The Anglo-American Winter War with Russia, 1918–1919

A Diplomatic and Military Tragicomedy

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Preface

Ill-conceived military campaigns have been anything but unique in history. But the weak Anglo-American intervention at Archangel in 1918-1919 was unusually inept based as it was upon misinformation, profound geographical and political misconceptions, and a generous supply of wishful thinking. Surely the Allies would have saved themselves much embarrassment had they followed the advice of American consul Felix Cole who warned that the invaders would be swallowed by the sheer vastness of North Russia. The prevalent mood of the region was for peace, Cole pointed out, and he accurately predicted that few Russians would volunteer to do the fighting. And General Tasker H. Bliss was certainly right when he speculated that the British (the chief sponsors of the affair) had bitten off more than they could chew. Other than accentuating Soviet paranoia about the sinister designs of the western imperialists, the Allied invasion proved a futile adventure and its obvious military lessons were promptly forgotten by both sides.

Sir Herbert Butterfield has pointed out that once the passions of battle have subsided, historiography usually evolves from heroic, black and white interpretations to an appreciation of more complex and tragic elements. In many ways the Anglo-American winter war at Archangel serves as a case in point. In the immediate aftermath many western participants looked upon their enemy as atrocity-prone desperadoes (the "Bolos") who were dominated by Germany (at least until the armistice of 11 November 1918). Today it is difficult to detect real villains on either side. Neither Commissar M. S. Kedrov nor General Aleksandr Samoilo appear more fanatical or violent than their western counterparts. Even General F. C. Poole, for all his conceit and posturing, appears more pathetic.
than sinister, a man who got himself into an untenable situation, who was bedeviled by blundering Russian politicians and Allied diplomats, and who was not even informed by his own government that President Wilson had restricted the American participants to the role of noncombatants. Most lonely of all was Colonel George E. Stewart, the American commander, who was sent to Archangel without adequate instructions and then kept in the dark by his government throughout the long Russian winter. One way or another all the participants in the affair justified their actions as logical and moral. The British War Cabinet looked upon the eastern front as a plausible gamble to restore the eastern front against Germany. Viewed from London it seemed preposterous to think that the Bolsheviks could offer serious resistance to western troops and artillery. President Wilson, under pressure from the Allies, agreed only reluctantly to participate, while protesting that he still opposed intervention in principle. He defended his decision on humanitarian grounds and upon the belief that he had restricted the American participants to the role of noncombatants. Yet, as had been the case with Wilson's interventions in Mexico, most diplomacy produced a less than moral result. In the end, America's participation did not prevent the establishment of a military dictatorship instead of democracy in North Russia, nor could it avert the eventual collapse of the White Russians. In Wilson's defense, he was immediately and thoroughly disillusioned with British policy in North Russia and sought an exit at the first opportunity.

Compared with the professional conduct of the war on the western front, the military operations in North Russia were often amateurish and sometimes absurd. Both sides were forced to rely upon untrained, poorly motivated second class troops who were outfitted with improvised equipment. Not even the talented General Edmund Ironside could accomplish military miracles under such circumstances. Still, considering the polyglot nature of the expedition and the odds against its success, the biggest surprise is not that there were a few mutinies or cases of cowardice and incompetence, but that there were not more. The conscripted American, British, White Russian, and Bolshevik forces, each mutually detested by the others, could justifiably regard themselves as players in a drama controlled by distant abstract forces beyond their control. The long suffering people of Archangel province could take a similar view. Bruce Lockhart, the British representative in Moscow, aptly described the campaign as an "unbelievable folly" that was comparable with the worst mistakes of the Crimean War. Whether the lessons of the North Russian affair were absorbed any more thoroughly than those of the Crimean conflict is questionable.

My interest in the Allied intervention in Russia originated over twenty years ago when Daniel M. Smith of the University of Colorado introduced me to George F. Kennan's monumental two-volume account of Soviet-American relations during World War I. A brilliant diplomatic study, Kennan's work made no pretense of discussing the military aspects of the intervention in any detail. Most of the historical literature on the subject, with the exception of older works by Leonid I. Strakhovsky and E. M. Halliday, has also concentrated upon the diplomatic maneuvering which preceded the Allied decision to intervene, or has emphasized the Siberian phase of the intervention, probably because more Allied troops were involved there than was the case in North Russia. That there remained a general unfamiliarity with the Anglo-American winter war against the Bolsheviks at Archangel was illustrated by a statement contained in the 1984 State of the Union Address: "It is true that our governments have had serious differences. But our sons and daughters have never fought each other in war."

I would like to express my thanks to the staffs of the Public Record Office, the National Archives, the United States Army Military History Institute, the United States Military Academy Library, and the Wisconsin Historical Library for their invaluable assistance in my research. In particular, I am indebted to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the Memorial Library of the University of Wisconsin for access to their exceptional resources, without which this study could not possibly have been written. Bruce F. Flood first pointed out to me that the American troops involved in the Archangel campaign were primarily from Michigan and Wisconsin, a fact which had escaped my notice. My wife Florence suggested numerous improvements in style, form, and logic and assisted in the tedious routine of proofreading. I would like to acknowledge the support of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater for encouraging my research through three state research grants and by making available the manuscript in the department of History by Marcy Glaser and Regina Brown. Finally, I would like to thank the following journals for permission to include in this manuscript material which they previously published: The Review of Politics for
Winter 1918.
2. The Allied diplomats and President N. V. Chaikovsky at the residence of American ambassador David R. Francis at Archangel. October 13, 1918. Bottom row, left to right, Serbian Minister Spolaikovich; member of the Archangel Provisional Government, Mr. Garodetsky; Italian Minister Torretta; President N. V. Chaikovsky; Ambassador David R. Francis; Provisional Government Minister of Finance Kourokin; British Commissioner Francis Lindley; Provisional Government Minister Mefodieff. Top row, left to right, Provisional Government Secretary Zuboff; Chinese Secretary Tchen Ten Tchaj; Brazilian Chargé G. Vionna Kelsch; Provisional Government Minister Grudisteff; Earl Johnson, secretary of David R. Francis; Provisional Government Minister de Boccard. Courtesy of National Archives.

3. Reviewing the troops. Right to left: General E. Ironside; Colonel C. E. Stewart; Captain Joel R. Moore; Chargé d'Affaires DeWitt C. Poole, Jr.; Captain M. A. Goff; Major J. Brooks Nichols. November 20, 1918. Courtesy of the National Archives.
4. Reviewing the troops. Right to left: General E. Ironside; Colonel G. E. Stewart; Major F. F. Ely; Major J. Brooks Nichols; Chargé d'Affaires DeWitt C. Poole, Jr.; Captain Joel R. Moore; Captain M. A. Goff. November 20, 1918. Courtesy of the National Archives.

5. Point of farthest advance by American forces in North Russia, 28 versts from Shenkursk. The village of Pagosta in the distance was occupied by the Bolsheviks and the church towers were used as observation posts. Eleven days after this photo was taken, the Bolsheviks launched a surprise offensive that forced the Allies to abandon this point and Shenkursk as well. Photo by Sergeant Grier M. Shotwell, Signal Corps, January 8, 1919. Courtesy of the National Archives.

