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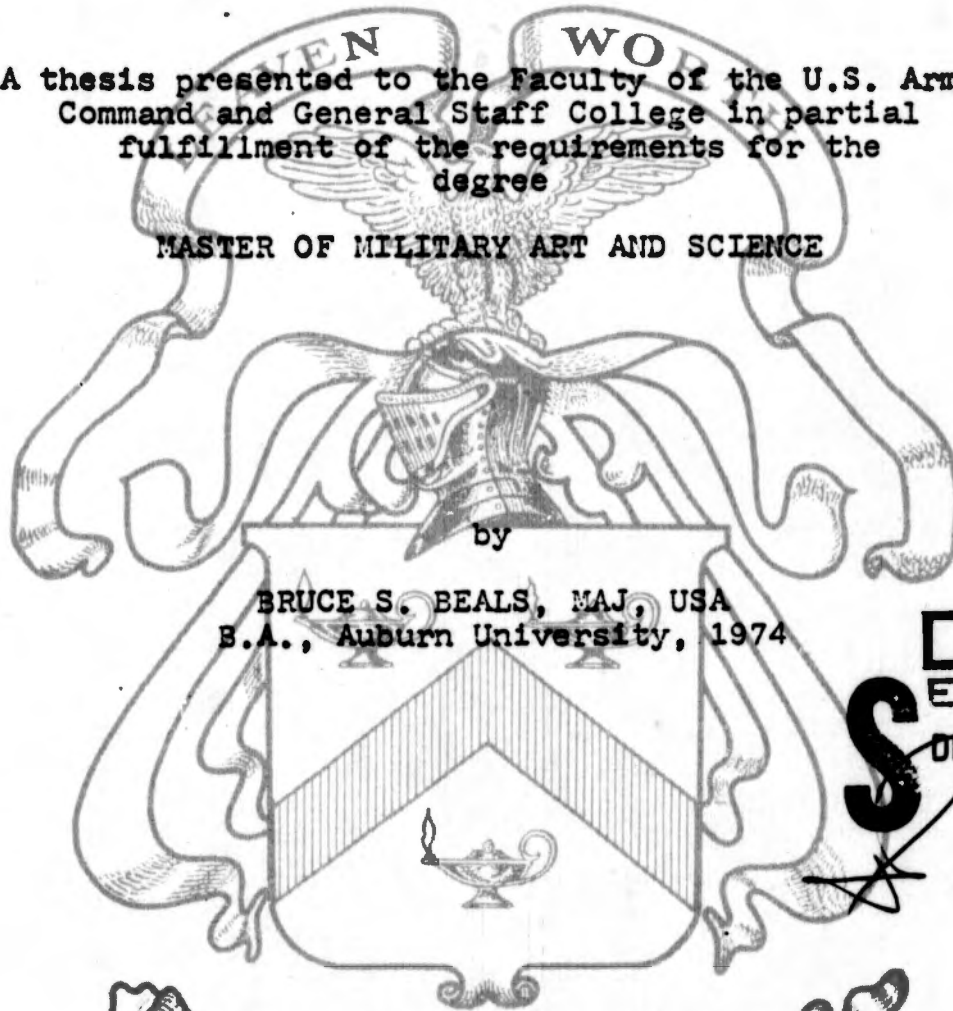
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COALITION WARFARE DURING THE ALLIED INTERVENTION

IN NORTH RUSSIA, 1918-1919

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

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE



by

BRUCE S. BEALS, MAJ, USA
B.A., Auburn University, 1974

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This thesis examines the background to the intervention, the relationships between the Allies, the Allied military operations, and the reasons for the ultimate failure of the North Russian Expeditionary Force. The study focuses on the decisions that led to the intervention at Archangel, the command relationships between the primary military and political players, and the impact of the unique characteristics of each of the Allied forces on the conduct of combat operations against the Bolsheviks.

Source material for this study has been taken from the accounts of American, British, and Canadian officers, after-action reports, and unit histories. Other information comes from French, Canadian, Australian, English, and American sources.

The impact of the extremes of weather, vastness of the country, ubiquitous nature of the enemy, length of supply lines, lack of fire support, confusion of the command structure, and distinct motives of each of the Allied forces all combined to spell the inevitable failure of the Allies in North Russia. This thesis scrutinizes each of these elements and concludes by discussing those crucial factors that influenced the coalition warfare effort. (Author)

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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**COALITION WARFARE DURING THE ALLIED INTERVENTION IN NORTH
RUSSIA, 1918-1919, by Major Bruce S. Beals, IN, 105 pages.**

Two months before World War I ended, the President of the United States, along with the leaders of Great Britain, France, Italy, and several other Allied nations, committed nearly 20,000 soldiers to war in North Russia. Almost a year after the armistice on the Western Front Allied troops were still fighting in the snowy wastes of a far off, strange land, for unclear and ambiguous reasons.

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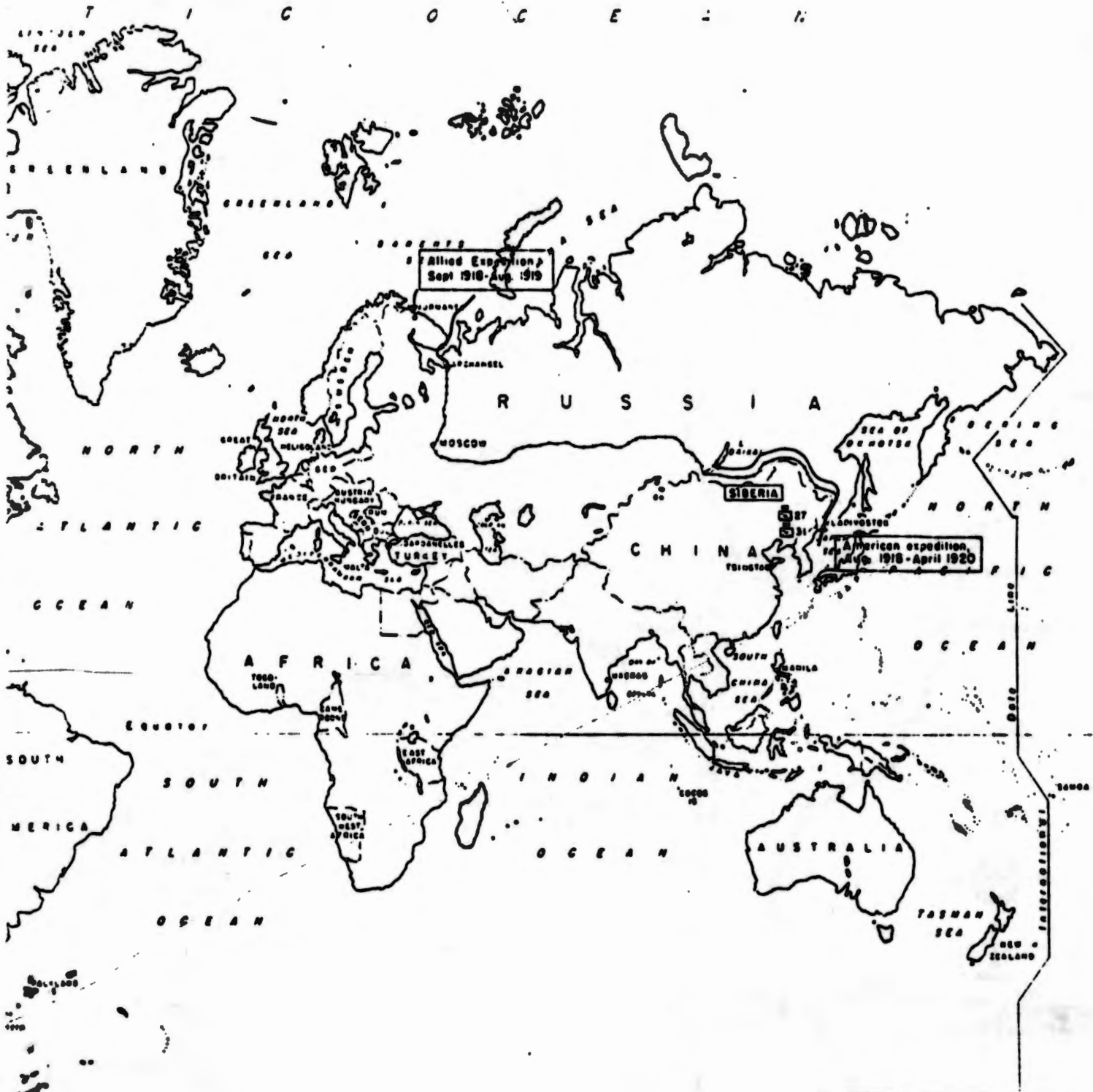
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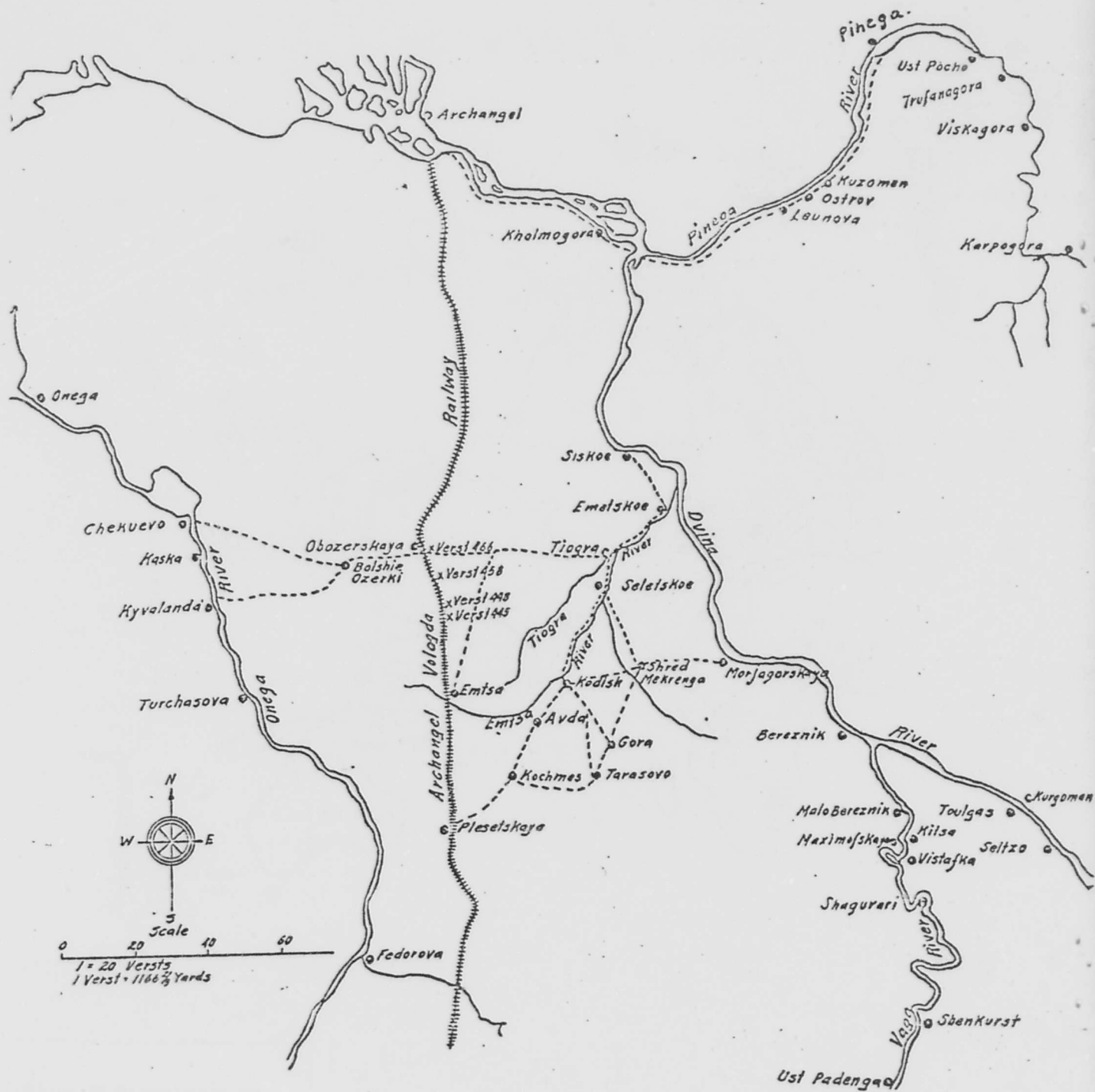
Allied Expeditions to Russia 1918-1920.

Area of Operation - Archangel Province



**ALLIED EXPEDITIONS TO RUSSIA
1918 - 1920**

(West Point Atlas of American Wars)



(Cudahy, Archangel, The American War with Russia)

Introduction

In 1959 Nikita Khrushchev said in Los Angeles,

"We remember the grim days when American soldiers went to our soil, headed by their generals to help our White Guards combat the new revolution... 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."¹

Overshadowed by the termination of the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution, the League of Nations debate, and President Wilson's post-war political problems, the North Russian Expedition has been viewed as a sideshow to the "Great War" and has received little attention. The entire episode, from the decisions that led to the intervention in early 1918 to the evacuation of forces in the fall of 1919, was characterized by extremes of motive, personality, terrain, and weather. The military operations in the Archangel region proved to be as difficult as any in modern history. Fighting in extreme cold, seemingly endless forests of fir and pine, and faced with little or no hope of resupply or reinforcement, the Allies battled to survive against the brutal Russian elements as well as numerically superior Soviet forces. These factors, combined with the almost impossible command relationships, diverse political considerations, and essential differences in social and cultural traditions, led to a campaign wrought with over-optimism, naivete, ignorance, and periodic desperation.

The seeds of resentment and lack of cooperation between the Allies were planted in the misinformation and absence of objective and direction centered around the purposes given for the intervention. These separate and varied motives, coupled with a bewildering command relationship were ultimately reflected in the conduct of military operations. To a great extent, the success or failure of the Allied coalition was determined before the first soldier stepped ashore at Archangel.

This thesis focuses on the relationships between the Allied military forces involved in the North Russian expedition and those elements of the relationships that ultimately contributed to the outcome of the coalition effort against the Soviets. One method of judging the final results of the coalition endeavor would be to consider the campaign in the context of victory or defeat. If such a method is selected, then the association of the American, French, and other national forces under the command of British officers should be regarded as an abject failure. The Allied forces did not accomplish their assigned missions of linking up with the Czechoslovakian Corps and subsequently creating a military atmosphere in which the anti-Bolshevik forces could defeat the Soviets. The ultimate evacuation of all Allied forces from North Russia in late 1919, and the ensuing victory of the Red forces serves to emphasize the degree of defeat suffered by the Allies.

If the final appraisal is based on the success or failure of platoons, companies, and individuals to overcome differences in language, tactics, equipment, and combat experience, in a hostile land, then the Allied effort should be assessed as a resounding accomplishment.

This thesis attempts to look beyond the more obvious problems normally associated with coalition warfare. National interests, international politics, and patriotic chauvinism all have an important part to play in any multi-national military operation. Perhaps more important than these manifold elements are the individual, seemingly insignificant incidents, perceptions, and circumstances that influence the ultimate outcome of an engagement, battle, campaign, or war.

The objectives of the Allied intervention seem to be as numerous as the national forces who participated. With the Bolshevik Revolution of November, 1917, and the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March, 1918, the Allies saw disaster around the corner. The treaty between the Germans and the new revolutionary government would release an estimated one hundred and forty-seven German and Austrian Divisions for duty on the Western Front. Winston Churchill, then British Minister of Munitions, told the Imperial War Cabinet, "Above all things reconstitute the fighting front in the East...If we cannot...no end can be discerned to the war. We must not take 'No' for an answer either from America or from Japan."²

Another consideration was the Allied war material that had been provided to the Russian government prior to the Bolshevik Revolution. This huge stockpile of equipment and supplies was supposedly stored in warehouses and dumps in Archangel and was vulnerable to capture by German troops operating from Finland.