   Courtesy of the Collections of the Library of
10. Verst 455 Railroad Front. February 17, 1919. "I" Company is lined up preparatory to the awarding of the French Croix de Guerre to eight soldiers for bravery. Captain Horatio G. Winslow of Madison, Wisconsin is in front of the company. Six weeks later "I" Company was inaccurately accused of having mutinied. Courtesy of the National Archives.

11. Funeral procession of Lieutenant Marcus T. Casey of New Richmond, Wisconsin at Archangel, Russia. September 18, 1918. Courtesy of the National Archives.

13. Allied officers on the Vologda Railroad Front. February 17, 1919. Left to right, Colonel Dunlap (French), Colonel Lucas (French), General Ironside (British), Colonel George E. Stewart (American), Major C. Archer (French), Major J. Brooks Nichols (American), and Lieutenant De Reims (French). Courtesy of the National Archives.
The Decision to Guard Military Stores

As they left America by troopship in the summer of 1918, the soldiers of the United States 399th Infantry were under the impression that they were on their way to France to wage war against the forces of Kaiser Wilhelm II. At the last minute, however, both their destination and the enemy were changed. Their exact location was now a classified secret. But, in letters to their relatives, the soldiers described many attractive aspects of the place. Geographically, the country resembled the northern counties of Michigan and Wisconsin. Forests of pine, spruce, and aspen dominated the largely flat landscape, which also featured numerous meadows filled with wild flowers and unusual mosses, as well as clear lakes and rivers. Ample wildlife made the area a virtual paradise for the sportsman and naturalist; the woods teemed with abundant deer, ducks, geese, woodhens, crows, immense rabbits, and flocks of white chickadees so plentiful that "when they flew it looked like a snowstorm." In summer there were long hours of daylight and mild temperatures. During the months of intense cold the troops were housed in snug, well-heated dwellings that were frequently equipped with saunas. Even the long winter nights were made memorable by brilliant displays of northern lights. And the natives of the region were not too much different from the people at home—hardworking, religious folk who loved a good joke and often drank too much.¹

At the same time there were drawbacks: bottomless swamps and clouds of mosquitoes in the summer. During the winter months homesickness and melancholia were induced by the short days and temperatures as low as -53° Fahrenheit. The food ration, consisting primarily of black tea, hardtack, and canned willy (corned beef), also left much to be desired. Flies,
fleas, cockroaches, bedbugs, and ticks were other disagreeable features. "It's the filthiest place I've ever been in," wrote one Milwaukee man. "The cooties keep us dancing every minute." Probably the most unattractive aspect of the mission was the imminent danger of death from sickness, mines, booby traps, and rifle and artillery fire. Tragically, for the 222 American soldiers who lost their lives, they were not engaged in practice maneuvers in the north woods, but were fighting a shooting war against the Bolsheviks more than 200 miles deep in the interior of North Russia. America's connection with the affair originated in the distressing news that came out of Russia in the autumn of 1917. First, in November the Bolsheviks easily toppled the pro-Western Provisional Government. And within a few months, to the consternation of the Allies, the Bolsheviks betrayed the West by signing a separate peace with Germany at Brest-Litovsk (3 March 1918) and leaving the war. From the Allied viewpoint, especially that of the British War Cabinet, the Bolshevik action was intolerable, because it would permit the Germans to transfer their army to the western front and to gain control over extensive Allied military supplies sent to Russia. The British proposed, therefore, to invade Russia through its northern ports of Murmansk and Archangel, take possession of the extensive military supplies there, and eventually reorganize the eastern front with the assistance of Russian volunteers. British planners and generals feared an uncontrolled or chaotic intervention in Siberia that would protect military stores piled up at Vladivostok and to deny Germany the resources of the region by occupying the Trans-Siberian Railroad. With their manpower and resources thoroughly committed on the western front, the British were counting on the United States to provide the bulk of the soldiers and supplies for both the Siberian and North Russian projects. For many months the idea of military intervention in Russia met with general disapproval from Washington. Both Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and General Peyton C. March, the army's chief of staff, opposed the project as militarily unsound. Baker, who characterized the North Russian intervention as "nonsense from the beginning," recalled: "The only real disagreement I ever had with President Wilson was about the sending of American troops to North Russia." Likewise, General March argued that the war would be won or lost on the western front and on that ground he opposed "at all times the slightest diversion of our troops from that objective." It was March's considered opinion that military intervention in either Siberia or North Russia would be "absolutely futile." Also unsympathetic was General Tasker H. Bliss, the American representative on the Supreme War Council at Versailles. When the British in early April attempted to ram through a policy statement approving military intervention, Bliss refused to sign, thus thwarting the British strategy. Finally, President Wilson, perhaps recalling the unpleasant repercussions that had accompanied his two military interventions in Mexico, stubbornly resisted. Supported by Secretary of State Robert Lansing, the president adopted a deliberate "do nothing" policy.

But the British were not easily discouraged. Through the British ambassador, Lord Reading, and Sir William Wiseman, a liaison agent, continuing pressure was applied to Wilson's advisers such as Lansing and Colonel Edward M. House. In April the president, after at first refusing, agreed to a British request to send a warship to Murmansk, a new port hurriedly constructed during the war on the Kola Inlet north of the Arctic Circle. Citing a supposed German military threat to the region, the British had already established a military presence at Murmansk, consisting of a battleship and two cruisers. Two hundred British marines were quietly landed on 6 March, and the Allied force was further strengthened by the arrival of the French heavy cruiser Amiral Aubert. Overwhelmed by superior force, the Soviet was inclined to cooperate with the Allies, although relations with the Soviet government in Moscow became more and more strained as British military preparations increased.

In the meantime another consideration entered the thinking of the Allies. This factor was the existence of the 70,000-man Czechoslovak Legion, a well-disciplined and well-equipped survivor of the Russian Army under the Provisional Government. In the spring of 1918, the Czechs fled eastward from their base in the Ukraine to escape the advancing Germans. Their immediate destination was Vladivostok, from where they expected to be shipped to the western front. Under the circumstances the idea naturally occurred to British and French military experts that the Czechs would be very useful in protecting Russia's northern region from the supposed German threat. On 2 May the Supreme War Council passed a somewhat vague resolution which--without the knowledge or approval of the Czechs--proposed splitting the Czechoslovak Legion, with perhaps 20,000 of the troops being transported to the northern ports. In fact, this
project existed only in the minds of its planners and after 26 May the Czechs were engaged in open hostilities against the Bolsheviks as they sought to fight their way to the east.

Therefore, when the British War Cabinet on 26 May approved the first military steps in North Russia it acted on the basis of incomplete and misleading information. In the first place the cabinet, apparently mesmerized by the fury of the German spring offensive in France, greatly exaggerated the German threat to the northern ports. Likewise, the British exaggerated the strength of the Czechs and their willingness to serve the Allies. And, consistently, the Allies seriously underestimated the determination and ruthlessness of the Bolshevik leadership. According to the 26 May decision of the War Cabinet, a small expeditionary force of approximately 1,000 troops was assigned to Murmansk to protect the area from Germany. Also sent to Murmansk was a 560-man training mission which was ultimately expected to proceed in the summer to Archangel. Presumably the Czechs, augmented by thousands of Russian volunteers, would be organized into an effective fighting force to thwart Germany’s plans.