Additionally, there was the question of the Czechoslovakian Corps. This unit, once part of the Imperial Russian Army, had been isolated in Russia after the fall of the Czar and had begun a march to Vladivostok in March, 1918, for the purpose of redeploying to the Western Front. This idea was fully supported by the Allies, especially the French. By May, 1918, the Czechs were in conflict with the Soviets along the Trans-Siberian railway. Although the Czech Corps controlled long sectors of the railroad, they were split into two elements, separated by Soviet forces. The plight of the Czech Corps and the desire on the part of the Allies to introduce the Corps into action of the Western Front was offered as another reason for intervention.

Among the Allied troops there seemed to be a good deal of confusion as to their purpose in North Russia. The announcements of the military authorities varied and did not clearly state the object of the expedition. British General Headquarters published a pamphlet for troop consumption with the following reasons for the Allied action in North Russia:

1. To form a military barrier inside which the Russians could reorganize themselves to drive out the German invader.

2. To assist the Russians to reorganize their army by instruction, supervision, and example on more reasonable principles than the old regime autocratic discipline.

3. To reorganize the food supplies, making up the deficiencies from allied countries. To obtain for export the surplus supplies of goods, such as flax, timber, etc. To fill store ships bringing food, thus maintaining the economical shipping policy.³

American forces were informed that they were sent to Russia "to guard military stores which may subsequently be needed by Russian forces, and to render such aid as may be acceptable to the Russians in the organization of their own self-defense."⁴

Finally, because there seemed to be continued confusion as to why Allied soldiers were dying in North Russia, British Headquarters issued this proclamation:

There seems to be among the troops a very indistinct idea of what we are fighting for here in North Russia. This can be explained in a few words. We are up against Bolshevism, which means anarchy pure and simple. Look at Russia at the present moment. The power is in the hands of a few men, mostly Jews, who have succeeded in bringing the country to such a state that order is nonexistent. Bolshevism has grown upon the uneducated masses to such an extent that Russia is disintegrated and helpless, and therefore we have come to help her get rid of the disease that is eating her up. We are not here to conquer Russia, but we want to help her and see her a great power. When order is restored here, we shall clear out, but only when we have attained our⁵ object, and that is the restoration of Russia.

This was the direct opposite of what the Americans had been instructed. It is not surprising that friction, suspicion, and misunderstanding between the Allies was developing

from the start. The confusion and ambiguity over the actual purpose of the intervention would become one more factor in a series of issues that would lead to a frustrating and difficult campaign.

The answer to the question of success or failure seems to be found in the relationships that formed between the Allies. The personalities, national characteristics, and customs of the individuals and units involved in the expedition play a most important role in the subsequent development of the Allied affiliation.

Among the commanders there was incompetence as well as brilliance; genuine care for the welfare of the troops as well as callousness; and professionalism as well as careerism. For the individual soldier there were, among other problems, questions about medical care, mail from home, drunken commanders, profiteering among rear detachment troops, and constant jealousy over the quantity and quality of food and supplies.

The strain of combat against a fanatical enemy, in a wretched land, ignorant of purpose and fighting in the shadow of the armistice on the Western Front, resulted in mutinies, disobedience, and inter-Allied relations that were strained to the limit. Nerves and patience were stretched to the point that the American commander requested that the "...present force be entirely replaced as early as practicable...with an adequate force commensurate with its mission,

supplied and equipped so that it can operate in an American way."⁶

Chapter three explores the major combat actions between September 1918 and the evacuation from Archangel in October, 1919. The focus of this chapter is not on "Grand Strategy" or detailed reports of friendly and enemy order of battle. The small unit actions and relations between the leaders and subordinates of those platoons and companies are the subject of this examination. The engagements on the Archangel-Vologda railroad, The Vaga River, and the Dvina River are recounted, for it was these battles that accounted for the majority of Allied combat interaction or, as it is called today, interoperability. This thesis draws on the descriptive accounts of several of the participants in these actions. Through their reminiscences one is able to feel the admiration, disgust, camaraderie, and frustration born out of the need to trust your life to a soldier of another nationality, in a strange land, under the most arduous circumstances, in a mutually misunderstood war. It was these interpersonal transactions, on the soldier to soldier level, that played such a key role in the success or failure of coalition combat in the expedition to Archangel.

Although the war with Germany ended on 11 November, 1918, the last Allied force did not depart Archangel until 12 October, 1919. Albeit the original justifications for intervention were centered on Germany, not one German prisoner was

taken in North Russia, nor was there any evidence of German involvement in the combat actions against the Allies. In the entire conduct of the North Russian expedition there was no firm connection between the Soviets and the Germans.

The relationships between the Allied participants were formed out of the political and military actualities of the moment, and resulted in a contradictory and confusing set of circumstances within which the Allied military commanders were forced to act. With this introduction, we shall approach the question of coalition warfare during the Allied intervention in North Russia, and the background to that intervention.

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CHAPTER 1

Background to the Intervention

In order to understand the relationships between the Allied forces during the expedition to North Russia, one must look at the circumstances and decisions that led to the commitment of military forces.

The entire complexion of the war in Europe changed on 3 March 1918, when a Soviet Government delegation, headed by Leon Trotsky, negotiated a separate peace with Germany. Since November, 1917, when the Bolshevik dominated Soviet government took power from the Kerensky government, the Allies had been in a constant state of exasperation over Soviet actions. The secret treaties between Russia, Britian, France, Italy, and Japan were published by the new Soviet government. The war debt, incured by the Czarist government, was repudiated. But the most serious breach between the Soviets and Allies was the separate peace signed at Brest-Litovsk. The ramifications of this act were critical to the Allied cause. The Germans would now be able to transfer approximately forty divisions from the Eastern to the Western front. This would allow the Germans to enjoy a numerical superiority of nearly 217 divisions to the Allied strength of 173 divisions, or a little more than a two million man difference.¹

It was apparent to Allied military leaders, and politicians, that the situation was grave. In late March, 1918 the Germans

began an offensive on the Western Front that succeeded in pushing the British back nearly thirty miles. More than ever, it appeared critical to reconstitute an Eastern Front and stop the transfer of German troops and materiel from Russia. As the full impact of the great German offensive began to be felt, the planners and politicians had visions of German prisoners being released in Russia to reinforce units on the Western Front. These visions became nightmares as the Allies pondered the possibility of these prisoners being armed and equipped with the very weapons and supplies that the Allies had provided to the Czar's Army, supplies then stockpiled at a number of Russian port cities. Winston Churchill, then British Minister of Munitions, told the Imperial War Cabinet that: "Above all things reconstitute the fighting front in the East... If we cannot... no end can be discerned to the war."²

There were other reasons for intervention besides the potential military advantage the Germans would enjoy with the shift of troops from East to West, and the possible seizure by the Soviets of the precious war supplies at Archangel and Vladivostok. There was the plight of the Czechoslovak Corps.

In the spring of 1918, following the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, a force of approximately 40,000 Czech soldiers was making its way from the Ukraine to Vladivostok. This unit, which had been fighting the Germans as part of the Imperial Russian Army, was to become part of an interesting and absurd plan that would eventually be a key element of the Allied inter-

vention in Archangel. For the moment, the Czech legion was making for the port of Vladivostok where it would embark for France and the Western Front, via the United States. It was intended that upon arrival in France the Czechs would take their place in the trenches under French command.

The Czech situation presented several interesting problems, not the least of which was geographic. The Czech Corps was spread out along the Trans-Siberian Railroad, from Kiev to Vladivostok, with little or no communication between sub-units. The prospect of an armed, organized military unit, previously loyal to the Czar, transiting the heart of Russia posed a difficult political question to the Soviets. On 14 March, 1918, the Soviet Government gave orders to allow the Czechs to depart for the Pacific Russian port. On 26 March the orders were altered. The Czech Legion was easily the largest group of armed and disciplined troops in Russia at the time. Also, most of its senior officers were Russian and suspected to be anti-Bolshevik. The force could become a threat to the new Soviet leadership, especially if it linked up with the Cossacks or the Japanese in Siberia.

The amended orders, issued by Joseph Stalin, People's Commissar for Nationalities, stated that the Czechs were to move to Vladivostok, "not as fighting units but as groups of free citizens, taking with them a certain quantity of arms for self defense against the attack of counter-revolutionist."³

Between 26 March and 14 April the Czechs moved eastward in a rather sporadic manner, their rate of transit depending on the

whims and attitudes of the local Soviet authorities. Some local leaders ignored Moscow's instructions while others attempted to enforce them to the letter. The movement was further complicated by the Japanese landing at Vladivostok on 5 April. Lenin assumed that the Japanese actions were part of an Allied invasion and ordered that the Czechs not be allowed to proceed. On 10 April Lenin was informed that the Japanese landings were completed and two days later he canceled the order halting the Corps' movement.⁴

On 14 April the Czechs decided that no more arms would be surrendered and that those voluntarily surrendered previously would be recovered. They also intended to obtain control of the trains and fuel in those areas where their forces were located. The Czech leadership informed the Soviets that the only reason for their movement to Vladivostok was to get to France and help the Allies, and that the Corps retained "old brotherly feelings towards Russian democracy." But, "in the event of irresponsible elements engaging in operations against Czech units, they will be met with due resistance."⁵

While the Czechs were issuing their resolution to the Soviets, the British and French were debating how the Czechs should be employed. The French desired to continue with the original plan to transport the Czechs from Vladivostok to France. The British, who were to furnish the transport, doubted that the effort required was really worth it and felt that the Corps might play a more important role within Russia. Options included

moving north to Murmansk and Archangel or concentrating in Siberia. Another plan called for a link up with a Cossack leader such as Semenov, operating in the East.⁶ How these British plans would counter the renewed German pressure on the Western Front was not very clear. As a consequence, Clemenceau disagreed with the British proposal and pushed for adoption of the French plan.

On 1 April the British War Office informed the Czechoslovak National Council, the political representative of the Czech legion, that it had doubts about the feasibility of getting the Corps from Siberia to Europe via the United States, and proposed that the Czechs be used to assist the Japanese in Siberia or to protect the North Russian White Sea ports from German actions. Both the Czech National Council and the French opposed this idea.

At the end of April an important change in the French position prompted the Permanent Military Representatives of The Supreme War Council to discuss the question of the Czech Corps. The result of the council meeting was a Joint Note (No. 25) stating that the fastest way to remove the Czech Corps was to send those troops that had not passed east of Omsk to Archangel and Murmansk while the remainder of the Czech forces should continue to Vladivostok. The note added that while the Czech troops were waiting to embark for France they could be profitably employed in defending Archangel, Murmansk, and the Murman Railway. As a result of this apparent Allied

compromise, a British instructor staff was sent to Murmansk in May to train and organize the Czechs for the subsequent mission of defending the North Russian ports. General Tasker H. Bliss, the American representative at these discussions, abstained from taking a position primarily because of President Wilson's view that the Permanent Military Representatives should not become involved in political matters.⁷

In addition to the instructor staff, the British assigned a military mission of 560 officers, a machinegun company, an infantry company, and an engineer company, all to be garrisoned at Murmansk. The troops would guard the port while training was conducted for the Czechs. This force, commanded by Major-General Maynard, was composed of troops belonging to a physical category so low as to render them unfit for duty in France. At the same time, General Maynard saw his command as more than just a training and security cadre. "When ready to take the field," General Maynard wrote, "the whole force was to endeavor to join hands with the pro-ally forces in Siberia, and then to assist in opening up a new front against Germany."⁸ There was a subtle yet irrevocable change in the original concept of the movement of the Czechs Corps to the Western Front and the opening of a second front taking place. What was initially intended to be a basic movement of forces from one theater of operations to another theater was taking on a much broader meaning. Not only were Allied forces being introduced into North Russia and Siberia, but the question of who these forces would be facing was in the

minds of both the Allies and the new Soviet leaders.

The highest body developing Allied policy on the Czech-Soviet question was the Permanent Military Representatives of the Allied Supreme War Council. The personalities of this body warrant attention for it was they who formulated the intervention in North Russia as part of the grand strategy for defeating the Germans. They also created the general reserve, decided on the disposition of the American Army, and determined shipping priorities to deal with the German submarine threat.

The men assigned as Permanent Military Representatives were distinguished general officers who not only were among the most famous of their countries' martial leaders but were also loyal to their political masters. They met three times each week in Versailles and discussed methods for prosecuting the war. It was at these meetings that the concept of a Russian intervention was born.

The members included France's Maxime Weyand, future Commanding General of the French Army and an important figure in the defeat and surrender of the French in 1940. Great Britain's representative was General Henry H. Wilson. Wilson would become Chief of The Imperial Staff and later be assassinated by Irish terrorists in 1922. Luigi Conte Cadorna sat in for Italy, but because his country was a late entrant on the Allied side, and he had been the Commanding General of The Italian Army at the time of its defeat in October, 1917, he had little to offer at the sessions. Lieutenant General Tasker H. Bliss was Woodrow

Wilson's representative. Bliss had graduated from West Point in 1875 and was considered an intellectual within the Army. He had been promoted directly from major to brigadier general during the Spanish-American War and as Chief-of-Staff had planned the mobilization of the American Army in 1917.⁹

The subject of an Allied intervention in Russia began to be discussed by the Permanent Military Representatives when it became obvious that a separate peace between the Germans and the Russians was in the making. General Weygand suggested that a Japanese force, supervised by an Allied Commission, should occupy the Trans-Siberian Railway from Vladivostok to Harbin. This action would deny Germany access to Allied supplies, as well as a sea port on the Pacific coast of Russia. Bliss informed Secretary of War Newton D. Baker of Weygand's proposal. "The intervention," wrote Bliss, "over a large part of Siberia, of a large Japanese Army, raises the question of when and how they can be made to get out. I have often thought that this war, instead of being the last one, may be only the breeder of still more."¹⁰ In retrospect, these were prophetic words by a concerned and intelligent officer.

The recommendation was forwarded to the Supreme War Council for President Wilson's approval. Wilson rejected the proposal because he felt that a unilateral Japanese move into Siberia would only serve to antagonize the Russians.

The British were eager to intervene in Russia. They knew that a world-wide Soviet sponsored proletarian revolution would

have a dire impact on the empire, especially India. In late 1917 the British began sending limited support to several anti-Bolshevik elements in Russia, and the imposition of Maynard's force at Murmansk insured British control of the primary starting point for any intervention in Northern European Russia. The only problem was the lack of troops needed to carry out an intervention in a country as vast as Russia. Somehow, Woodrow Wilson, President of the one nation that had not been bled white by four years of trench warfare, must be coaxed, cajoled, or intimidated into providing American men for a military intervention in North Russia.