America’s first military involvement with the affair began with the arrival at Murmansk on 24 May of the 5,600-ton cruiser Olympia, a vessel still remembered for having served as Admiral George Dewey’s flagship at the battle of Manila Bay during the Spanish-American War. In response to British requests to provide a warship, the Olympia had been reassigned from convoy duty in the Atlantic and given a hurried overhaul at the Charleston Naval Yard in preparation for its transatlantic crossing. Under the command of Captain Bion Boyd Bierer, the Olympia sailed from Charleston on 26 April, arriving in Enoshima on 6 June. After taking on coal, the ship resumed its voyage to the Arctic, arriving at Murmansk on 24 May. On the final leg of its journey the Olympia carried an important passenger: General Frederick Cuthbert Poole, a forty-nine-year-old artillery expert, who was designated “British Military Representative in Russia.” His instructions placed him in command of all Allied troops that might be sent to Russia and entrusted him with the training of Russian volunteers and the Czechs, large numbers of whom were supposed to be en route to Murmansk and Archangel. As he contemplated his ultimate destination, the frozen, Soviet-controlled port of Archangel, it is at least possible that General Poole found inspiration from a plaque attached to the deck of the Olympia marking the spot where Dewey uttered his order, “You may fire when ready, Gridley.”

From the British point of view the sending of the Olympia was a welcome token of American support, but London was counting upon a far more extensive American commitment. As was the case throughout the debate over Allied intervention in Russia, British officials dismissed the Bolsheviks as a powerless minority that did not need to be taken seriously. Instead, British thinking emphasized measures that would lead to the defeat of Germany, a nation whose strength appeared to be expanding in the spring of 1918. By the end of May the Germans had pushed well into the Ukraine and the Baltic provinces in the east, while on the western front they had advanced to within thirty-seven miles of Paris. The spring offensive was accomplished by wild rumors that Germany intended to seize Murmansk for use as a submarine base. To counter this apparent threat, Arthur Balfour, the British foreign secretary, specifically requested that the United States send to Murmansk “a brigade, to which a few guns should be added.” The Americans were desperately needed, Balfour declared, because Britain was “completely denuded of troops” and because it was not practical to divert regular troops from the western front. Without much enthusiasm Wilson acquiesced, provided that Marshall Foch could spare the soldiers from duty on the western front. A further consideration was that the American soldiers who would be sent to Murmansk did not expect to be employed in the front line, and Balfour reassuringly noted in making his request, “It is not necessary that the troops should be completely trained, as we anticipate that military operations in this region will only be of irregular character.”

When the Supreme War Council took up the Murmansk situation in June the British pressed their advantage by requesting, to the great irritation of the War Department, three American troops: two infantry battalions, two artillery batteries. For the first time the White Sea port of Archangel, still inaccessible due to ice, entered the discussion. In Joint Note No. 31, approved on 3 June, the Supreme War Council recommended the occupation of Archangel as well as Murmansk in order to check German expansionism. For the time being, Wilson resisted British appeals to intervene in Siberia. But the president had agreed in principle to the use of American soldiers on Russian soil.

American diplomats in Russia added to the chorus of interventionist advice descending upon Washington.
Since the spring of 1916 the American ambassador to Russia had been David Rowland Francis, a sixty-four-year-old politician and businessman from Missouri. He was the third American ambassador to Russia within four years and it was rumored that his predecessor had resigned because his wife was disappointed with the subdued social climate of wartime Petrograd. No doubt the dismal weather of the Russian capital— which was supposed to consist of nine months of winter and three months of bad weather—was another contributing factor. A native of Kentucky who managed to work and borrow his way through Washington University in St. Louis, Francis achieved great financial success as a grain merchant, investor in banking and insurance companies, and as owner of the St. Louis Republic. His gross income, as reported on his 1916 federal income tax return, totaled the impressive sum of $203,823.21. While in his thirties and forties the gregarious Francis rose quickly in Democratic politics serving as mayor of St. Louis, governor of Missouri, and secretary of the interior during the last six months of Grover Cleveland's second term. Soon his political career went into decline as Francis was out of sympathy with the silver wing of the Democratic party which rose to power in the 1890s. His defeat in the Democratic primary for the United States Senate in 1910, effectively ended his hopes for high office.

His experience in business and politics and his exuberant personality well suited Francis for the public life of his duties. Accompanying him on his travels black servant Philip Jordan, Francis cut an impressive figure as he presided over embassy social functions or was driven in his Model T Ford to the golf course. As befitted his age Francis played a fatherly role in his dealings with embassy personnel, even offering free and unsolicited advice for the resolution of marital woes. His funeral oration delivered in Mobile in May 1918, following the death from a stroke of the American consul Maddin Summers, was both graceful and compassionate. Nor was there any question about the ambassador's personal bravery as he managed to survive the February and October Revolutions of 1917, both of which were accompanied by rioting and rifle fire in the neighborhood of the American embassy.

By early 1918 conditions in Petrograd sharply deteriorated. First, with a show of force, the Bolsheviks prevented the convening of the Constituent Assembly, a semirepresentative body elected under the Provisional Government. And a week later Francis, as dean of the diplomatic corps, went in person to Lenin's headquarters where he pleaded successfully for the release of the Rumanian minister, who had been temporarily jailed. As the impressionable Phil Johnsen expressed it to William Lee, one of the ambassador's St. Louis business associates, Francis was spending much of his time "dodging bullets." He continued,

Mr. Lee, do you know, that this country is all shot to pieces. Here in Petrograd we are living without any law or protection of any kind. We are all sitting on a bomb. Just waiting for someone to put a match to it. I will put in this letter a speech that was made by some anarchist and that will give you a pretty good idea about what the Ambassador is up against. These people over here kill each other just like we shoot flies in America. . . . When we have a fight we do not have them out in the open but right in the heart of the city, just the same as having machine guns and cannon in front of the Merchants' LaCedle and at Broadway and Washington.

Finally, on 27 February, fearing the Germans would capture Petrograd, Francis and his staff fled by train to the sleepy provincial capital of Vologda, 350 miles to the east.