Wilson's man in Russia was Ambassador David R. Francis. During the early part of 1918 Francis had become increasingly concerned about the removal of Allied stores from Archangel by the Soviets. The Reds did not pay for the supplies nor did they inform the Allies for what purposes they were seizing the materials. Francis informed the Soviet authorities that the Allies desired that the stores be retained for use on the Western Front, but he received no reply from Moscow. These military supplies, which included small arms, shells of all types, trucks, artillery, barbed wire, copper wire, and metal pigs for the production of artillery, were needed on the Western Front, and that, plus the fact that the Soviets apparently had no intention of paying for the goods they took, irked Francis. The senior diplomat was concerned that the stores would fall into the hands of the Germans and would be used against the Allies. He also viewed

the Soviet actions as nothing more than common thievery and felt strongly that the Allies should intervene to protect their interests. At the end of May, 1918, Vice Counsel Felix Cole sent a dispatch from his post at Archangel to the State Department discussing his opinion of an intervention in North Russia. Cole felt that he was close to the pulse of the people and was disturbed by those who were calling for military action. On 1 June Cole sent the following message:

Intervention will begin on a small scale but with each step forward will grow in scope and in its demands for ships, men, money, and materials... The ground for landing an interventionary force has not been properly prepared. The north of Russia is nowhere near as pro-Ally as it might be... Intervention in the north of Russia will mean that we must feed the entire north of Russia containing from 500,000 to 1,500,000 population,... Intervention can not reckon on active support from Russians. All the fight is out of Russia... No child can ever be convinced that it is spanked for its own benefit... Intervention will alienate thousands of anti-German Bolsheviks... Every foreign invasion that has gone deep into Russia has been swallowed up... Intervention will not engage three Germans in Russia to every one Ally... Intervention will belie all our promises to the Russian people made since October 26, 1917. We will lose that moral superiority over Germany which is a tower of strength to us everywhere,... And after all, unless we are to invade the whole of Russia, we shall not have affected that part of Russia where the population is massed, mainly the center and the south where the industrial, mining, and agricultural strength of Russia lies....¹¹

Ambassador Francis received a copy of Cole's dispatch but did not accept his point of view basically because Cole's opinions ran counter to his own recommendation to intervene. As it happened, the dispatch from Cole did not arrive in Washington until 19 July, after the final decision to intervene

had already been made. On 3 June the Permanent Military Representatives issued Joint Note No. 31 which dealt with the situation at Murmansk and Archangel. The note addressed concern over Finnish cooperation with Germany and Finnish designs on North Russia. It also discussed the availability of the Czech Corps to serve in the North and the possibility of the Germans establishing a submarine base in the Murmansk area. Most importantly, it stressed the need to keep the region out of German hands through the introduction of Allied forces. On the assumption that a certain number of Czechs would be available for duty at Archangel, the British, French, Italians, and United States would send four to six battalions, with equipment and supplies, to the area of Murmansk/Archangel. The expedition was to be under British command.

General Bliss concurred with this Note based on his understanding of Wilson's current position regarding the occupation of the northern ports. Wilson supported efforts to keep the Germans out and to secure Allied War materiel, but he opposed the conduct of military operations from the port areas into the interior of Russia. He also understood that Allied participation would be approximately equal to insure that the United States force would be no more than one or two battalions.¹²

The President's position, as perceived by Bliss, was best expressed by an earlier message from Wilson in which he said: "...Russia's misfortunes impose upon us at this time the obligation of unswerving fidelity to the principle of Russian ter-

ritorial integrity and political independence. But the President is heartily in sympathy with any practical military effort which can be made at and from Murmansk or Archangel, but such efforts should proceed if at all upon the sure sympathy of the Russian people and should not have as their ultimate object any restoration of the ancient regime or any other interference with the political liberty of the Russian people."¹³

It should be understood that along with the vague instructions from his Commander-in-Chief, Bliss had no senior political representative at the Council to coordinate with or consult. After the First Session of the Supreme War Council, in November, 1917, Wilson refused to be personally represented and all discussions of the Prime Ministers had to be sent to Washington for Wilson's approval, after their adoption by the others. This arrangement was not only difficult for Bliss but made for an environment of distrust, confusion and misunderstanding. This arrangement helps to explain the time lag in communications between Bliss and Wilson and demonstrates how easy it was for the British and French to prevail on the question of the North Russian intervention.

On 1 June, two days before the Supreme War Council ended its debate on Joint Note No. 31, Wilson authorized diverting troops from France to Murmansk. He also detached the USS Olympia, Dewey's flagship at Manila Bay, to North Russian waters. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, in one of the few disagreements he ever had with Wilson, later stated: "I

convinced him that it (the diversion of troops) was unwise, but he told me that he felt obliged to do it anyhow because the British and French were pressing it on his attention so hard and he had refused so many of their requests that they were beginning to feel he was not a good associate, much less a good Ally."¹⁴

Wilson had previously expressed some willingness to send American troops to North Russia if Foch agreed to the diversion. Lord Milner, the Secretary of State for War in the British government, informed Wilson that he had spoken with Foch and that he was aware of the importance of the North Russian matter and was willing to allow the diversion of American forces. Milner further asked that an American force of three battalions of infantry and machineguns, two batteries of artillery, three companies of engineers, and the required medical and administrative support be dispatched.¹⁵ The force would be under British command.

When Secretary of War Baker and the Chief of Staff, Peyton C. March, saw Milner's request to Wilson their first reaction was surprise that Bliss had accepted the provision for British command of the Allied force. They were also strongly opposed to the employment of such a large American force. Baker sent a telegram to Bliss asking about the question of command and instructing Bliss to personally speak to Foch about the diversion of American forces from the Western Front. When Bliss learned that Milner had increased the level of American troop

commitment from the one to two battalions proposed at the War Council, he was indignant. Bliss saw Foch, as instructed, and learned that because of the improving situation on the Western Front the diversion of one or two battalions would not hinder the American effort in France.¹⁶

The argument about the size of the American force continued throughout June, but curiously, the question of command did not officially come up again. From 2 through 4 July the Supreme War Council met at Versailles where they heard a report on the North Russian situation from Sir Eric Geddes, First Lord of The Admiralty. His report expressed the views of Major General Frederick C. Poole, the overall British commander in North Russia. Poole favored expansion of the entire plan for an intervention and felt that an Allied occupation was necessary in order to retain "bridgeheads into Russia from the north from which forces can eventually advance rapidly to the center of Russia,..."¹⁷

Bliss, who had been suspicious of the British intentions all along, was appalled by Poole's concept of the operation and wrote Secretary of War Baker that the British project was too ambitious and vague. Bliss felt that the best the Allies could hope for was to hold onto the northern ports during winter and stated that: "Our Allies want the United States to commit itself to expeditions to various places where, after the war, they alone will have any special interests..."¹⁸

Neither Baker or March saw any value in a North Russian

expedition but the President nevertheless decided to honor the British request for three infantry battalions. Baker later said: "The expedition was nonsense from the beginning and always seemed to me to be one of those side shows born of desperation and organized for the purpose of keeping up home morale...."¹⁹

On 17 July Wilson formally notified the Allied governments of his decision. The United States government, the message solemnly stated,

...yields, also to the judgement of the Supreme Command in the matter of establishing a small force at Murmansk, to guard the military stores at Kola, and to make it safe for Russian forces to come together in organized bodies in the north. But... it can go no further.... It is not in a position, and has no expectation of being in a position, to take part in organized intervention in adequate force from...Murmansk and Archangel. It... will... feel obliged to withdraw these forces, in order to add them to the forces at the western front, if the plans... should develop into others inconsistent with the policy to which the Government of the United States feels constrained to restrict itself. ²⁰

The President had decided to provide three battalions of infantry and three companies of engineers to the North Russian expeditionary force. The matter was closed. This, in essence, was how approximately 4,500 American men of the 339th Infantry Regiment, the 337th Field Hospital and the 310th Engineer Battalion, under British command, became involved in one of the most futile and ill-advised military operations in American history.

Wilson would, later in the summer of 1918, circulate an

aide-memoiré among the Allies in which he attempted to justify his decision to send American troops into Russia. This paper, eloquent and sometimes contradictory, put forth the argument that:

Military action is admissable 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 and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense in which the Russians themselves may be willing to accept assistance. Whether from Vladivostok or from Murmansk and Archangel, the only legitimate object for which American or Allied troops can be employed, it submits, is to guard military stores and to render such aid as may be acceptable to the Russians in the organization of their own self-defense... the United States is glad to contribute the small force at its disposal for that purpose.²¹

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CHAPTER 2

The Relationships Between The Allies

The 339th Infantry Regiment served with The North Russian Expeditionary Force for relatively inconsequential reasons. The commander of the 339th, Colonel George Evans Stewart, was one of the few American officers who had served in Alaska, and the regiment was conveniently encamped for embarkation on the London-Aldershot Canal in Surrey, England. The unit had been recruited at Fort Custer, Michigan in 1918 and was composed primarily of draftees and officers from the mid-western part of America. The 339th was part of the 85th Division and when they arrived in England in the summer of 1918, it was with the high and noble mission of killing Germans on the battlefields of France.

On 6 August, 1918, a message marked "Secret" arrived for Stewart from the War Office in London. It informed him that the 339th Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion, 310th Engineer Regiment, 337th Field Hospital Company, and 337th Ambulance Company should be prepared for immediate service in Russia. It also instructed Stewart that:

No animals will be taken, but all vehicles, saddlery, and harness will accompany the units; the units will mobilize in accordance with British mobilization store tables; British personal equipment will be issued and any American equipment will be turned in at Aldershot; that Russian rifles, Russian pattern Lewis guns, and Russian pattern Colt machine-guns will be issued in lieu of the Enfield rifles that the Americans have trained with; and American officers will be issued, free of charge, a special

winter kit at the commencement of the winter in the theatre of operations.¹

On 9 August Confidential Order No. 1, Headquarters, American Expeditionary Force, formally designated the American units as part of the Murmansk Expeditionary Force and appointed Colonel Stewart as the commanding officer of the detachment. It provided the 339th with 1,000 pairs of skis, 5,500 pairs of snow shoes, 7,500 winter moccasins, 50 long cross cut saws, 50 ice tongs, and slip-on garments of white material to make the troops less distinguishable on the snow.²

Stewart and his men were not happy about having to give up their personal gear or the Enfield rifles. One officer noted:

"Most disheartening of all were the Russian rifles issued to the infantry. They were manufactured in our country by the million for the use of the Imperial Army; long, awkward pieces, with flimsy bolt mechanisms that frequently jammed. These weapons had never been targeted by the Americans, and their sighting systems were calculated in Russian paces instead of yards. They had a low velocity and were thoroughly unsatisfactory. The unreliability of the rifle, prime arm of the infantry, was an important factor in the lowering of Allied morale."³

Prior to departing for North Russia the order requiring the turn-in of personal gear was rescinded, but the Russian weapons were issued.

The other members of General Pool's Allied Expeditionary Force were an interesting collection of fighting men from

several countries. The British contingent consisted of an infantry brigade numbering nearly 4500 men. The brigade was made up primarily of Royal Scots and British soldiers classified as category C3. This classification meant they were unfit for the arduous tasks of field operations, but could perform garrison or guard duty. Many of these men wore wound stripes won in France and Belgium.⁴ Also included in the British strength was a group of three officers and six sergeants from the Australian Imperial Forces. These men had been specially chosen and trained to act as advisors to the White Russian Army troops. Later in the campaign, over one hundred Australians would volunteer for duty in North Russia as part of the British Army.⁵

The British officers were of two basic groups. One consisted of officers who had seen combat on the Western Front and were in North Russia because they were professional military men or loved adventure. The other group was made up of officers who had not seen combat and viewed the North Russian operation as an opportunity to make a name for themselves. After all, the war appeared to be coming to an end and this might be their only chance to gain a reputation that might prove valuable after the war.

The French element included approximately 370 men of the 21st Colonial Infantry Battalion, with two machinegun sections and two sections of seventy-five millimeter artillery attached. The 21st Colonial was a distinguished unit that

had seen some of the most violent fighting on the Western Front at Chemin des Dames in 1917. The unit had been so decimated that it was deactivated in France and then reactivated for the North Russian expedition. Many of the men who joined the 21st before departing France had just arrived from the Middle East and were in very poor health.⁶

From Canada came the 16th Brigade Canadian Field Artillery. The Brigade consisted of the 67th and 68th Batteries with six eighteen pounders each. The Brigade had 497 officers and men who had, for the most part, served in France. These volunteers had an excellent reputation as gunners and hard fighters.⁷

The force also included 360 Serbs, 1,139 Italians, 449 Poles, 5 Japanese, 43 Koreans, 262 Chinese, and an unrecorded number of South Africans, Lithuanians, Finns, and anti-Bolshevik White Russians.⁸ One estimate puts the total number of Allied Forces at 1,424 officers and 25,816 enlisted men.⁹ The combat order of battle included one regiment of American infantry, one brigade of British infantry, one battalion of French infantry, two sections of French artillery and machineguns, one brigade of Canadian artillery, one armored train, one 155 and one 77 millimeter Russian howitzers, for a total of about 9,500 front line troops.¹⁰

The 339th and its' support troops departed England aboard the Tydeus, Nagoya, and Somali on 27 August, 1918. An influenza epidemic broke out at once and nearly 500 of the 5,500 Americans were sick. After eight days at sea all

medical supplies were exhausted and the sick bay was so congested that the ailing soldiers had to lie in the holds or on the decks, exposed to the elements. One officer explained that:

"At Stoney Castle Camp in England, inquiry by the Americans had elicited statement from the British authorities that each ship would be well supplied with medicines and hospital equipment for the long voyage into the frigid Arctic. But it happened that none were put on the boat and all the medical officers had to use were three or four boxes of medical supplies that they had clung to all the way from Camp Custer."¹¹

At mid-point in the voyage, Colonel Stewart received new orders from Poole's Headquarters that he was to proceed not to Murmansk, but to Archangel where his command would assist a small force of British, French, and American sailors who were engaged with a Bolshevik force, on the Archangel-Vologda railway line. This small group of sailors, from the U.S. cruiser Olympia, were the first American servicemen to actually see combat against the Russians. A little more than a month before the 339th and its support units arrived at Archangel these sailors had joined some of General Poole's forces in search of adventure. They soon found themselves chasing the retreating Bolsheviks down the Archangel-Vologda railway on an old wood burning locomotive, armed with machineguns mounted on flat cars. About thirty miles south of Archangel the Bolsheviks burned a railroad bridge and decided to make a stand. It was at this point that British Headquarters in Archangel wired

Stewart to divert his force to Archangel.¹²

Upon their arrival, the Americans found the situation somewhat different from what they had expected. On 4 September the troopships docked at Archangel and on the 5th, the 2nd Battalion, 339th Infantry Regiment established their camp at Smolney Barracks. The 3rd Battalion came ashore the same day and moved out immediately for the relief of the forces located on the Archangel-Vologda railway. On 7 September the 1st Battalion embarked on two barges, towed by British tugs, and moved up the Dvina River towards a link-up with British forces operating near Berezink.¹³

The sick were unloaded from the ships and transported to the Russian Red Cross hospital at Archangel. The American medical officer, Major Jonas Longly, asked the British for assistance but was told that the British hospital would take only the American officers and the enlisted men would have to stay on the ships. Longly refused to make any distinction between the officer and enlisted men and informed the British that he would open an American hospital. The young medical officer's actions were blocked by the staff of General Poole, based on the lack of American medical supplies, personnel, and equipment. Longly went to the American Red Cross representative in Archangel and explained the situation. Almost at once, the deputy commissioner, Mr. C.T. Williams turned over five Red Cross hospital trains that contained tons of medical supplies that had been sent to Russia prior to the Bolshevik Revolution. Two volunteer nurses

aided Longly, one of whom would later be awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal for her services in Archangel.¹⁴

After establishing the hospital Major Longly raised the American flag over it, in violation of General Poole's orders. Poole had previously decreed that only the Union Jack would be flown in Archangel. When a British staff officer appeared at the American hospital and ordered Longly to haul down the Stars and Stripes, Longly produced some armed guards and refused. That action ended the debate and Longly proved to be the only Allied officer to win an argument with General Poole concerning which flag would be flown.¹⁵

The coalition relationship got off to a rocky start and went downhill rapidly. The Americans observed that many of the British officers wore the insignia of high rank but drew pay of lower grades. This policy was apparently to insure that the British always outranked their American Allies. The British promoted subalterns to Lieutenant Colonel and made sergeants into temporary majors. General Poole wanted to be certain that if and when the intervention became a large scale Allied operation that the English would be firmly in control of it.¹⁶

The Americans also complained that the British took food intended for the sick and wounded and served it in the sergeant's messes. This might have been overlooked except that the wounded were fed a steady diet of tea, jam, and bread. The situation was made worse when Colonel Stewart recalled an American medical officer for refusing a British officer's order to have American

medical personnel dig latrines for the British officer's quarters.

There were also charges that the British neglected several Americans and required them to do orderly duties. Finally, Colonel Stewart court-martialled one American soldier for refusing to do scrub work in a British hospital. The establishment of the American receiving and convalescent hospitals in Archangel cured most of these problems.¹⁷

The 3rd Battalion, 339th Infantry moved directly from the ships to the Archangel-Vologda railroad line. The mission of the 3rd Battalion was to move south along the railroad to Obozerskaya and relieve part of the French 21st Colonial Battalion. Obozerskaya was located approximately 70 miles south of Archangel. From Obozerskaya the 3rd Battalion was to continue south along the railroad to verst 466* and make contact with the French.

When the 3rd Battalion, commanded by Major Charles D. Young, contacted the French Battalion, the officer in charge came out of his dugout and indicated that he expected a Russian artillery attack at any moment. Major Young ordered the American troops dispersed and began to relieve the French of their position. That night the American's suffered their first casualty

*A verst was .66 of a mile or 1,164 yards. Each verst on the railroad was marked, with the numbers going from south to north.

of the campaign, a soldier shot in the leg by a sentry who fired without waiting for a response to his challenge. It was at the point that the doughboys fully realized that: "Guard duty at Archangel was aiming now to be a real war, on a small scale but intensive."¹⁸

How were these Americans drawn into combat, under British officers, nearly 100 miles from Archangel, where, according to President Wilson, their duties were limited to performing "guard duty"? This question is key to an examination of the relationship between the Allies.

The command relationship between Colonel Stewart and General Poole was basically established by President Wilson's decision to commit American troops under British command. This situation became clearer after the Americans arrived in Archangel. Immediately after Stewart's arrival at Archangel, Ambassador Francis called him to his apartment where the ambassador asked Stewart if he had any orders for him. Stewart replied that he did not. Francis then asked what orders Stewart had received. Stewart said his orders were to report to General Poole, the commander of the Allied Forces. Francis responded: "I interpret our policy here. If I should tell you not to obey one of General Poole's orders what would you do?" Stewart replied that he would obey Francis.¹⁹

Francis had contacted the State Department earlier and requested that the ranking officer be put "in close touch" with him. When the State Department informed General March, Chief

of Staff, of Francis' request, March stated that he didn't want the ambassador to have anything to do with the troops. The State Department, through Assistant Secretary of State Long informed President Wilson of March's attitude and in a subsequent War Council meeting, Wilson ordered March to inform Stewart to comply with Francis' request. On 13 September Francis received a telegram from the State Department stating: "It is important that you and Colonel Stewart should keep in close personal touch. You appreciate, of course, that in military matters Colonel Stewart is under General Poole."²⁰

The command relationship was further complicated when, on 17 September, Stewart received a cable from American Military Headquarters in London in response to a request for guidance in what must have been an ambiguous and contradictory predicament. The cable stated:

Reference your telegram following repeated for your information and guidance. ...for tactical purposes and for administrative matters involving the entire command he is under the jurisdiction of Allied Commanders. Supplies will be furnished by the British. In matters of internal administration he will be governed by our own orders, regulations, and instructions. ²¹

On 14 October the war office recalled General Poole to England, ostensibly to confer on future operations. The primary reason for Poole's departure was because Ambassador Francis had informed the State Department of Poole's interferences in Russian political affairs and over optimistic reports. The State Department contacted the British Foreign Office and informed them that if Poole continued to meddle in

Russian domestic affairs, "The United States shall be compelled to consider withdrawal of American troops from British superior demands...."²²

The British could not afford to have the Americans withdraw at this point, and replaced Poole with Major General William Edmund Ironside as Commander-in-Chief of the North Russian Allied Expeditionary Force.

On 8 November, 1918, three days before the armistice, the one man who could have most directly influenced the role of American troops departed Archangel. Ambassador Francis was taken ill and left Russia for a prostate operation in England. His replacement, DeWitte Clinton Poole (no relation to General Poole) former Charge d' Affairs in Finland did not have the influence or authority of Francis. With the departure of Francis came the total subjugation of the American forces to British command authority.

General Ironside proved to be strikingly different from Poole. Totally dedicated to the military and little interested in politics, Ironside set about to position his force in a more favorable stance for the coming winter and inevitable Bolshevik attacks. As the new Commander-in-Chief inspected his Allied forces he noted that if it were not for the "untrained condition of the United States infantry in the Archangel Force", he would not have been forced into putting the C3 category Scots into the line and could have kept them for Archangel garrison duty.²³ He also observed that;

"The United States troops were of fine physique, but they had no experience of war and when they arrived their military training was most imperfect. They had been drawn from Detroit and had the advantage of possessing many men of Russian and Polish extraction, which gave them the advantage of having many interpreters, of whom there was a great lack in the other two contingents."²⁴

On one of his first visits to an American unit in the field, Ironside viewed the doughboys inexperience first hand. In his words:

"The whole company was lined out, peering into the forest with their arms at the ready. No clearings had been made for even a modest field of fire. I explained to the company commander what he should do, so that a few sentries could watch while the remainder of his men rested or took their meals. He stared at me in obvious amazement and then burst out with, 'what!, rest in this hellish bombardment!' At the moment a few shells were falling wide in the forest. They had a lot to learn...."²⁵

Ironside's dealings with Colonel Stewart may have influenced his opinion of the American soldier. Shortly before Poole's departure for England and Ironside's assumption of command, Ironside visited Stewart with the intention of asking the American colonel to assume command of the Allied forces on the railway front. This element was composed of Americans, French, and British troops.

Ironside found Stewart in his office at the Archangel Y.M.C.A. After the initial greetings, Stewart launched into a series of complaints about his problems in administering his troops when they were so widely dispersed. Stewart also cited

the lack of artillery, engineers, and medical elements. Ironside took this opportunity to offer command of the railway column to Stewart. The American colonel sat silently for several minutes, then refused. He stated that if he left Archangel he would be exceeding his instructions. Ironside pressed the issue, but Stewart would not budge. The British commander could not understand how a soldier who had been awarded The Medal of Honor for heroism during the Phillipine insurrection—the equivalent of The Victoria Cross could refuse an offer for a combat command. Ironside left Stewart and went immediately to the commander of French forces, Commandant Lucas, who accepted the offer without hesitation.²⁶

Stewart apparently took his instructions to remain in Archangel quite literally. He visited the American units at the front twice only during the entire North Russian campaign. He attended the funeral service for the first American casualties on the railroad front and made an inspection tour to the Dvina front, where he lost a mitten and accused a junior officer of stealing it. The matter was settled when the mitten was found where it was dropped by the colonel.²⁷

Shortly after Ironside's visit to Stewart and Francis' departure for England, Colonel Stewart cabled American Headquarters in London with the following message:

November 14 1918

Men of this command have performed most excellent service under the most trying climatic conditions of cold, snow, wet and miry marshes (tundra). Having had former service in Alaska I do not

contemplate with equanimity the effect on the numerical strength of my command of field service in the Arctic under the most primitive and unsanitary conditions unless dictated by urgent and imperative military necessity. Allies have not been received with the hospitality the object of this expedition warranted. A certain amount of distrust of motive evidently permeates Russian mind. The original object of this expedition no longer exists. The winter port of Archangel will be practicable for navigation twenty to thirty days longer and then closes until June. My inference is plain. Immediate consideration requested. Stewart ²⁸

Stewart saw the problems that would come about with the onset of winter. He also felt that with the signing of the armistice on 11 November any reason for remaining in North Russia was voided. The war was over on the Western Front and the Germans no longer posed a threat to the Allies or their supplies. Stewart's apparent motive in sending the message of 14 November was to force a decision on evacuation before the port of Archangel was frozen for the winter of 1918-1919. Stewart received a reply on 1 December stating that the disposition of troops in North Russia was going to be discussed upon the convening of the peace conference and that the British felt that the port would be open until December. Once the port was closed it would be feasible to withdraw through Murmansk.²⁹

The Americans were not the only Allied force questioning the reasons for continued fighting after the armistice. The French, upon hearing of the cessation of fighting on the Western Front, refused to continue to perform combat duties. The commander of the French forces, Commandant Lucas, convinced

the French troops that the Americans could not hold off the Russians without the assistance of the French soldiers. Because the French and Americans admired and respected each other, the French responded and took up their arms.

As mentioned previously, the 21st Colonial was reconstituted after it was virtually destroyed in France. Many of the men who filled the battalion's ranks were not volunteers or were taken from other units in the French Army. Many of the men, like those in the British contingent, had been wounded or suffered from serious ailments and were not fit for active combat duty. In spite of these shortcomings, the unit fought bravely in the period prior to the armistice.

As the Russian winter approached, the French soldiers began to complain, like the Americans, that the British supplied their own troops with better food, equipment, and health care than their allies. The French also complained about the British operated mail service and lack of information from France. The British reply to all of these charges was that they treated all of the Allied forces in the same manner.

Another problem was the very high incidence of venereal disease among the French troops. From December 1918 through May 1919 there were 109 cases of venereal disease verses 38 other non-combat related illnesses. The reason for this high rate, according to the French, was the refusal on the part of British Headquarters to allow the operation of prostitutes, inspected and supervised by the French military authorities.

This activity, routinely accepted by the French, was designed to keep up the French morale while controlling disease. The British disapproval was seen by the French as a ridiculous obstacle to good health and cheerfulness.

Finally, when a battalion of Yorkshires staged a short mutiny and the British blamed the incident on the bad example of the French troops, the French military and government reacted. The French cited all of the previous accusations and said the absence of a formal declaration of war against the Russians, argued against the French being in North Russia. In addition to these accusations a French politician claimed that the American troops were "totally contaminated by Bolshevik ideas", and in turn set a bad example for the French troops.³⁰ The Americans returned the favor by claiming that it was the French, not the Yanks, who were contaminated. For the most part, the Americans and French got along well at the individual soldier level. One member of the 339th remembered the French as:

...those 'mah-sheen' gunners in blue on the railroad who stroked their field pets with pride and poured steady lines of fire into the pine woods where lay the Reds who were encircling the Americans with rifle and machinegun fire. How the Yankee soldiers liked them. And many a pleasant draught they had from the big pinaud canteen that always came fresh from the huge cask. How courteously they taught the doughboy machine gunner the little arts of digging in and rejoiced at the rapid progress of the American.³¹

The Canadians were appreciated and liked by all of the Allies. This could have been because they had traditional ties with each of the major members of the expedition or

because they were a relatively small unit that provided the most critical element of combat support—artillery.

The Canadian opinion of the American soldier was, in many respects, the same as the British view. The commanding officer of the 68th Battery, Major Walter Hyde, admired the Americans as good allies, but felt that; "the new, untried infantry with whom we are associated in our work, were very green and it was very difficult to arrive at a proper understanding of conditions."³²

On the other hand, the Americans looked on the Canadians as

"tough gunners seasoned and scarred by four years of barrages and bombardments in France, rather keen for the adventure of North Russia while fighting was on and thoroughly 'fed up' when there was a lull in the excitement."³³

One of the traits that the Americans did not admire in the Canadians was their propensity to strip the Russian dead of anything of value, such as boots and high fur hats. One American officer observed that the Canadians were like,

"school boys on a hilarious holiday. Yet there was nothing debased or vicious about these Canadians. They were undeliberate, unpremeditated murderers, who had learned well the nice lessons of war and looked upon killing as the climax of a day's adventure, a welcomed break in the tedium of the dull military routine. Generous hearted, hardy, wholesouled murderers...."³⁴

The relations between the Canadians and British were usually good, primarily because of the traditional cultural and political ties the two countries enjoyed. The one exception

occurred in early March, 1919, following a mutiny by the Yorkshires and French and an alleged refusal of the Americans to return to duty at the front. The Canadians, normally congenial to British command authority, began to complain because they were not granted the same allowances as the British. In April, General Ironside corrected the situation and stated; "The Canadians out here, especially the Artillery Brigade, have been the backbone of the expedition."³⁵

It is possible that this incident led Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden to inform British Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill, on 18 May, that:

"Beyond question it is imperative that the Canadian Forces now at Archangel should be withdrawn without delay. Many of these troops were sent in the first instance for instructional purposes. Doubtless they have not objected to the active service which has been substituted for the original purpose. Recently, there has been unfortunate evidence of keen resentment on their part. ...However, I have no right to speak for the others but I do insist that the Canadians shall be withdrawn immediately."³⁶

Within three weeks, on 11 June, the Canadians were on their way home from North Russia.

The relationships between the major Allied participants were determined by several factors. Among these were; the cloudy command arrangement which caused misunderstanding and resentment, the individual personalities of the military and political leaders involved in the expedition, the basic

cultural and social differences between the Allies, and the varied and differing objectives that each nation understood as the reason for military action in North Russia.

For Generals Poole and Ironside there was no question of who was in command of the Allied Forces. From their point of view, they had been given the mission to lead an Allied expedition by the Permanent Military Representatives. Inherent in that task was the tactical employment, organization, administration, and supply of those forces assigned. Those forces would react to British prerogatives and the commanders of those forces would be subject to the same authority as if they were officers in the English Army. The American perspective was slightly different. Apparently, it was President Wilson's intent to satisfy the demands of the British by sending American Forces to the North Russian Expeditionary Force. But, at the same time, he sought to have some civilian control of the operational aspects of the campaign by instructing March to inform the American commander to stay "in close touch" with the American Ambassador. Consequently, the American President had created a command relationship that would allow United States Army troops to be used in offensive operations against Russian soldiers, commanded by British officers. At the same time, he forced the local commander into a position where he was responsible to the senior military officer of an Allied nation, and also the senior American political officer present. In essence, the commander of the American Forces was in an impossible situation.

The personalities of the commanders and politicians involved played a critical part in the Allied coalition. The British, and especially General Poole, tended to be overbearing and overconfident. One American officer noted that the

...philosophy of North Russia and Gallipoli; this attachment of the British mind to an astricted faith in England and her imperial destiny to rule the peoples of the world, contemptuous of obstacles and difficulties and perils in unknown alien lands that appear very real to other than British mental processes. 'We'll just rush up there and reestablish the great Russian Army - reorganize the vast forces of the Tsar', said an ebullient officer in England, wearing the red tabs and hatband of the General Staff. 'One good Allied soldier can outfight twenty Bolsheviks' was the usual boast of the commanding officer (General Poole) in the early days of the fighting."³⁷

The Americans, on the other hand, were initially represented by the equally forceful Ambassador Francis. After his departure, the submissive Colonel Stewart was all that stood between the British offensive plans and the stated policy of using American troops for garrison guards in Archangel. It is easy to be critical of Colonel Stewart who, in the words of General Ironside "...was worrying about his position, should an armistice be signed in Europe." To be fair, one must acknowledge that the American colonel had the insight and concern for his troops to request evacuation before the closing of the ports. It appears that he attempted to inform his superiors in London of the military and political realities of Archangel but either did not do it forthrightly enough out of respect for his superiors or was so overwhelmed by circumstances that he was unable to clearly articulate in the facts

of the moment.

The basic cultural and social differences between the Allies had a great impact on the relations between the military forces. The highly structured system of the British officer corps, with its obvious class consciousness and social strata orientation, contrasted sharply with the more analogous American and French traditions. The idea of taking food from hospital rations and providing it to an officer's mess was not only alien to the American concept of concern for the common soldier, but reminded many of the American troops of abuses that had occurred earlier in United States' history. The French also had difficulties with the British approach to certain questions of social or political significance. These disparities stemmed from long standing customs and traditions as well as the political climate that had influenced the French Army during the years since 1914.