The public Francis and the private Francis appear to have been two distinctly different persons. In his memoirs, Francis assures the reader that he was able to assure the Public that the capital was "honeycombed with German spies" and "as a result I was on the lookout for the activities of such persons." He neglected to mention, however, that in the absence of his wife, he became infatuated with Madame Matilda de Cramm, a Russian resident of Petrograd who was suspected of being a German spy. Francis often called upon her in order, he said, to take French lessons. She was often present at the embassy and Francis even permitted her to have access to the code room. Despite numerous warnings from Washington, Francis defended Madame de Cramm's innocence and continued to write and visit her even after the embassy had moved to Vologda. Other indiscretions on Francis's part included flagrant speculation in Russian currency and misusages of the embassy's use to conduct private business. Much of his time was spent worrying about his declining business affairs at home. When one son lost $12,000 in wheat trading, an enraged Francis pointed out that the loss amounted
to more than two-thirds of his year's salary as ambassador to Russia. Even more troubling were the chronic losses (averaging between $50,000 and $60,000 a year) of the St. Louis Republic. "You know how much I dislike to lose money," he wrote to his son Perry, "and how much I dislike to see one lose it, but grinding as that is, it does not compare in the humiliation I undergo in seeing any enterprise with which my name is connected become a failure." Francis was also bothered by problems with his health. In April, the ambassador suffered a debilitating attack of diarrhea and soon began experiencing serious problems with an enlarged prostate gland—a condition which within six months brought an end to his diplomatic career.12

The all-important question of Allied military intervention in Russia, Francis had some difficulty in making up his mind. In February, when the Germans had appeared ready to occupy Petrograd, Francis had advised Washington to intervene militarily both in North Russia and at Vladivostok. After the move to Vologda, Francis reversed himself—apparently because the German advance failed to materialize—and withdrew his recommendation. For the next few weeks Francis tried to straddle the issue, maintaining that intervention should be resorted to only if the Allies were invited in by the Soviets or if the Soviets proposed to offer opposition.13 But Francis had a reputation for agreeing with the last person to speak with him and soon he began listening to the interventionists in the diplomatic community.

One source of pressure came from the French ambassador, Joseph Noulens, who arrived at Vologda on 29 March. A bitter foe of bolshevism and an advocate of intervention, Noulens skilfully applied intellectual and psychological leverage on Francis. At the same time Francis received a barrage of interventionist advice from the American consuls, DeWitt Poole, Maddin Summers, Ernest L. Harris, and the counselor of embassy, J. Butler Wright. By 13 April Francis was once again leaning toward intervention and advised Washington: "I think time is fast approaching for Allied intervention and Allies should be prepared to act promptly." And on 2 May Francis completely capitulated and wired Secretary of State Lansing: "In my judgement, time for Allied intervention has arrived."14 Left unstated by the ambassador, as he wrote from Vologda, was precisely where the intervention should occur.

Under the circumstances the Allies might have considered sending a military expedition to Moscow via Russia's Baltic or Black Sea ports. But since both areas were closed by World War I only one logical point of attack remained: the White Sea port of Archangel which was linked by rail to Moscow 700 miles to the south. Archangel was an ancient city of about 50,000 which extended for 6 miles along the Dvina River near its outlet to the White Sea. For many years prior to World War I the city had been in a state of decline as much of Russia's commerce had shifted to the more convenient warm water ports of the Baltic. Moreover, Archangel's usefulness as a port was hampered by its close proximity to the Arctic Circle. Even in the best years navigation was possible for only six or seven months before ice terminated the shipping season.

World War I restored Archangel to a position of prominence. In 1915 more than half of Russia's exports (lumber, flax, grain cakes, seal skins, flour, and naval stores) passed through Archangel. At the same time, Allied military shipping brought to Archangel the port's huge supplies of munitions, food, and fuel. Enormous disorganization was inevitable, since the single-track railroad was equipped to send only one passenger train and seventy carloads of freight to the south each day. The obvious remedy for Archangel's overcrowding was to increase the carrying capacity of the railroad by converting from narrow gauge to the Russian broad gauge of five feet. This project, which included the construction of sidings at five-mile intervals, was finally completed in January 1916. However, due to the inadequate roadbed and antique wood-burning locomotives, speeds were limited to thirty miles per hour. One astonished American observer noted that "the obsolete rolling stock, insecurely tumbled down cars and wood-burning locomotives of a type used in this country [the United States] fifty years ago," thought he had stumbled upon a museum. And, according to the American railroad expert John F. Stevens, the railroads of Russia consisted of "strings of match boxes coupled with hairpins and drawn by samovars." Thus, by November 1917 the overcrowding at Archangel was worse than ever as more than 162,000 tons of munitions and metals clogged the port and its vicinity.15

At first the Bolshevik Revolution was a bit slow to penetrate to the North. For several days following the overthrow of the Provisional Government, Archangel was cut off from communication with either Petrograd or either anti-Bolshevik element and the interim committee to organize the Revolutionary Committee. Formed out of elements that were in power under the Provisional Government, the objective of the Revolutionary Committee was to maintain the status
quo. In this it succeeded at first as for three months not a single decree of the Bolsheviks was in force in Archangel. And, for the most part, reported Colonel Cole, "perfect order" prevailed. The sole exception was an unsuccessful attempt by demobilized soldiers to pillage grain alcohol stocks that were stored at the docks prior to export to England.16

By the end of January 1918, however, the anti-Bolshevik forces were losing their grip. The 6,000 pro-Bolshevik sailors of the White fleet began, as Cole noted, "to conduct themselves more and more arrogantly," and demanded that the naval commander-in-chief at Archangel turn over to them a consignment of 6,000 revolvers held in customs. For the time being the Bolsheviks were thwarted, as the weapons, with which it was intended later to equip anti-Bolshevik troops, were moved to a different warehouse. Following the arrival of Commissar Mikhail Sergeevich Kedrov, regarded by American ambassador Francis as "one of the most violent and unscrupulous members of the Bolshevik Party," the authority of the Revolutionary Committee collapsed.17

On 8 February the Bolsheviks easily took control of all railroads. First of all, a telegram arrived from Moscow abolishing the office of naval commander-in-chief. Second, the Archangel Soviet outflanked the Revolutionary Committee by simply voting the committee out of existence. "And now," reported Cole, "thanks to the moderation and good sense of a few of the [Bolshevik] leaders, this has taken place bloodlessly without violence or disorder by a mere vote in the council [of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies] and a telegram from Moscow." To the great irritation of the Allies, the Bolsheviks began with great determination to use the dilapidated Vologda-Archangel Railroad to ship southward the military stores sent to Archangel for the Provisional Government. This confiscation, combined with the Bolsheviks' signing of a separate peace with Germany at Brest-Litovsk on 3 March, intensified the Allied pressures upon Washington to intervene so as to prevent the supplies from falling into the hands of Germany.18 Archangel was the logical base for a military expedition to North Russia, and the most obvious route southward toward Vologda and Moscow was the railroad to Archangel.

A far different view of the situation was taken by the thirty-year-old American consul at Archangel, Felix Cole. In his opinion economic aid to the North, especially in foodstuffs, would do far more to maintain Allied influence than the use of force. Coincidentally, Cole was a native of Missouri, the same state in which Ambassador Francis had risen to prominence once in St. Louis in 1887. Born in St. Louis, he was the son of Theodore Cole, a prominent legal bookseller and authority on statute law who later moved his residence and business to Washington, D.C.