Finally, the relations between the Allies were affected by the perceptions of national objectives by those personalities most directly involved in the conduct of the expedition. The original aims of an Allied-Czech link-up operation, security of Allied supplies, and development of an Eastern Front against the Germans no longer had application after the signing of the armistice. Almost immediately the Americans and French questioned the need to remain in North Russia and either refused to continue the fight or requested evacuation. The British position was expressed by General Finlayson, commander of the Dvina River

Force. "There will be no faltering in our purpose to remove the stain of Bolshevism from Russia and civilization."³⁸ General Ironside saw his mission, after the armistice, in the following terms:

"It seemed to me that the Allies would now proceed with the liberation of Finland, Poland, Esthonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and perhaps even the Ukraine. The new Russian Empire which would emerge would be something much smaller than it had been in the old imperial days, however strong the Bolsheviks became. My task was still the one outlined to me by Sir Henry Wilson - to hold the fort until the Provisional Government could organize its forces. A proper settlement of the Russian frontiers in Europe could be made only after the defeat of the Bolsheviks."³⁹

It is not surprising, considering the many opportunities for misunderstanding, disagreement, and confusion, that the Allies failed to produce a united, harmonious coalition. It is also not surprising that the complexities of the command relationships, personalities, national characteristics, and strategic and political objectives all impacted upon the combat effectiveness and efficiency of the Allied elements. Ultimately, these problems influenced the success of military operations, our next area of interest.

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Chapter Three

Allied Military Operations

A participant in the North Russian expedition described the Archangel area in the following manner:

The Province of Archangel stretches from the Norwegian frontier across the Arctic Ocean east of the Ural Mountains of Siberia. It includes the Kola Peninsula, which lies well north of the Arctic Circle, and the furthest point south is below sixty-two degrees latitude. The total area is six times that of the average American state. It is a poverty distressed and cheerless, destitute region, which during the reign of the Romanoffs, like Siberia, was often a place of exile and asylum for political dissidents. War accentuated the poverty of the province and the only industry is at the port of Archangel, where large timber mills, owned mostly by British capital, line both sides of the harbor.

This same observer explained how Ivan The Terrible founded the port during the sixteenth century. It had, since that time, been a British trading post. Archangel was a city of stark contrasts. Greek Orthodox priests, with their long robes, and the onion domed cathedral, shared the same streets with modern buildings, electric lights, and an up-to-date tramway. Before the war Archangel Province had about three hundred and fifty thousand people, with about sixty thousand residing in the city of Archangel. The only other population centers of consequence were Pinega, at the northernmost bend in the Pinega River, with perhaps three thousand inhabitants, and Shenkursk, two hundred miles south of Archangel on the Vaga River, with

about four thousand residents. The remainder of the Province's populace were found in small villages of two or three hundred log houses, much like the cabins of the American frontier.

The inhabitants of these small settlements were primarily peasants, or moujiks, who cleared the area for a few hundred yards around their houses and attempted to grow wheat, flax, and potatoes during the short growing season. During the winter the people remained indoors and spent the majority of their time sitting around large ovens or fireplaces, discussing the weather. One officer of the 339th Infantry Regiment noted:

To the doughboy penetrating rapidly into the interior of North Russia, whether by railroad or by barge or by more slow-moving cart transport, his first impression was that of an endless expanse of forest and swamp with here and there an area of higher land. Never a long peasant's house on the trail was seen. They lived in villages. Few were the improved roads. These roads ran from village to village through pine woods, crossing streams and wide rivers by wooden bridges and crossing swamps, where it was too much to circuit them, by corduroy. The soldier saw a people struggling with nature as he had heard of his grandfathers struggling in pioneer days in America.²

Archangel Province was approximately three hundred and thirty thousand square miles of tundra and thick fir forests; an area almost as large as France and Germany combined. Through the province cut numerous rivers and streams, the largest being the Dvina. Archangel, like the rest of North Russia, was not industrialized. The people were primarily occupied with fishing, trapping, farming, and woodcutting. The climate was humid and warm in the summer and sub-zero in the long

winter. Starting in October the nights lengthen until, by late December they are almost twenty-four hours long. conversely, during the summer months, periods of sunlight last from early morning until late at night. John Cudahy, an American officer on the Archangel front, wrote:

"Life became a very stale, flat drab thing in the vast stretches of cheerless snow reaching far across the river to the murky, brooding skies and the encompassing sheeted forests, so ghostly and so still, where death prowled in the shadows. Strong men were made cowards by the cumulative depression of the unbroken night and its crushing influence on the spirit: for the severest battles of the campaign were fought during the cold black months of winter."³

The nature of the terrain and weather was to have an important impact on the ultimate outcome of the Allied operations. The Allies believed offensive operations had to be conducted either prior to the closing of the port in late November or following the spring thaw in late March. Once the harbor was iced in for the winter there would be no resupply or reinforcement from England, and in order to conduct offensive operations, a constant and reliable supply of men and materiel must be available. The winter freeze also prohibited the movement of British gunboats on the rivers upstream from Archangel. This effectively denied the Allies a primary source of fire support and transport at the most remote positions. This reduction of fire support and mobility, resulting from the severe winter conditions, became one of the prime factors determining the tactics and overall strategy of

the winter campaign of 1918-1919.

In the opening days of October, 1918, the Allied positions resembled the five fingers of a hand with the palm at Archangel. From east to west the small finger reached Pinega on the Pinega River; the second, Toulgas on the Dvina River; the third, Shenkursk on the Vaga River; the index finger, Obozerskaya, on the Archangel-Vologada railway; and the thumb, Onega, on Onega Bay of the White Sea. There was little communication or contact between the outlying positions. Each "front" as it was called, was in fact an advance post of a series of blockhouses, somewhat like the small wooden forts of the American frontier. These outposts were usually grouped around a village or group of small towns like Shenkursk. Between the "fronts" was an almost impassable barrier of forest, brush, and swamp-like tundra with numerous small streams and lakes interspersed.

Between September and October the Allies had moved rapidly out from Archangel in an attempt to drive the Bolsheviks out of Archangel Province before the onset of winter. General Poole, despite his lack of political finesse, was a good tactician and recognized what must be accomplished if his forces were to push south from Archangel and still be able to maintain contact between his flank elements and a certain degree of rear area security at Archangel. He was aware that as the fingers between the railroad and Dvina fronts opened he was offering the enemy an opportunity to strike through the middle

and either envelop his flanks or drive straight to Archangel itself. The Emtsa River served as an east-west barrier between the railroad front and Dvina front and the small river town of Kodish was the key point that would serve to protect his flanks. Poole also recognized that Bereznik, at the junction of the Vaga and Dvina Rivers was vulnerable to a Red attack and, if captured, would cut off his forces to the south. Therefore, it must be secured as soon as possible.

The idea of taking Vologda before winter was abandoned early in the campaign. Poole decided instead to take Plesetskaya, a rail center halfway between Archangel and Vologda. Although the terrain was difficult and the Allies were numerically inferior, Poole's plan was well conceived and by the time winter arrived the Allies held Onega in the west, Obozerskaya on the railroad, Kodish on the Emtsa, Shenkursk on the Vaga and Toulgas on the Dvina.⁴

On 5 September the 3rd Battalion of the 339th Infantry Regiment had moved, at British insistence, directly from the docks of Archangel to the railroad front. After an all-night train ride, the battalion arrived at Obozerskaya where they were to relieve the advance elements of the French 21st Colonial Battalion. A member of the American unit noted:

Obozerskaya, about one hundred miles south of Archangel, in a few days took on the appearance of an active field base for aggressive advance on the enemy. Here were the rapid assembling of fighting units; of transport and supply units; of railroad repairing crews, Russian, under British officers; of signals;

of armored automobile, our nearest approach to a tank, which stuck in the mud and broke through the frail Russki bridges and was useless; of the feverish clearing and smoothing of a landing field near the station for our supply of spavined airplanes that had already done their bit on the Western Front; of the improvement of our ferocious-looking armored train, with its coal-car mounted naval guns, buttressed with sand bags and preceded by a similar car bristling with machine guns and Lewis automatics in the hands of a motley crew of Polish gunners and Russki gunners and a British sergeant or two.⁵

"All patrols must be aggressive and it must be impressed on all ranks that we are fighting an offensive war, and not a defensive one. All posts must be held to the last as we do not intend to give up any ground which we have made good."⁶

These orders from Colonel Guard, British commander of "A" Force on the railroad front, were intended to satisfy General Finlayson and Colonel Sutherland, Poole's deputy and front commander. The growing American and French graveyards at Obozerskaya verified the offensive nature of the battles on the railroad front.

On 28 September, Finlayson appeared at Sutherland's headquarters and, apparently not satisfied with the tempo of combat, ordered an immediate advance down the railroad to Versts 453 and 455, about ten miles south of Obozerskaya.

Sutherland tasked one company of French infantry and two companies of American infantry, supported by Polish gunners manning field guns and the armored train to make a coordinated attack on the Russian positions and seize a key railroad bridge.

Major Charles D. Young was in charge of the 3rd Battalion, and in accordance with Sutherland's plan, divided two of his companies into separate forces to conduct a converging flank attack on the Red positions. He also detached a machine gun section and twenty-one other Americans to man three Stokes mortars to support the French, who were to attack directly down the railroad. It is noted that the Americans assigned the mission of manning the Stokes mortars had never used or been trained on these weapons prior to this occasion.⁷

The Americans were to move into their attack positions during the night and commence the assault at first light. At the same time, the Poles and Americans would support the French infantry by fire as they made a frontal assault, down the railway, on the enemy fortifications and bridge.

Sutherland's plan seemed simple enough in concept, but the execution was to prove too complex and hence a failure. A reconnaissance of the route the Americans were to take to the assault positions had not been performed because of the short notice given the Americans by Colonel Sutherland. Only outdated forester's maps were available and the most accurate intelligence on the enemy troop dispositions had been provided by local woodcutters who were at best disinterested and at worst pro-Bolshevik.⁸ An American officer notes:

"It is a story that was to be duplicated over and over by one American force after another on the various fronts in the rainy fall season, operating under British officers who took desperate chances and acted on the theory that 'you Americans,' as

Col. Sutherland said, 'can do it somehow, you know.' And as to numbers, why, 'ten Americans are as good as a hundred Bolos, aren't they?'"⁹

The Americans moved out in the early evening and soon became lost. The narrow forest trails, cut by the engineers of Peter the Great, quickly became deep with clinging, slimy mud and bog that forced men to their knees. One of the officers present recounts:

So the attackers went forth over unknown ground, and soon were stumbling in a blackness so dense that one file could not see even the outline of the preceding file. The sinking bog made the march distressingly arduous, yet for hours the company kept resolutely on, when, without warning, the forest parted and the sodden way terminated in a wide sheet of open water.¹⁰

The Americans turned back and reappeared on the railroad, near their original point of departure, at about 0630 hours on the morning of 29 September. Major Young recorded in his after-action report that:

The attack was made at about 0630. Few of the enemy were met and they immediately retired. The information received by Lieut. May, commanding this column, from the adjutant, 'A' force, (Capt. Griffen, British Army) as to locations of machinegun emplacements and trenches was found to be inaccurate, and there was a lack of initiative on the part of the officer in command, (Griffen) in that he did not immediately, by reconnaissance, inform himself as to the exact location of the positions.¹¹

The French attack, supported by the Polish and American gunners, succeeded in driving the Reds out of their position but, as soon as the artillery ceased, the enemy returned to occupy their entrenchments. A platoon from "I" Company was dispatched to reinforce the French and was immediately

attacked by the Russians. Two platoons from "M" Company moved forward along with the remainder of "I" Company and the enemy was turned back by 1500 hours. The Allies had taken the bridge despite the failure of Sutherland's original plan.

The action resulted in 2 Americans killed, 18 wounded, and 11 missing. French troops suffered: 11 wounded, and 11 missing. Several of the American and French soldiers reported as missing were, in fact, captured by the enemy during one of the fierce Russian counterattacks. According to Captain Joel Moore, commander of one of the elements attempting the unsuccessful flanking attack:

Many of the casualties were suffered by the resolute platoon at the bridge. But the eight others who were wounded, two of them mortally, owed their unfortunate condition to the altogether unnecessary and ill-advised attempt by Col. Sutherland to shell the bridge which was being held by his own troops. He had the panicky idea that the Red Guards were coming or going to come across that bridge and ordered the shrapnel which cut up the platoon of "M" Company with its hail of lead instead of the Reds who had halted 700 yards away and themselves were shelling the bridge but to no effect. Not only that, but when Col. Sutherland was informed that his artillery was getting his own troops, he first asked on one telephone for another quart of whiskey and later called up his artillery officer and ordered the deadly fire to lengthen range.¹²

At this point Colonel Sutherland ordered a withdrawal, thinking that the Reds had captured the railroad bridge. Major J. Brooks Nichols, who had just replaced Major Young as the commander of the 3rd Battalion, countermanded the order and for two more days and nights, with the assistance of the French, held on to the three miles of advance that

had been gained. The Reds would have to wait until the following year to regain control of the bridge.¹³

The advance on Plesetskaya began to slow in October. The Allies attempted to push south along the railroad but discovered that the Reds had constructed strong fortifications and were supported by heavy artillery and armored trains. They also began to understand that the terrain in North Russia gave a distinct advantage to the defender. The heavy forests, swamp bogs, and meandering streams and trails severely restricted crosscountry movement and forced the attacker to remain on the major rivers and roads. The difficult terrain also provided ideal locations and materiel for defensive positions that were formidable against even a numerically superior foe.

On 16 October the enemy counterattacked against "I" Company of the 3rd Battalion in the vicinity of verst 445 and inflicted moderate casualties. In this action the French refused to fight because they had gotten word of the proposed armistice of the Western Front. After about one hour the French, at the urging of their battalion commander, rejoined the Americans. The French were considered excellent fighters by the Americans and British, but had a tendency to balk at awkward times. As the armistice came and went, this propensity became more frequent.¹⁴

The Archangel-Vologda front would essentially stabilize in October, 1918, and remain so until the spring of 1919. The Allies would not be able to advance any further than verst 445,

about twenty miles south of Obozerskaya. There would be many small unit actions with minor gains and losses, usually resulting in the consolidation of a formally occupied position.

The Soviets struck the first blow of spring on March 17, at the village of Bolshie Ozerki on the road between Obozerskaya and Onega. The motive behind the enemy offensive was the prevention of resupply from Murmansk and to produce a threat to the Allied rear at Obozerskaya.

Bolshie Ozerki, located about twenty miles west of Obozerskaya, was garrisoned by a small French, American, and Allied Russian force. By coincidence, Colonel Lucas, the French commandant and Railroad Front Commander, was at Chekuevo, located between Bolshie Ozerki and Obozerskaya, when the assault came. Lucas, escorted by an American patrol, departed immediately for Obozerskaya. About one verst outside of Obozerskaya the patrol was attacked and dispersed. Lucas arrived in Obozerskaya the next day with a frostbitten left hand and was informed that General Ironside had relieved him and was taking charge of the operation.¹⁵

The attack at Bolshie Ozerki caught the Allied force of about 50 men by complete surprise. On 18 March, about 1200 hours, the French officer in charge surrendered the garrison after a well coordinated enemy artillery and infantry attack. The Allied prisoners were taken to Vologda and held until early May when they were released as part of a prisoner exchange.¹⁶

Both the Allies and the Soviets brought up substantial amounts of infantry and artillery for the coming battle. General Ironside committed nearly 600 American, British, French, Polish, and Allied Russian troops. By 23 March, when the Soviets began their main attack, the Allies were well dug in, thoroughly supplied with food and ammunition, and supported by French-Russian artillery pieces with airplane observation.¹⁷

The Soviet assault, conducted by the 2nd Moscow, 96th Saratov, and 2nd Kazan Regiments, continued until 4 April. After a series of savage attacks, counter-attacks, and artillery duels, the enemy retired. The battle was the high point of Allied cooperation and coordination and proved to be very costly to the Soviets. The intensity of combat was consistently fierce and one observer noted:

The Americans had never had such shooting. They knew the enemy losses were great from the numbers of bodies found and from statements of prisoners and deserters. Later accounts of our American soldiers who were ambushed and captured, together with statements that appeared in Bolshevik newspapers placed the losses very high. The old Russian general massed up in all over seven thousand men in this spectacular and well-nigh successful thrust. And his losses from killed in action, wounded, missing and frost bitten were admitted by the Bolshevik reports to be over two thousand.¹⁸

The only note of Allied discord occurred when some Polish troops refused to advance against the Soviets. An American officer present drew his pistol, threatened to shoot the Polish officers, and the unit took up the attack without further hesitation.¹⁹

Bolshie Ozerki was the last major battle for the Ameri-

cans in North Russia. Artillery exchanges and patrolling action continued until April, but larger scale troop movements were restricted by the coming of spring and subsequent soggy ground conditions. Although official orders had not arrived, the withdrawal of American forces seemed assured. Consequently, the companies of the 339th began pulling back to Archangel and were replaced by Allied Russians trained and commanded by the British.