For one year (1905-1906) Cole attended his father's alma mater, the University of Wisconsin, where he took courses in music and the liberal arts. He finished his undergraduate education at Harvard University, graduating cum laude in 1910 with a B.A. degree in philosophy. His first job was as a reporter and editorial writer for the Boston Herald. Then in 1913 the twenty-six-year-old Cole abruptly moved to St. Petersburg, Russia, to seek his fortune. For a few months he was employed as an automobile salesman and then by the Argus Printing and Publishing Company, which produced a monthly magazine in Russian under English editorial direction. Neither position appears to have proved a financial bonanza, but Cole did acquire a good command of the Russian language and also a Russian wife. Presumably it was the need for steady employment that led Cole to become a clerk in the American consulate at Petrograd (as the capital was then called) in 1915. His appointment came on 1 January 1917; after eight months, just before being sent to Archangel, Cole was promoted to vice-consul, and in March 1918, he was highly pleased when he was advanced to consul of class 8. In a mood of elation Cole wrote to Washington: "The attainment of what has been my ruling ambition for the past three years, that is to say the promotion of the Petrograd consulate as a clerk, will not lessen my efforts for the advancement of the Service and of the United States, but will rather confirm me in them and stimulate."19

Since the summer of 1916 the United States had been represented at Archangel by a citizen of Denmark, Carl Christianovitch Schulzberg-Loewe, who preferred to sign himself simply Carl Loewe. Together with his son Sven, Loewe operated a marine insurance agency located on the main boulevard of Archangel, the Troitski Prospect. Since the position of American consular agent carried with it no salary or housing allowance and only about $400 a year in fees, his main source of employment was serving as a marine-loss adjuster for three insurance companies. And when the war entered the United States, according to the American commercial attaché at Petrograd, showed "great interest and initiative" in seeking to expand American trade through the port of Archangel.20 Soon, however, the Petrograd embassy changed its opinion of Loewe as a mass of
circumstantial evidence accumulated that raised serious questions about his loyalty. The suspicions were aroused in April when, during the search of an apartment occupied by a suspected spy, the name and address of "Loewe-Archangel" was discovered. Then in June, Loeve visited the Archangel Counter Espionage Bureau and "insistently urged" that he be appointed as the interpreter in all dealings between the bureau and the American passport control officer, Hugh S. Martin. As it turned out, however, an interpreter and Loeve was turned down. Another suspicious development was the interception by Russian military censors of a letter written by one of Loeve's employees, which contained the statement: "Loewe is considered to be a rascal and is suspected of being a spy. No matter how regrettable, that is nevertheless a fact." The last straw came in early September when the American freighter Harburg docked at Archangel and the captain told Loeve that he had heard the signals of a German submarine while navigating through a heavy fog. When the captain said he would report the location to the British naval authorities, Loeve rejoined, "Don't do that. You are the only one thing by that gorgeous bloody English boats will go in that direction."  

The decision to replace Loeve with Cole was made by the Petrograd embassy soon after a letter arrived from Martin reporting the Harburg incident. But when Cole set out by rail for Archangel via Vologda on 20 September, no one bothered to inform him of the situation. Loeve was being replaced. Cole arrived in Archangel late on 20 September and was met by the officer at the hotel. Loeve happened to be a passenger, arrived. Cole then produced for Loeve the letter replacing him as consular agent. Except for a trembling of the hands, Loeve displayed little emotion. Until Loeve's train departed, Cole engaged him in conversation about the overcrowded conditions at Archangel. Cole's object was to prevent Loeve from telegraphing his son since Cole was afraid that Sven Loeve would be instructed to lock him out of the consular offices. This tactic seems to have worked as Sven Loeve was friendly and agreed to permit Cole to stay overnight. It was only after his arrival that Cole learned from Hugh Martin that the Harburg had rented a room in a forty-foot house. So says the statements made by the captain of the Harburg: "Had I known of this matter," reported Cole on 25 September, "I should never have gone to Loeve's even for one night, but being there, in the absence of hotel accommodations, I decided to remain until I got a decent room, which I have been able to do today."  

Instead of going to Archangel, Cole intended simply to take over Loeve's position and operate the consular agency from the existing office. But, because of Loeve's questionable loyalty and general unpopularity, Cole concluded that it was absolutely essential that "an entirely separate office, physically as well as 'politically' be maintained."_LOGO Col now determined to ignore Loeve as much as possible. Nevertheless, Loeve's questions, and objections, as obstructed activities of the Counter Intelligence Bureau, kept Cole from completely losing sight of the former consular agent. First, Loeve tried unsuccessfully to become the American Red Cross representative at Archangel. Then on 1 October Loeve tried to secure from the chief of marine transport maps showing the location of frequently used shipping channels in the White Sea. When inquiries were made, Cole pointed out that the consular agency had no need whatsoever for such maps. Although Loeve's disloyalty was never conclusively established, Cole obviously displayed good judgment by keeping his distance.  

Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, Cole was primarily occupied with the consular and bureaucratic aspects of his position. In order to emphasize his separation from the discredited Loeve, Cole rented a one-story building to house the consulate, which was now upgraded from its former status of a consular agent. Three of the six rooms were used for office space, the remainder as Cole's quarters. One of the apartments in the adjacent apartment building, Cole was able to rent as an additional six rooms. However, judging from the inventory of equipment filed by Cole, the consulate was very meagerly furnished with plain pine tables and chairs, a stationery cabinet in "bad" condition, two typewriters, and two American flags, one listed as "torn, dirty." To refurbish the place Cole purchased from the State Department a new set of chairs, a locking desk and filing cabinets, a wall clock, a thick red rug to cover the cold floors, and portraits of Presidents Wilson, Washington, and Lincoln. Washington, however, turned down the requests due to "an insufficiency of funds." Nevertheless, Cole was permitted to drop from his inventory of his personal goods, a small ruby of sixty-four carats.  

During his first two months at Archangel, before the closing of the port for the winter, Cole spent most of his time dealing with ordinary consular
The Decision to Guard Military Stores

listened respectfully to Cole's views. In March the ambassador adopted Cole's suggestion that two cargoes of food be dispatched to Archangel. "I recommend granting thereof," he advised Secretary of State Robert Lansing, "because [they] will relieve hunger and be good propaganda." A further consideration was that if it became necessary to evacuate the embassy from Vologda, Archangel was the logical point of departure and the American diplomats would likely need all the good will that could be created. But, due to a lack of shipping, the State Department replied that provisioning Archangel was out of the question. A month later Cole traveled to Vologda, accompanied by five members of the Russian American Committee of Archangel, and the group discussed with Francis plans for developing trade with America in metal ores, and flax. Presumably Cole also used the occasion to reiterate his opposition to military intervention. "Cole," reported the ambassador, "has good judgment and knows Archangel conditions."  

Cole's supreme demonstration of good judgment came in the form of a cogently reasoned and well written summation of the case against military intervention. Cole must have invested a great deal of thought in this lengthy epistle before submitting it to Francis on 1 June 1918, nine days after the ambassador had cabled Washington to advise a policy of intervention. Cole's main theme was that America's basic interests would best be served by continuing the existing policy of nonrecognition of the Bolsheviks while seeking to develop a much more favorable relationship. He viewed Russia as being once and for all out of the war and as "down and out economically and financially--at Germany's mercy now and for a long time to come." The way to make Russia independent of Germany, he felt, was through large-scale trade with the Bolsheviks. "We can make more friends in Russia," he concluded, "by the proper use of sugar, beef, fish, and machinery than 200,000 or 500,000 troops."

Cole also asked Francis to consider a second major point: that military intervention was likely to "go further than at first planned involving unforeseen and difficult expenditures of ships, men, and materials." By stooping to the use of force the Allies would lose their moral superiority over Germany and damage their relations with the new Russia on the wrong foot. If the Allies resorted to force, Cole concluded:

We shall have sold our birthright in Russia for a mess of pottage. The birthright is the future friendship and economic
cooperation with a great and free democracy controlling untold riches. The pottage will be the recovery of a few thousand tons of materials that we once gave to Russia after deciding we could ourselves do without them, the temporary control (for we do not intend annexation) of some hundreds of square miles of forest and barren northern tundra, trackless and as yet unproductive but what the Germans intended to demand the evacuation of Murmansk.

A second major reason cited by Francis for intervention was expediency. In his opinion the Soviets were on the verge of collapse. Supposedly Lenin had remarked, "We admit we are a corpse but no one has the courage to bury us." To this Francis added the notation: "Sometimes a corpse becomes so putrid that it should be removed in the interest of public health or for sanitary reasons. In my judgment that is the condition now." Other unspecified reasons had also influenced his decision, Francis vaguely concluded, "but I have not time to mention them."

Throughout the letter the ambassador's tone, as befitted a professional politician, was considerate and unoffensive, using a phrase made famous by the Republican politician James G. Blaine, please "Burn this letter"? Would it be advisable to send a diplomatic pouch to Washington by means of a British steamer bound for Montreal? Finally, Francis had a favor to ask. Would Cole try to locate some gasoline for the ambassador's 1916 Model T Ford which had been shipped from Petrograd to Vologda? "I had no gasoline for several weeks," noted Francis, "and that which I finally procured in Petrograd was mis-named gasoline." However, Cole found that his English source of gasoline had disappeared and not until five weeks had passed was he able to supply the desired commodity. In return for the gasoline Francis gave instructions to scour Vologda for scarce butter and eggs which were then sent to Cole by courier.

Not so tolerant of Cole's noninterventionist views was consul DeWitt C. Poole, Jr., who regarded Cole's report as "an excellent illustration of the danger of discussing general problems from a local point of view." Cole's report, however, was his failure to recognize that the Allies had available in Siberia "a splendid army" which could be counted upon to tie down many German soldiers. (Poole was referring to the Czechoslovak Legion—an anti-Bolshevik group of former war prisoners that was fighting its way across Siberia to Vladivostok; he, like most western observers, exaggerated its military
strength.) At the same time Poole recruited consul F. Willoughby Smith to join in the assault upon "Cole's on-the-whole-too-clever exposition of the subject." Smith likewise found Cole's report to be badly flawed and spuriously stated, "Though its logic rings more or less true to a person absolutely ignorant of the general situation, it is not worth serious attention." In the overly optimistic opinion of Smith, intervention would cause large numbers of Russian troops to rally around the Allies. Moreover, a successful military campaign was practically guaranteed by the weak condition of the Soviet Army. "Any military demonstration on their part...can be discounted," Smith concluded.

Poole then presented Francis with the hostile critiques drafted by Smith and himself and urged that "a restraining hand" be applied in the interest of "principle and service discipline." Specifically, Poole recommended that Cole "should have strict instructions" to communicate directly to the State Department "only purely news items of an urgent character." And in a scribbled postscript written on 6 July 1918 Poole lamented, "Unfortunately Cole's report is probably arriving in Washington about now." In reality, Poole's fears proved unfounded as Cole's report was mailed by Francis, rather than cabled, and did not arrive in Washington until 19 July after President Wilson had made his decision. The ambassador had at least had the good judgment to reject the vindictive advice of DeWitt Poole that Cole should be silenced for having dared to offer dissenting opinions. Nevertheless, Francis's inexcusable delay in transmitting Cole's memorandum came at a critical time, since President Wilson was still in the process of making up his mind in June and the first part of July.

From all sides President Wilson found himself subjected to more intensive pressure than ever to accept intervention. Wilson's trusted adviser Colonel Edward M. House, the State Department, the Supreme War Council, the British and French governments, Ambassador Francis and his colleagues in Russia all appealed for American participation in the proposed Siberian and Russian projects. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and Chief of Staff John J. Pershing offered some objections on military grounds. But only Felix Cole had taken the pains to think through all the facets and likely perils of the proposed intervention. Whether the president would have adopted the dissenting views of an obscure thirty-year-old consul seems somewhat unlikely. Yet, had the president been given the opportunity to read Cole's brilliant memorandum of 1 June 1918 it conceivably could have made a difference. Justifiably Wilson could have described Cole, using the same words he applied to General Tasker Bliss, as "a remarkable man. Every word he writes strengthens my impression that he is a real thinking man, who takes the pains to think straight."

While Cole's dispatch was slowly making its way to Washington, the president was under pressure to make a judgment and without much conviction, abandoned his "do nothing" policy. He first gave way on the question of Allied intervention in Siberia. On the evening of 6 July Wilson called to the White House Secretary of State Lansing, Secretary of War Baker, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, Admiral William S. Benson, and General March. According to March's account, the president entered the room holding a pad in his hand and lectured the assemblage "somewhat in the manner of a school teacher addressing a class of pupils." Reading from an aide-memoire, Wilson announced that he would send American troops to Vladivostok but would restrict their role to guarding military stores and assisting the Russians in organizing their self-defense. Even Wilson seems to have regarded the venture as a gamble. Observing March shaking his head in opposition to the deployment of troops, Wilson surmised that the general feared Japan would exploit the situation to seek territorial gains. "Well," remarked the president, "we will have to take that chance." In the end Wilson admitted to his close friend Colonel Edward House that he had been "sweating blood" over the question of intervention. The president remarked to Josephus Daniels that the advice of the Supreme War Council was so impractical "that he often wondered whether he was crazy or whether they were." As late as 12 July, Sir William Wiseman found Wilson still "very hesitant and fearful that American participation would overwhelm his administration."

Finally, on 17 July Wilson tried to end the months of indecision by writing out a complicated aide-memoire that incorporated many of the ideas previously discussed during the White House meeting described by General March. Under the signature of the secretary of state, the document was then sent to the Allies. Unfortunately, the logic of the president's lengthy statement proved very difficult to follow. At the outset Wilson clearly stated the desire of the United States to cooperate "ungrudgingly" and "in every practical way" with the Allies. He then rejected the basic premise of Allied policy by announcing his "clear and fixed judgment" that military intervention...
would exploit rather than serve Russia and would contribute nothing to the main Allied goal of defeating Germany. He also endorsed Allied assistance to the Czechs on humanitarian grounds. However, stated Wilson, the United States would not "take part in organized intervention in adequate force from either Vladivostok, or Murmansk and Archangel." Finally the president denied any intention to intervene in the internal affairs of Russia and he made a thinly veiled threat to withdraw from the entire venture should the Allies misuse the American troops destined for Russian soil. On this latter point the president would have profited from reading Felix Cole's warning that "an expedition into Russia could not be withdrawn in a night or a week or a month—especially after Archangel freezes and the neck of the White Sea clogs with ice." 