General Poole viewed the force on the Dvina River as the key to the entire campaign in North Russia. He felt that Kotlas must be taken prior to the onset of winter in order to move on to Viatka and a link up with the Czech Corps in the spring. In September, when the 339th Infantry arrived in Archangel, Poole already had a force located at Bereznik, 150 miles southeast of Archangel on the Dvina River. From Bereznik, located at the junction of the Dvina and the Vaga rivers, it was about 250 miles to Kotlas. Poole's "C" Force, composed of 660 British infantry, 110 Russian infantry, 33 Lithuanian infantry, and one section of 18 pounders, manned by Russian gunners, was opposed by about 2000 Red Guards headquartered at Toulgas, 40 miles upstream from Bereznik.

Five days after departing Archangel, the men of the 1st Battalion, 339th Infantry arrived at Bereznik. Enroute, two doughboys died of influenza and were buried upon arrival at the river village that served as headquarters for "C" Force.

One company of Americans was left at Bereznik for security and the remainder of the force moved south along the Dvina and Vaga rivers to join the "C" Force. The enemy decided to make his stand at Seltzo, thirty miles upstream from Bereznik and well over two hundred miles southeast of Archangel. This was to be the limit of the Allied advance on the Dvina River.

On the morning of 19 September, less than two weeks after the arrival of the Americans, the battle for Seltzo began. The village sat near the Dvina, on the southwestern side of the river, surrounded by swamp and peat bogs. The only easy approach was along a narrow road that paralleled the river and entered the village from the north. The enemy denied this approach by flooding it and forced the Allies to attack across the open swamp. One company of American infantry deployed and began to wade through the waist deep marsh. About 1500 yards from the village the Soviets opened up with machineguns and artillery. Without maps, artillery support, or protective cover, the Americans bunched together and tried to dig in without drowning in the mud.²⁰

Another company of Royal Scots and Americans moved through a woodline on the flank of the village in an attempt to assist the Americans caught in the open. The flanking force was taken under fire by the Red artillery and forced to take cover to avoid destruction. As night arrived, the two Allied elements found themselves pinned down by Soviet automatic weapons and indirect fire and unable to return the favor. Because

of the American's position in the open swamp, each time they attempted to maneuver or take the enemy under fire, they were subjected to intense small arms and machinegun fire. Also, the Allies had no artillery available for their own use.

The 1st Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel James Corbley, had been absent from the entire fight. For the better part of the day, and into the night, he was trying to get the Allied Russian artillery, led by British officers, to move up and support the trapped infantry elements. After spending an entire night caught in the open, the Americans finally were able to maneuver towards the village when the Allied artillery began to fire. At the same time, the Allies took several Soviet gunboats that had been providing the enemy with effective support since the start of the battle under fire. With their indirect fire support falling on Seltzo, the Allies advanced and drove out those Red Guards that had not already evacuated. Now however, the Americans and Scots were taken under fire by the gunboats that proved to be beyond the range of the Allied artillery.²¹

The Allies quickly abandoned Seltzo the morning after the attack and moved downstream toward Toulgas. This decision was made by the British command based on information that the population of Shenkursk desired a large Allied force to be present during the winter to hold off the Soviets. The fact that the Allies were obviously outgunned on the Dvina might have also had some bearing on the decision. The lack of British

naval support on the Dvina was a result of a staff decision made in Archangel. The British monitors had been withdrawn, fearful of being caught by the ice that was expected to begin forming in October but actually did not come until mid-November. The withdrawal of the monitors had been ordered by Poole's staff without the knowledge of the "C" Force Headquarters. Consequently, the gunboats were not available for fire support or transport of the Seltzo force following the battle. Many of the Allied soldiers were suffering from trench foot and wounds but had to be carried out or walk under their own power because of the departure of the gunboats. General Ironside, who was General Poole's deputy at the time, records:

...I received an urgent telegram from General Finlayson. Apparently, on his arrival at the Dvina headquarters he had found that the British gunboats on the river had been withdrawn ...without notification having been made to the commander on the spot. The Bolshevik ships...had suddenly returned...and subjected our defences to a heavy bombardment....The enemy ships had stood outside the range of our field-guns and much of our precious winter cover had been destroyed. I took the telegram over to General Poole, who sent for the admiral to come and explain. There followed a somewhat heated argument, which ended in the admiral producing a paper from headquarters, authorizing the withdrawal of the gunboats....The staff had omitted to inform the Dvina Column.²²

The Dvina front evidenced some of the same characteristics as the railroad front. On both fronts there would be fierce fighting with a variety of weapons, alternate advance and retreat, and daily casualties. When the two sides met, they fought with everything they had including, in August,

1919, mustard and lachrymatory gas.²³ The primary difference between the two fronts was the total isolation experienced on the Dvina front during the winter. With the freezing of the rivers, transportation was limited to the horse drawn sled or "Drosky". The extreme length of lines of communication and the ubiquitous nature of the enemy made duty on the Dvina and Vaga river fronts lonely and perilous.

At the same time the Seltzo operation was taking place against stiff Soviet opposition, two platoons of A Company, 339th Infantry entered Shenkursk without firing a shot. Shenkursk was the second largest city in the Province and occupied a commanding position on a high bluff above the Vaga River. Its four thousand citizens were thought to be anti-Bolshevik primarily because of their prosperity and social links with the Moscow aristocrats. Shenkursk had been a favorite summer resort before the war and was "a generation removed from moujik poverty and enchaining ignorance, and consciously superior to the humble log huts that below north and south trailed the river."²⁴

On 19 September a reconnaissance element continued south along the Vaga to locate the enemy. At Rodvino, a small village ten miles from Shenkursk, the force of about 100 Americans and 50 Allied Russians came under fire from both sides of the river. The Allied force's paddleboat was hit and beached almost immediately. Captain Otto Odjard, the American commander, ordered an attack across the beach and drove off the Red

forces through a combination of surprise and audacity rather than superior numbers or firepower.

Odjard's Allied force continued to push out from Shenkursk in an effort to secure the area around this important river city. As winter approached, and the prospect of the freeze became more imminent, the security element was forced to withdraw to Ust Padenga, a small village fifteen miles south of Shenkursk. This village was to be the farthest penetration of the main body of the Allied Expeditionary Force.

Fall ended with General Poole failing to obtain any of his objectives. "A" Force, on the Archangel-Vologda railway, was halted near Obozerskaya, 80 miles short of Plesetskaya and almost 200 miles from their original objective of Vologda. On the Dvina, "C" Force had taken Seltzo, then withdrawn to Toulgas, and was nearly 200 miles from Kotlas, its first goal. Between "A" and "C" Forces a group of British, American, French, and Allied Russians were fighting near Kodish on the Emtsa River. This Allied element, "B" Force, was under the command of Colonel Henderson of the famous "Black Watch" Regiment. During the later part of September it fought numerous small but bitter engagements to secure the vulnerable center against enemy probes.

At the same time that these bloody actions were taking place near Archangel, Secretary of State Robert Lansing was concluding that military activities in North Russia were

futile. On 26 September, Lansing cabled Ambassador Francis:

It is in the opinion of the Government of the United States plain that no gathering of any effective forces by the Russians is hoped for. We shall insist that the other governments, so far as our cooperation is concerned, that all military effort in Northern Russia be given up, except the guarding of the ports themselves and as much country round about them as may develop threatening conditions.²⁵

Despite this clarification of the American role, United States forces were fighting deep in the interior of Russia and would continue to fight until 1919. Ambassador Francis, heedless of Lansing's instructions, allowed British commanders to use American troops with little or no regard for Colonel Stewart's position as the commander of United States Forces. Francis, who harbored an intense personal hatred for Bolshevism, states:

I shall encourage American troops to proceed to such points in the interior as Kotlas, Sukhona, and Vologda as at those places, as well as Petrograd and Moscow, are stored war supplies which the Soviet Government, in violation of its promises and agreements, transferred from Archangel. Furthermore I shall encourage American troops to obey the commands of General Poole in his effort to effect a junction with the Czechoslovaks and to relieve them from the menace which surrounds them; that menace is nominally Bolsheviks but is virtually inspired and directed by Germany.²⁶

The threat from Germany was officially ended on 11 November, 1918, with the signing of the armistice. This date was also the beginning of the winter campaign in North Russia. General Poole departed for England on 14 October and General Ironside became the acting Commander-in-Chief believing that

if Poole returned at all, it wouldn't be until after the spring thaw. Ironside who, unlike Poole, had made numerous visits to the front understood the military problems that had been left to him. He saw the futility of attempting a link up with the Czechs and determined that his most immediate task was to establish tenable defensive positions for the winter. Shelter and protection for his troops were his biggest problems, and he decided that a series of log blockhouses, protected by barbed-wire and manned by machinegun crews should be established before the onset of winter. He also realized that a large scale commitment of Allied troops from the home countries was highly unlikely and that his long range plans should provide for the eventual evacuation of Allied forces from North Russia. With these factors in mind, Ironside issued orders to each of his forces to prepare for defensive operations during the winter months.

On 11 November, while the rest of the western world was rejoicing in the news of the armistice on the Western Front, B Company, 339th Infantry, a company of Royal Scots, and a section of Canadian Artillery were fighting a desperate battle on the Dvina River, at Toulgas, some fifty miles south of Bereznik.²⁷ One American officer explains, "Toulgas was the duplicate of thousands of similar villages throughout this province. It consisted of a group of low, dirty log houses huddled together on a hill, sloping down to a broad plain...."²⁸ The same officer recounts the commencement of the battle:

On the morning of November 11th while some of the men were still engaged in eating their breakfasts and while the positions were only about half manned, suddenly from the forests surrounding the upper village the enemy emerged in attack formation. All hands were immediately mustered into position to repel this advancing wave of infantry. In the meantime the Bolo attacked with about five hundred men from our rear, having made a three day march through what had been reported as impassable swamp. Hundreds of the enemy appeared as if by magic from the forests, swarmed in upon the hospital village and immediately took possession. Immediately the hospital village was in their hands, the Bolo then commenced a desperate advance upon our guns.²⁹

The Soviets deployed into squad attack formations and began their assault on the Allied positions. An American Lewis gun crew opened fire and slowed the attackers until the Canadian gunners could swing their weapons about to face the enemy. First Lieutenant John Cudahy, a platoon leader in B Company, describes the Canadian actions:

They swore fine, full chested, Canadian blasphemies that were a glory to hear, crammed shrapnel into their guns, and turned terrible blasts into the incoming masses that exploded among them and shattered them into ghastly dismembered corpses and hurled blood and human flesh wide in the air in sickening, splattering atoms. The more weight of those approaching great numbers would have shaken and turned ordinary troops, for the onslaught was not stopped until less than fifty yards from the guns; but the Canadians were not ordinary men and they gave not the slightest hope of being turned.³⁰

The fight for Toulgas lasted four days and the tide of battle flowed alternately in favor of the Allies and the Reds. On the second day of the engagement the Soviets brought five gunboats down river from Seltzo and shelled the Allied positions with relative impunity from the shorter-range Canadian 75's. On the morning of the fourth day two platoons of Amer-

icans, led by Lieutenant Cudahy, made a counterattack on the main enemy force. While the Royal Scots held the primary Allied positions and provided a base of fire, the Americans maneuvered through the thick fir forest in a surprise flank attack. Taking full advantage of their unexpected assault, the small American element set the enemy observation posts afire and the resulting explosions deceived the Red Guards as to the actual size and strength of the Allied force. Consequently, the Soviets fled in panic before what they apparently thought was at least an Allied regiment. Cudahy remarks:

The Americans dared not pursue, for to do so would have revealed their true strength, and they were outnumbered four to one. Besides, they were too elated at being rid of the enemy to give him the chance to return to the attack. They contented themselves with taking prisoner those stragglers who could not keep pace with the leaderless rabble that dispersed into the forest.³¹

The Allies had successfully held off a major Soviet attack, allegedly led by Trotsky himself, and had killed Chief Commander Foukes, one of the ablest Red Guard leaders.³² In addition to a great number of dead, wounded, and captured, the Soviets lost the will to fight, at least for the moment. The Allies had suffered about one hundred casualties out of their six hundred man force, with the Royal Scots taking the worst punishment. The majority of the Allied killed and wounded were the result of enemy shelling rather than small arms fire. Lieutenant Cudahy explains that:

"It was noon when the blockhouse was hit. It crumpled like paper under the impact, and one

man, drenched with a welter of blood, was seen to drag himself from the wreckage and crawl back to the priest's house. Shells, tossing geysers of dirt and debris, struck all around, and ploughed a deep circular furrow within a radius of five yards of the death house, where seven Americans sat with blanched faces and set teeth, counting the seconds between the hideous successive whine of the plunging shells, and waiting silently for certain destruction."³³

The northern half of Toulgas was burned because the Allies did not have enough men to occupy the entire village and because an attacker could use the small houses for outposts and cover in the event of a renewed assault. An observer describes the destruction of the hamlet:

The first snow floated down from a dark foreboding sky, dread announcer of a cruel arctic winter. Soon the houses were roaring flames. The woman sat upon hand-fashioned crates wherein were all their most prized household goods, and abandoned themselves to a paroxysm of weeping despair, while the children shrieked stridently, victim of all the realistic horrors that only childhood can conjure. Nitchevoo, fate had decreed that they should suffer this burden, and so they accepted it without question. But when we thought of the brave chaps whose lives had been taken from those flaming homes, for our casualties had been heavy, nearly one hundred men killed and wounded, we stifled our compassion and looked on the blazing scene as a jubilant bonfire.³⁴

Following the Toulgas battle the enemy made periodic probes to test the constantly improving Allied defenses. During December the 310th Engineers assisted the infantry and artillery in the construction of winter quarters and fortifications. The Soviets attempted a major attack in late January, 1919, and again in February, but were driven off by the Allies on both occasions.

The supremacy of the defense was becoming evident as winter arrived in North Russia. With the advantage of large, well built and supplied log blockhouses, surrounded by barbed wire and protected by several machine guns, the Allies could effectively hold off the numerically superior enemy. Despite the Soviets advantage in large caliber artillery, the extreme cold and deep snow made offensive operations almost impossible. When an attack was attempted the results were usually inconclusive and cost the force conducting the offensive action an excessive number of casualties.

The resourcefulness of the Americans was also becoming very obvious. An officer noted:

In a few hours - or few days at most, the Americans soldier would have dug in securely and made himself rudely comfortable. That rude comfort would last till some British officer decided to 'put on a bit of a show' or till the Reds in overwhelming numbers or with tremendous artillery pounding - or both combined, compelled the yanks to fight themselves into a new position and go through the Arctic rigors of trench work again in zero weather for a few days.³⁵

The Americans also had a certain ingenuity for making a quick profit. One officer returning to Archangel from the wilds of North Russia complained:

And over across the harbor at Bakaritzza, (Archangel) a well-fed Supply Company watched over mountains of rations and supplies that had been brought all the way from far off America; supplies and little good things and comforts that would have heartened and brought new life and hope to the lonely, abandoned men on the far fighting lines in the snow. These supplies never reached the front, but the Supply Company, with American business shrewdness and American

aptitude for trading, acquired great bundles of rubles, and at the market place converted these into stable sterling, and came out of Russia in the springtime with pleasant memories of a tourist winter; likewise a small fortune securely hid in their olive drab breeches.³⁶

It didn't take long for the more enterprising soldiers of the Expeditionary Force to find a way to make the most of their advantageous position. This opportunism had taken place in previous wars and would surely be repeated in conflicts to come.