Certainly, it was Wilson's intention to set strict limits on the American role. But the president's own words were decidedly contradictory and ambiguous. On the one hand he announced that "military intervention would add to the present sad confusion in Russia rather than cure it." But at the same time he approved the use of American troops for the purpose of guarding military stores, assisting the Czechs, and training the Russians in self-defense. Thus, by trying to straddle the question, Wilson contributed to the "sad confusion in Russia" that he sought to clarify. In its planning of the Archangel campaign the War Office seems not to have taken seriously the fine line that Wilson tried to draw between opposing military intervention in principle and permitting the landing of American troops for guard duty and training purposes. The War Office thought so little of the aide-mémoire that it didn't even bother to forward a copy to General F. C. Poole who within two weeks would launch an attack upon the Bolshevik defenders of Archangel. In view of these military preparations the British were inclined to read only the parts of the aide-mémoire that approved the use of American troops and to skip lightly over the rest.

An Invitation to Land

Neither side was well prepared on the eve of the Archangel campaign. At Murmansk General Poole had available for a landing party only about 1,450 men. Two-thirds consisted of "B" grade Royal Scots who were reputedly fit only for garrison duty. About 500 members of the French foreign legion, who arrived on 26 July, were available as well. Poole could also call upon 100 Royal Marines and 50 sailors from the Olympia. This tiny force was considerably bolstered by the presence of the 2,670-ton scout cruiser Attentive, which was armed with ten twelve-pound guns, the 3,070-ton seaplane carrier Nairana equipped with seven Short aircraft, and the French heavy cruiser Amiral Aube. In their planning of the campaign General Poole and Admiral Thomas Kemp faced a formidable geographical problem: Archangel could not be attacked directly since it was isolated from the open sea by a twenty-five-mile channel. This passageway could be easily mined, and the banks were lined with heavy forest cover that was ideal for concealing defenders. Furthermore, before entering the channel the Allied ships would have to pass the heavily fortified Mudug Island. All these considerations led Poole and Kemp to plan a coup. 

The uprising was organized by a dashing Russian naval captain, Georgi Ernolaeovich Chaplin, who met with Admiral Kemp in late June aboard the latter's yacht at Archangel. His main problem—one which was shared by the British—was the overwhelming apathy among the Archangel population. In one sense though, Archangel's "cowardice" was justified as it was only realistic of the population not to take sides prematurely. As the plan evolved, the head of the new government was to be a prominent socialist, the seventy-year-old Nicholas V. Chaikovsky, who arrived at Archangel in late July. Noted for his flowing
white beard and blue eyes, Chaikovsky had been a prominent member of the Constituent Assembly. As a result of twenty-six years of exile in England and six in America, the old man possessed a fluent command of English, a considerable asset in view of the forthcoming Anglo-American intervention.

According to Ambassador Francis, Chaikovsky was "an able writer, a fine character and a valuable man." Some idea of his less than practical outlook can be glimpsed from his four years at Independence, Kansas (1875-1879) where he had tried and failed to found a religious sect. That he retained much of his missionary nature was demonstrated by his continued belief, as quoted by Francis, "that God is in every man's soul, and that is the sole existence of what thee call religious denominations call the Supreme Being." Convinced that the human race was incapable of appreciating his beliefs, he abandoned religion for politics.2

Fortunately for the plans of General Poole, the Bolsheviki at Archangel were weak and divided. Commissar Kedrov found himself frustrated by the determined atrophy of the population—the same problem that had beset Trotsky. The Archangel region, discovered, was more concerned by shortages of food and manufactured goods than by the possibility of an Allied invasion. Outwardly the Bolsheviki adopted a tough position. In response to a telegram from Trotsky, Kedrov presented Felix Cole with a letter (delivered on 23 June at nine o'clock in the evening) demanding the immediate withdrawal of all Allied warships from Archangel. Three days later Kedrov declared martial law and ordered an immediate state of battle readiness. On 22 July, as evidence accumulated of British military preparations along the west coast of the White Sea, Kedrov informed Cole that "an almost de facto state of war" was in existence. In reality, however, the tough talk masked an underlying state of weakness. Only with great difficulty was Kedrov able to pressure the Archangel Soviet into declaring martial law; the resulting mobilization campaign failed spectacularly, and even the fortification of Mudyug Island fell behind schedule. The obstacle in this case was not apathy, but fierce swarms of mosquitoes. The installation of mosquito netting enabled workers to complete the improvised defenses, which consisted of a battery of four six-inch guns on the northern tip of the island and an identical battery placed a mile to the south. In their amateurish attempts at fortification the Bolsheviki failed to consider that if the southern battery were forced to fire at a target north of the island, the more northerly guns would then be within the field of fire. In such a case the guns to the south could not be fired without threatening the exposed gun crews to the north gun crews to the east.

A final warning to the Bolsheviks that Allied military action was imminent was the departure from Vologda on 24 July of David R. Francis and the other Allied ambassadors. Fearing for their lives following the murder of the Tsar and his family, the ambassadors demanded a special train to take them to Archangel. Halfway to their destination, they briefly met Kedrov, who was on route to Moscow to report to Lenin. To the great relief of the ambassadors, who were worried that they might be imprisoned as hostages, Kedrov permitted the diplomats to continue on their way to Archangel. After a two-day debate with the Bolsheviki authorities at Archangel, who imposed various bureaucratic obstacles but did not physically detain the party of 140, the diplomats were allowed to depart for Kandalaksha on the White Sea. Arriving at their destination, Ambassador Francis and the British representative Francis Lindley advised General Poole by telephone to take immediate action, since the coup at Archangel was about to be discovered and attributed to the Bolsheviki.4

Upon hearing from Lindley, Poole boldly decided to attack at once instead of waiting until 3 August as originally planned. Reflecting two months later about his decision, Poole wrote: "It was, naturally, a considerable risk; but as I could expect no more reinforcements before the end of August, and as the opposition to us was daily growing stronger, I calculated that the risk was justifiable and decided to take it." Taking advantage of around-the-clock daylight the Allied fleet, consisting of the cruisers Attentive and Amiral Aube, the seaplane carrier Nairana, six armed trawlers, and two gunboats, departed on the evening of 30 July. The Olympia was left at Murmansk; however, Captain Bierer joined Poole on board the yacht Salvador. The following day four transports escorted by a Russian destroyer and four armed trawlers departed, carrying the bulk of the soldiers including three officers and fifty-one sailors from the Olympia. A few hours previously the first shots of the campaign were fired at Onega, located about fifty miles to the west of Archangel. Half of a British force crossed the White Sea from the port of Kem aboard the steamship Archangel Michael and succeeded in taking the thirteen Bolshevik defenders completely by surprise. From Onega it was hoped that Colonel C. J. M. Thornhill and his troops would be able to advance eastward to Oberskaya on the
Archangel-Vologda Railroad and cut the Bolshevik escape route to the south. But, as Poole reported, the British ship was unable to reach its destination owing to the severe opposition encountered, but it fought most gallantly against great odds and eventually withdrew to Onega after having inflicted severe casualties on the enemy. It succeeded, however, in diverting a considerable force from my part and thus was of considerable assistance to my operations. 