The British also had their share of tainted logistical activities in Archangel. One American officer estimated that the British General Headquarters had six hundred surplus officers and forty thousand cases of Scotch whiskey cached in Archangel. The American doesn't say what purpose the whiskey was intended to serve, but states that,

"Some of the officers had come frankly in search of a 'cushy job' in a zone they thought safely removed from poison gases and bombardments and all the hideous muck of the trenches. Others, much to their disgust, had been sent to the polar regions because some one in Headquarters had thought they possessed some peculiar qualification to command or 'get on' with imaginary Russian regiments that were to spring to the Allied Standard."³⁷

The corruption of Archangel had its effects on the Russians as well as the Allies. On 11 December, 1918, soldiers of the Anglo-Slavic Legion mutined at Nevsky Barracks in Archangel. Colonel Sutherland, in command of Allied forces in Archangel since his relief on the railway front, ordered Colonel Stewart to provide the American troops stationed at Olga

Barracks to assist in putting down the mutiny.

Headquarters Company, 339th Infantry moved out and took up positions on Petrogradski Street with four Lewis guns and three trench mortars. At exactly 1400 hours Colonel Sutherland gave the order to commence firing into the windows and doors of the barracks. After about fifteen minutes the mutineers, holding a white flag, came out of the barracks and surrendered. There were no American casualties and Colonel Stewart, in his official report, states that thirteen of the ringleaders suffered death under orders of the Russian Command.³⁸ Another American officer's version of the action is more embellished than Colonel Stewart's official account:

Meanwhile G.H.Q. had ordered out the American 'HQ' Company trench mortar section and a section of the American Machine Gun Company to try bomb and bullet argument on the S.B.A.L's (Anglo-Slavic Legion) who were barricading their barracks and pointing machine guns from their windows. Promptly on the minute, according to orders, the nasty, and to the Americans pitifully disagreeable job, was begun. In a short time a white flag fluttered a sign of submission. A few minutes later to the immense disgust of the doughboys, a company of English Tommies who by all rules to right and reason should have been the ones to clean up the mutinous mess into which the British officers had gotten the S.B.A.L.'s, now hove into sight, coming up the recently bullet-whistling but now deadly quiet street, with rifles slung on their shoulders, crawling along slowly at sixty to the minute pace - instead of a riot - call double time, and singing their insulting version of 'Over There the Yanks are Running, Running, everywhere, etc.' And their old fishmonger reserve officer - he wore Colonel's insignia, wiped off his whiskey sweat in unconcealed relief. His battle of Archangel had been cut short by the Americans....We are bound to comment that we believe it never would have occurred if a tactful, honest American

officer had been in charge of the S.B.A.L. Americans know how tactless and bull-dozing some British orders - not many to be sure - could be. We fortunately had bluffs enough to offset the bull-dozings, A stormy threat by a sneering, drunken officer to turn the Canadian artillery on the bloom'in' Yanks could be met by a cold-as-steel rejoinder that the British officer would please realize his drunken condition and take back the sneering threat and come across with a reasonable order or suffer the immediate consequences. And then usually the two could co-operate. Such is a partnership war incident.³⁹

American troops viewed the British headquarters in Archangel as the source of many problems. Many claimed that doughboys who were sent on temporary duty with the British were kept indefinitely and the American headquarters had a tendency to forget about its soldiers. Some American officers felt Colonel Stewart had lost touch with his battalion and company commanders because the American units were shifted about Archangel Province without any consideration given to the 339th Regimental Commander. One officer reported:

He had a discouraging time even in getting his few general orders distributed to the American troops. No wonder that often an American officer or soldier reporting in from a front by order of permission of a British field officer, did not feel that American Headquarters was his real headquarters and in pure ignorance was guilty of omitting some duty or failing to comply with some Archangel restriction that had been ordered by American Headquarters. As to general orders from American Headquarters dealing with the action of troops in the field, those were so few and of so little impressiveness that they have been forgotten.⁴⁰

This same officer felt that Colonel Stewart, although unable to influence the tactical employment, transport, supply,

or medical care of a good portion of his command, should have directly controlled those units and officers in Archangel.

Somehow the doughboy felt that the very limited and much complained about service of his own American Supply Unit, that lived for the most part on the fat of the land in Bakaritzza, should have been corrected by his commanding officer who sat in American Headquarters. And they felt whether correctly or not, that the court-martial sentences of Major C.G. Young, who acted as summary court officer at Smolny after he was relieved of his command in the field, were unnecessarily harsh. And they blamed their commanding officer, Colonel Stewart, for not taking note of that fact when he reviewed and approved them.⁴¹

General Ironside attempted a limited offensive in late December to take Emtsa, a large village halfway between Verst 445 on the Railroad Front and Plesetskaya. He felt that by occupying Emtsa in the west and Shenkursk in the east, he would be secure for the remainder of the winter.

Ironside planned a coordinated three-pronged attack against Emtsa using forces from the Onega River Front; troops from the Vaga Front to take Kodish; and elements from the Railway Front to attack south towards Plesetskaya. Ironside was sure he would be successful because all intelligence reports indicated that the Soviets were exhausted and undermanned.

The offensive began on 29 December when "G" Company, 339th Infantry and some Russian volunteers moved up the Onega River and engaged a strong Red force at Turchasova. By 31 December

"G" Company withdrew after suffering heavy casualties. The French Foreign Legion unit, made up of Russian volunteers commanded by French officers, delayed their attack along the railway front when they discovered they did not have the correct type of snowshoes and would need an additional forty-eight hours to reach their destination. The Soviets realized immediately that the Allies were preparing a major attack and shelled the rail line with approximately 1,500 rounds of artillery, further halting the French advance.⁴²

Hearing of the cancellation of the French attack, Ironside rushed to the front to meet with Colonel Lucas, the French commander. Ironside learned that Lucas had violated orders by not coordinating plans with the Americans. At almost the same moment Companies "E" and "K" of the 339th, supported by Canadian Artillery, began their attack on Kodish.

Two thousand Red Guards defended Kodish and their resistance was stronger than expected. The Americans pushed slowly forward and secured Kodish. They accomplished their mission despite the failure of the French and without a second supporting attack that was supposed to be made by a machinegun company of the King's Liverpool Regiment. The British unit failed to show up for the attack because, as General Ironside put it, "The Colonel in question had succumbed to the festivities of the season." In other words, the British commander was drunk.⁴³

After the abortive limited offensive in late December,

Ironside became concerned with just maintaining his present positions. His most vulnerable outpost was at Shenkurst. According to Colonel Stewart the value of this Vaga River village was its substantial number of well-built dwellings that provided shelter for Allied men and material.⁴⁴ Allies occupied the city, without resistance on 18 September, 1918, and the Soviets never seriously threatened the occupation force until the end of December. By January, 1919, almost 2000 American, British, Canadian, and Allied Russians occupied Shenkursk. The Allies established three security outposts south of Shenkursk, Visorka Gora, Ust Padenga, and Nijni Gora, for the purpose of early warning.⁴⁵

On the morning of 19 January the Soviets began an attack that would prove to be the turning point of the intervention. Lieutenant Harry Mead, along with forty-five men from "A" Company, 339th, was located at Nijni Gora, the southern most Allied strongpoint. Lieutenant Mead tells of the initial attack:

On the morning of that fatal nineteenth day of January, just at dawn the enemy's artillery which had been silent now for several weeks, opened up a terrific bombardment on our position in Nijni Gora. This artillery was concealed in the dense forest on the opposite bank of the Vaga far beyond the range of our own artillery. After about an hour's violent shelling the barrage suddenly lifted. Instantly, from the deep snow and ravines entirely surrounding us, in perfect attack formation, arose hundreds of the enemy clad in white uniforms and the attack was on.⁴⁶

Mead and his men held off the attack with their machine-

guns until it was obvious that they were about to be overrun. As the Yanks evacuated the outpost and headed for Ust Padenga, the next Allied position, the Soviets cut down the Americans with rifle and automatic weapons fire. Of the forty-five men Mead had in Nijni Gora that morning, only he and seven others made it to Ust Padenga. Mead quickly realized that he would not be able to delay at Ust Padenga or collect his wounded or dead. He and the remainder of his men moved directly to Visorka Gora, the last outpost before Shenkursk. The Reds, not realizing that Ust Padenga had been abandoned, attacked the empty village with artillery and ground troops. The Canadian artillery, along with the remaining soldiers of "A" Company, took the enemy under fire from Visorka Gora and inflicted heavy casualties on the Soviet attackers. On 20 January the Reds made their attack on Visorka Gora with an estimated 1000 men.⁴⁷ The Canadian artillery stopped the enemy by firing shrapnel rounds into the oncoming waves of Soviet soldiers.

The British command at Shenkursk ordered the Americans and Canadians to evacuate Visorka Gora on 22 January and retreat to Shenkursk. The enemy had surrounded Shenkursk and it appeared that they were attempting to cut the escape route to the north and annihilate the Allied troops. The force at Visorka Gora withdrew through the Soviets and then halted for a rest at Spasskoe, a small village about four miles south of Shenkursk. The enemy occupied both sides of the Vaga and had gotten between Spasskoe and Shenkursk. Lieutenant Mead

tells of the withdrawal:

We finally decided that under cover of darkness and in the confusion and many movements then on foot, we could possibly march straight up the river right between the villages, and those on one side would mistake us for others on the opposite bank. Our plan worked to perfection and we got through safely with one shot being fired by some suspicious enemy sentry, but which did us no harm, and we continued silently on our way.⁴⁸

The command at Bereznik saw that the Shenkursk force would have to break out or be destroyed. Colonel Sharman, the Canadian artillery commander, and commander of the Vaga River force, informed Colonel Graham, the British commander at Shenkursk, that he was authorized to abandon Shenkursk immediately. Graham ordered the evacuation to begin at midnight, 24 January.

The order directed each individual evacuate only what he could carry on his person. All equipment, supplies, rations, and horses were to be left behind, unharmed. To destroy these items would only alert the enemy of the pending evacuation. The British also ordered the Canadians to leave their guns and the Americans to abandon their wounded, both being too difficult to carry out under the circumstances. Both the Canadians and Americans disobeyed the order.

At midnight the column moved out on a small logging trail avoiding the main road heading north, which had been cut by the enemy. Shortly after departing, two companies of Allied Russians deserted to the enemy, but apparently did not betray the evacuation. Lieutenant Mead, a member of the rear guard explains:

Hour after hour we floundered and struggled through the snow and bitter cold. The artillery and horses ahead of us had cut the trail into a network of holes, slides, and dangerous pitfalls rendering our footing so uncertain and treacherous that the wonder is that we ever succeeded in regaining the river trail alive. At this time we were all wearing the Shackleton boot, a boot designed by Sir Ernest Shackleton of Antarctic fame, and who was one of the advisory staff in Archangel. This boot, which was warm and comfortable for one remaining stationary..., was very impracticable and well nigh useless for marching....Some of the men unable to longer continue the march cast away their boots and kept going in their stocking feet...with the result that on the following day many were suffering from severely frostbitten feet.⁵⁰

At 1700 hours on 25 January the column arrived at Shegovari, approximately 20 miles to the north, where two platoons of "C" and "D" Companies, 339th Infantry were waiting. These platoons constituted the garrison at Shegovari and had been attacked by an enemy force on 21 January in an attempt to cut the Allied line of communication. The enemy was driven off, despite heavy losses to the Americans. Immediately after the Allied column arrived at Shegovari the enemy again attacked. The Canadians, who had lost four of their six guns during the retreat, turned the remaining two on the enemy and stopped the assault. At dawn on 26 January the column crossed the Vaga and burned Shegovari as they departed. Lieutenant John Cudahy wrote, ... "Shegovari was added to the sum of Russian villages fed to the fires of the Allied cause...."⁵¹

From Shegovari the Allies withdrew to Vistavka, about five miles south of Kítsa and nearly thirty-five miles from

Dvina Force Headquarters at Bereznik. The Allies dug in at Vistavka and held off numerous enemy infantry and artillery attacks until 9 March, 1919, when new defensive positions were established at Kitsa. The Allied plan was to hold off the enemy on the Vaga as far south as possible until the spring thaw came in April, and then withdraw to Archangel, burning everything in their wake.⁵² The period from March until the departure of the American troops in June was known as the spring defensive.

On 17 April Brigadier General Wilds P. Richardson arrived in Archangel to take command of all American forces in North Russia and supervise their evacuation. Richardson had served in Alaska and was best known for his construction of the "Richardson Highway". Along with General Richardson came thirty-five officers and 265 enlisted men of a railroad company to assist in the transport of American forces.

The decision to withdraw American forces was a result of talks that began in January. One of the first items discussed at the peace conference in Paris was the problem of the Russian intervention. Marshal Foch proposed that an Allied force, composed primarily of Americans, march on Moscow and defeat the Bolsheviks once and for all.⁵³ Wilson responded to Foch's proposal by offering his opinion that Bolshevism could not be brought under control by force. On 22 January Wilson invited all the interested parties to a conference at Prinkipo, on the

Sea of Marmora near Turkey. Wilson hoped that the conference would undo Bolshevik credibility and give the political process in Russia an opportunity to emerge. The only problem was that the Bolsheviks were the only Russians to accept the invitation.

The peace talks ground to a halt in February when the British Prime Minister Lloyd George departed for London to deal with civil strikes following the English general election, Clemenceau was shot and wounded in an assassination attempt, and Wilson returned to the United States. Enroute to America Wilson held a meeting with Ambassador Francis who was also returning to America following surgery in England. Francis detailed his plan for an Allied intervention that would decisively defeat the Bolsheviks. Francis describes the meeting with the President in his papers:

I outlined my recommendation about Russia to him. He replied that sending American soldiers to Russia after the armistice had been signed would be very unpopular in America. I ventured to differ with him; I expressed the opinion that many of the 2,000,000 soldiers he had in Europe were disappointed that the armistice was signed before they could engage in a battle. I said 'you could get 50,000 volunteers out of the 2,000,000 of American soldiers who would be glad to go to Russia....'⁵⁴

Wilson told Francis he had discussed his recommendation with Lloyd George and Clemenceau and they both indicated if ordered to Russia, the British and French soldiers would refuse to go or mutiny.

As a result of growing pressure from the Congress and his

own assessment of the situation, Wilson wired Secretary of War Baker, on 16 February, to recall the American troops from North Russia. On 18 February Baker, in the New York Times, explained that the dispatch of 720 volunteers for railroad duty in Russia was to "assure greater safety for American forces and facilitate the prompt withdrawal of troops in North Russia at the earliest opportunity that weather conditions in the spring permit."⁵⁵ Characteristically, the American troops learned about the withdrawal plans through the newspapers rather than from their commanding officer. The War Department failed to inform Colonel Stewart of the decision.

Eighteen days prior to the arrival of General Richardson an alleged mutiny occurred in the ranks of American forces, perhaps evidencing their declining morale. On 30 March, 1919, "I" Company, 339th Infantry, commanded by Captain Horatio G. Winslow was preparing to move from Smolny Barracks in Arch-angel to the Railway Front. There had been some discontent among the troops because of delays in mail service and the recent division of the company as a result of a fire in their barracks.

The company was ordered to pack their equipment and load their sleighs in preparation for the movement to the front. The first sergeant and senior platoon leader noted a certain dilatoriness in the soldiers routine and overheard a number of men complaining about having to go to the fighting front

While Russian troops remained in Archangel and drilled, Captain Winslow arrived, listened to the grievances, and then called Colonel Stewart to inform him of the problem. The Regimental Commander immediately held a meeting at the Y.M.C.A. with the members of "I" Company where he read them The Articles of War, informed them of the current military situation in North Russia, dispelled all rumors, and answered any questions posed to him. Whether it was the Articles of War or Stewart's speech that convinced the troops to move out for the front is not recorded. Regardless, following the meeting, "I" Company boarded the trains for the Railway Front.

The following day, 31 March, the British released a cable in London with the story of an alleged mutiny of American troops in North Russia. The British War Office urged men to volunteer for duty in North Russia where it was alleged that their English comrades had been left unsupported by the mutinous Americans.⁵⁶

There followed an immediate investigation by the Acting Inspector General, American Forces in North Russia. His inquiry produced the following findings:

The conclusions of the inspector were that from such evidence as could be obtained the alleged mutiny was nothing like as serious as had been reported, but that it was of such a nature that it could have been handled by a company officer of force. The inspector recommended to the Commanding General, American Forces, North Russia, that the matter be dropped and consider closed.⁵⁷

Colonel Stewart stated to the press, upon his arrival in the United States the following July:

I did not have to take any disciplinary action against either an officer or soldier of the regiment in connection with the matter, so you may judge that the reports that have appeared have been very, very greatly exaggerated. Every soldier connected with the incident performed his duty as a soldier. And as far as I am concerned, I think the matter should be closed.⁵⁸

The Americans were not the only Allied troops accused of mutinous behavior. In February a battalion of Yorkshires refused to relieve an American unit on the Onega Front, General Ironside personally intervened and conducted the court-martial of the two British sergeants who led the mutiny. Ironside sentenced them to be shot but their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment because of secret instructions from the King, forbidding the death penalty. The 21st French Colonial Battalion refused on several occasions to return to the front, basing their actions on the lack of a formal declaration of war against the Soviets. Even the Poles refused to fight when the British jailed their priest.⁵⁹

In late April the 3rd North Russian Rifle Regiment relieved the Americans at Toulgas. Before the Americans arrived back in Archangel, on 25 April, the Russians had murdered their officers, and defected to the Reds. Ironside put together a force of British infantry and Canadian artillery and retook Toulgas in May. For all practical purposes the coalition effort was finished and the war in North Russia had become a British affair.

The first Americans departed in May along with the French.

A second group of Yanks embarked on 3 June followed by the Canadians on 11 June and the remaining American combat troops on 16 and 27 June. General Richardson and his headquarters left on 23 August. The Americans had suffered 109 killed in action; 35 died as a result of wounds suffered in action; 100 died as a result of accidents or disease; and 305 were wounded.⁶⁰

The British were to have one more opportunity to offend their American Allies. When the doughboys arrived in France and attempted to cash in their English pounds sterling they found that the rate of exchange at which they had been paid was only applicable in North Russia. Consequently, the troops of the North Russian Expeditionary Force received fewer dollars than their fellow soldiers who had fought in France and had been paid in American or French currency.⁶¹

NOTES

1. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 41.
2. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 157.
3. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 159, 47.
4. Goldhurst, Op. Cit., Pg. 102.
5. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 21.
6. Ibid., Pg. 21.
7. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 89.
8. Halliday, Op. Cit., Pg. 53.
9. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit.,Pg. 24.
10. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 90.
11. Stewart, Op. Cit., Vologda Railway Operation.
12. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 26.
13. Ibid., Pg. 26.
14. Ibid., Pg. 28.
15. Stewart, Op. Cit., Bolshieozerkie.
16. Ibid.
17. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 190.
18. Ibid. Pg. 192.
19. Stewart, Op. Cit., Bolshieozerkie.
20. Goldhurst, Op. Cit., Pg. 107.
21. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 33-34.
22. Ironside, Op. Cit., Pg. 34-35.
23. Burness, Op. Cit., Pg. 34.
24. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 175.
25. Stewart, Op. Cit., Cables.
26. Francis, Op. Cit., Pg. 274.

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27. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 141.
28. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 105.
29. Ibid., Pg. 105-106.
30. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 145-145.
31. Ibid., Pg. 155.
32. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 108-109.
33. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 150.
34. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 109.
35. Ibid., Pg. 114.
36. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 76.
37. Ibid., Pg. 76.
38. Stewart, Op. Cit., Report of Mutiny of Anglo-Slavic Legion.
39. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 179.
40. Ibid., Pg. 45.
41. Ibid., Pg. 45.
42. Goldhurst, Op. Cit., Pg. 168.
43. Ibid. Pg. 169.
44. Stewart, Op. Cit., Shenkursk.
45. Ibid., Shenkursk.
46. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 136.
47. Goldhurst, Op. Cit., Pg. 174.
48. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 139.
49. Ibid., Pg. 142.
50. Ibid., Pg. 143.
51. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 186.
52. Moore, Mead, Jahns , Op. Cit., Pg. 149.

NOTES

53. Goldhurst, Op. Cit. Pg. 180.
54. Francis, Op. Cit., Pg. 310.
55. The New York Times, February 19, 1919.
56. Moore, Mead, Jahns, Op. Cit., Pg. 225.
57. Ibid., Pg. 227.
58. Ibid., Pg. 225-226.
59. Goldhurst, Op. Cit., Pg. 196.
60. March, Op. Cit., Pg. 150.
61. Goldhurst, Op. Cit., Pg. 211.

CONCLUSIONS

Even before the departure of the Americans, French, and Canadians, the British were considering the evacuation of North Russia. On 4 April General Ironside received a cable from the War Office stating:

Although you are cut off from your country by the ice, you are not forgotten. Whatever may be the plan of action towards Russia decided on by The League of Nations, we intend to relieve you at the earliest possible moment, and either bring the whole force away or replace you by fresh men. You will be back home in time to see this year's harvest gathered in, if you continue to display that undaunted British spirit....¹

Two special contingents of about 5,000 men each were being prepared in England to reinforce the British troops once the other Allies departed. Each of these brigade size units was composed of two battalions of infantry, one machine gun battalion, one battery of field artillery, two light trench mortar batteries, one field engineer company, one signal company, and one horse transport company.² The units were to depart for Archangel on 1 and 15 May. A General Staff report to General Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, stated:

Difficulty has been experienced in obtaining some of the personnel, especially infantry, Royal Army Service Corps and Royal Army Medical Corps. It is hoped however, that the public appeal for volunteers made on the 9th of April will produce the numbers required for both contingents.³

Only eight days before the public call for volunteers to join a North Russian relief force, the British press reported the

alleged mutiny of American troops at Archangel. The request for volunteers brought in veterans of the Western Front, raw recruits, and former Canadian and Australian soldiers. These troops were organized and transported to Archangel where they quickly deployed on the Dvina and Railway Fronts.

On 7 July Ironside's last hope for an effective Russian fighting force faded away when a battalion of former Bolshevik prisoners and deserters turned on their British officers and killed them. Ironside wrote later, "The mutiny...had caused me a greater shock than I liked to admit, even in my innermost thoughts. I now felt a distinct urge to extricate myself and my troops as quickly as I could."⁴

On 15 July the British General Staff proposed a timetable for the evacuation of the entire Archangel Force. One brigade ~~would depart 21 September~~, another on 21 October, and all British shipping would be clear of the White Sea by 1 November. General Ironside felt that the conduct of the evacuation could be facilitated by British announcement of her post evacuation policy. If the British planned to continue support of the local government then large amounts of food and materiel would be needed. This show of continued support would reassure the local Russians and reduce the chance of interference by the Soviets or pro-Allied Russian forces. If the government intended to discontinue support to North Russia than large numbers of anti-Bolsheviks would require evacuation along with the British troops. In this case it was not likely that the British would be allowed to withdraw unmolested.⁵

On 6 August Ironside submitted his plan of evacuation to the War Office. It called for the embarkation of 28,500 soldiers and civilians in five separate movements between 20 August and 21 September.⁶ On 10 August, to gain time for the evacuation, Ironside mounted his last offensive with the newly arrived relief force. With artillery support and an observation balloon to assist in the control of the battle, an all British brigade attacked an enemy force on the Dvina, near Seltso. The surprise assault, the first to use mustard gas in North Russia, resulted in two thousand enemy prisoners, eighteen field guns captured, and large amounts of ammunition and supplies destroyed. The attack was so successful that it became obvious to General Ironside that the Soviets could not hinder the British withdrawal.⁷

On 10 September British troops began boarding the transports for home. The following day Ironside supervised the destruction of British military equipment. The Allied Russian commander begged the British commander to allow him to keep the materiel but Ironside was sure if he did not destroy the equipment it would fall into the hands of the Soviets. On 27 September General Ironside and the last transport departed Archangel. British casualties for the entire operation numbered 196 officers and 877 enlisted men killed or wounded.⁸

The North Russian intervention is a classic example of

what happens when politicians and generals dwell on the certainty of victory rather than the possibility of defeat. President Wilson visualized American troops guarding the supply depots at Archangel and living off the Russian countryside. Churchill thought the Czechs would make quick work of the Bolsheviks and effect a rapid link up with the Allied forces. General Poole envisioned disciplined Allied troops marching on Moscow and dispersing the Red rabble.

General Ironside had a better grasp of the military situation in North Russia than any other character in the intervention. His description of Russia's vastness might remind some Americans of their most recent experience with military operations in remote and hostile lands:

To me it was like a great sticky pudding, a hand could be thrust easily into it. Everywhere it gave way so long as the thrust continued. Immediately the thrust ceased the mass began to close steadily on the hand, wrist, and arm. There then came a terrible fear that the hand could never be withdrawn.⁹

Regarding the flaws in the Allied coalition efforts, many could be explained by the failure of the players to adhere to The Principles of War.* The Allies committed inade-

*Field Manual (FM) 100-1, the Army, states: "The Principles of War are fundamental concepts, the result of centuries of tradition and experience. These principles are inter-related and, depending on the circumstances, may tend to reinforce one another, or to be in conflict. Consequently, the emphasis on any particular principle or group of principles will vary with the situation." The Principles include: Objective, Offensive, Mass, Economy of Force, Maneuver, Unity of Command, Security, Surprise, and Simplicity.

quate forces, underestimated the enemy, failed to define the military commitment, did not generate popular Russian support, and had no single definite objective.

Every military operation must have a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective. The Allied intervention in North Russia had none. The concept of the objective must go beyond place names like Shenkursk and Toulgas. There is also the need for a moral objective. In Russia, the Allied soldier never fully understood why he was fighting. Unlike the British at Mons, the French at Verdun, the Americans at Chateau-Thierry, or for that matter, the Soviets in North Russia; the individual trooper did not have a moral purpose in his actions other than personal survival. The politicians and generals, in their warm and comfortable war rooms, failed to select and coordinate strategic or ethical objectives for the military forces of their nations.

Because of the size of North Russia, the nature of the terrain and enemy, the inadequacy of his own forces, and the lack of clear political objectives, General Poole and later General Ironside were unable to plan, initiate, and to sustain offensive action. In their attempts to assume the offensive, they violated other principles. Infected with over-optimism, Poole failed to concentrate his forces at the critical times and places for conclusive results. Instead, he chose to disperse his units on several fronts and attempted an advance on the enemy from different directions at the same time. This

strategy might have been successful on a battlefield where maneuver and mobility were possible. In the woods of North Russia, where deception and surprise were difficult to achieve, the principle of mass was paramount.

Except at the platoon or company level, the Allies ignored the concept of concentrating forces to achieve combat superiority at the decisive point. Allied units spread out to the east, south, and west of Archangel, rarely coordinated their operations, and became vulnerable to encirclement by the enemy. This constant threat from all sides had a psychological as well as material impact on the effectiveness of the Allied soldier and his commanders.

Economy of force was a principle used repeatedly and successfully by Soviets but overlooked by the Allies. Many ~~Allied officers could not understand why the enemy, with superior numbers and artillery, did not drive the Allies into the White Sea.~~ The Soviets were masters in the economy of force mission. Based on their military and political experience, the Bolsheviks dealt with the most serious threat first. At the time of the North Russian intervention, the Soviets were faced with a greater menace from the White Russian forces in the south and east than from the Allies in Archangel Province.

Some might argue that of all the principles, unity of command was served best. True, the Allies did invest the British commanders with authority over all of the military forces. What the English generals failed to do was coordinate

the action of all those forces towards a common objective. The relationships between the Allies did not lend themselves to a unified command. The inability of one command to direct and control a multi-national force in a coalition effort was a direct result of the diverse national objectives. One American officer noted:

There are racial differences, racial prejudices racial disparities, and racial asperities that cannot be gainsaid even under the influence of military discipline, and experience has shown that soldiers yield a more ready obedience to leaders who speak their own language; understand the philosophy of their daily lives,....¹⁰

The same officer commented on the British failure to gain the respect and allegiance of their Allies by stating that their, ..."muddling, blundering, and fuddling, the lack of understanding, the brutal arrogance and cold conceit, and apparent heartlessness and want of sympathy that are forever British," alienated the other military forces.¹¹

If there was one principle that the Allies did follow it was simplicity. Lack of intelligence, inadequacy of forces, and restriction of movement, forced the Allies to devise simple plans and methods of operation. Added to these restrictions were long lines of communications, poor transport, lack of fire support, and unbelievably harsh weather conditions. Seldom were operations orders misunderstood. It was more frequent that isolated commanders either failed to carry out orders from higher headquarters or modified them for their own purposes.

Of all these imperfections in the Allied coalition effort, the worst was the failure to synchronize their national interests in the North Russian intervention. Woodrow Wilson wanted to see a democratic Russia. France wanted her war loans repaid. The British desired trade concessions and protection for her empire. These divergent political motives inevitably influenced the Allied commanders in the field and resulted in differing and sometimes conflicting military approaches to the problems faced in North Russia.

The long range impact of the failure of a coalition warfare in North Russia is difficult to judge. Unquestionably, the expedition experiences contributed to some American distrust and dislike of the British that continued into the first years of the Second World War. The British contempt for American military ability was eventually offset by the undeniable capacity of the United States to produce weapons and essential war supplies. The coalition effort mounted during the Second World War is nothing short of a miracle considering it included the same cast of characters as the North Russian intervention, a scant twenty-three years later. The crucial factor contributing to the turnabout was the unity of objective shared by the Allies in their battle against Germany. It was this very element that was missing in the political and military fabric of the North Russian Expeditionary Force.

George F. Kennan suggests that the Cold War began with the Allied intervention in North Russia. He maintains that this

incident was the cause that turned the Communist leaders away from the West and forced the withdrawal of one-sixth of the world's population from the international political and economic scene.¹² Others have claimed that Allied actions had little impact on future Bolshevik policies. Whichever theory one wishes to accept, the facts of the intervention remain unchanged. The Allied coalition efforts failed. They failed because nations with differing and distinguishable interests did not resolve these differences before engaging in joint military operations. The Allies committed military units to battle, without a common objective and without a resolution of national differences. These basic flaws in the coalition effort contributed to the failure of the Allied Expedition to North Russia.

NOTES

1. Great Britian, Army, Op. Cit., Attached Paper F.
2. Ibid., Attached Paper G.
3. Ibid.
4. Ironside, Op. Cit., Pg. 160.
5. Great Britian, Army, Op. Cit., Attached Paper R.
6. Ibid., Attached Paper U.
7. Burness, Op. Cit., Pg. 34.
8. George E. Stewart, The White Armies of Russia: A Chronicle of Counterrevolution and Allied Intervention, New York, 1933, Pg. 204.
9. Ironside, Op. Cit., Pg. 130.
10. Cudahy, Op. Cit., Pg. 74-75.
11. Ibid., Pg. 74.
12. Kennan, Op. Cit., Pg. 470-472.

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