There was no possibility of repeating the easy success achieved at Onega as the Bolsheviks had been warned by telegraph from Murmansk the moment the British fleet put to sea. Furthermore, the attackers were hampered by a heavy sea, damp cold, and clouds. While entering the White Sea in heavy fog, Poole and Admiral Kemp suffered a major setback when Admiral Rube struck an old wreck and was temporarily disabled. As matters turned out, however, the vessel was able to free itself after a few hours. Poole and Kemp, unable in the fog to predict where or whether the ship would be able to refloat itself, decided to carry on with the two remaining ships, the Attentive and the Nairana. On board the yacht Salvator Captain Binerer of the Olympia and General Poole witnessed the ensuing sea and air battle for Mudug Island.

For a short time it appeared that the mere threat of force would be sufficient. Apparently intimidated by the guns of the Attentive, the Bolsheviks signaled a willingness to surrender unconditionally. However, before the British were able to land troops the Bolsheviks reversed themselves. Support for the Attentive mistook the first shell fired by the defenders "for the bumping of the ship's side against another piece of ice." Yet, according to Captain Binerer, it was the Attentive that first opened fire from a position shrewdly located to the north of the Bolshevik batteries. Captain Binerer counted about thirty shots fired by the Attentive, while the Bolsheviks retaliated with wild shooting—except for a shell that perforated one of the four funnels of the British cruiser.

At the same time the British made effective use of air power, a secret weapon which was then a novelty in North Russia. Earlier when the Short seaplanes had held a rendezvous at Murmansk it was observed that the townspeople were extremely agitated and became hysterically that the planes were "devils from hell," and could not be made to understand that the craft would not harm her. At Mudug Island the carrier Nairana launched three seaplanes (piloted by two Canadians, Lieutenant Dugald MacDonald and Captain

G. H. Simpson; and Major Francis Moller, an Englishman). All the bombs seem to have missed, but the psychological effect of the seaplanes and the guns of the Attentive caused the Bolsheviks to "hop it." By 8:00 p.m. the Bolsheviks had fled the island by boat. "The enemy had been working very hard to complete their defences," concluded Poole, "and had our attack been delayed a few weeks longer the capture of the island would have constituted a very serious operation."

In Archangel itself the atmosphere was calm during the morning, but in the afternoon several British seaplanes flew over the city dropping pamphlets and it soon became generally known that the British had seized the harbor's outer defenses. Late in the afternoon the Bolsheviks began a hurried evacuation southward toward Vologda by railroad and by boat toward Kotlas on the Dvina River. As they departed the Bolsheviks sank two icebreakers in the main shipping channel. Early the next morning (2 August 1918), having cleared the Bolshevik mine field, Poole was fortunate enough to find that there was "just sufficient room" between the sunken icebreakers to permit the Allied vessels to pass. Throughout these events Cole and Consul Maurice Pierce remained out of sight in the American consulate. Fearing their imminent arrest, the two "placed the codes beside an open stove with a bottle of kerosene and a constantly burning candle in preparation for immediate destruction in case of necessity and gave directions that anyone demanding entrance should be detained in conversation at the door." At 11:00 p.m., after Pierce had gone out to observe the evacuation, Cole was arrested by several officers arriving in an automobile. The codes were hurriedly destroyed and Cole was taken to a "modern mansion" where he was held with the British consul and vice consul, together with the French consul and a number of French and British officers. As it turned out, the arrest was not a political act at all, but was motivated by criminal considerations. Those responsible had made off with a Bolshevik safe containing 4,500,000 rubles and the consulate was taken as hostages to ensure the success of the enterprise. The following day at 11:00 a.m. Cole and the others were freed unharmed.
been members of the Constituent Assembly. One of the first actions of the new government, undertaken "in the true fatherland and of the Achievements of the Revolution," was to invite General Koleda and his tiny force of fewer than 1,500 onto Russian soil. As the troops marched to the government buildings they were greeted with cheers, whistles, and the waving of handkerchiefs. Captain Bierer was so overwhelmed by the demonstration that he recorded: "The people simply wept with joy to an extent almost beyond imagination." However, noted Cole, "we were plain to be seen that this enthusiasm was confined to certain classes." Only the middle class and the peasantry, the two groups that had suffered the most at the hands of the Bolsheviks, displayed approval. "The working class," Cole observed, "was patently absent."10

This, a combination of luck, naval skill, and what the commander of the Attentive called "sheer effrontery," had produced a decisive victory without the loss of a single Allied soldier. The success seemed to justify Poole's boast to the War Office: "I occupied Archangel today." Yet, as one participant pointed out, the easy triumph was not entirely fortunate and it "gave our commanders an erroneous judgment of values. The road to Moscow is strewn to be strewn with roses!" More than ever the Bolsheviks appeared as inept visionaries who were incapable of offering effective resistance. As General R. G. Finlayson later noted, the Bolsheviks were mistakenly dismissed as a "great rabble of men armed with staves, stones and a verb, who rush about foaming at the mouth in search of blood and who are turned and broken by a few well-directed rifle shots." Ambassador Francis was so confident of victory that he predicted that the Allies would capture Moscow "within a month or two." Even the Supreme War Council subscribed to the myth of Bolshevik impotence, concluding that "the Bolsheviks had no real power with which to support their rule. They have entirely failed to raise an effective army and remain in office simply because Russia is too divided to create any alternative organization with which to supplant them."11

With his polyglot force of fewer than 1,500, Poole commenced his novel campaign for the conquest of Russia from the north. Initially the inept resistance offered by disorganized Bolshevik forces led to the justifying of the contemptuous attitude of Poole. Within a few days Allied troops were able to advance forty versts southward toward Vologda along the railroad (a verst equals .66 of a mile). "Rear guard sniping from engines and burning bridges have hampered advance,"

reported Poole. American sailors from the Olympia, apparently suffering from cabin fever, played a daring role in the early stages of the campaign. Riding a lame locomotive, Ensign Donald Hicks and a dozen seamen participated in a wild chase after the retreating Bolsheviks. Two days later Hicks returned to Archangel in charge of fifty-four young, dirty, hungry, and frightened Bolshevik prisoners. That the Bolsheviks, as Poole pointed out, were incapable of more than rear guard skirmishes was undoubtedly true. The only surprising development was the resistance stiffened appreciably as the Allies neared Oberskaya, seventy-five miles to the south. To Poole only one explanation was plausible: the Bolsheviks were being led by Germans. "This is confirmed," he reported, "by the finding of trenches dug according to German methods, unusual accuracy of fire from both guns and machine guns, tenacity in a defense, etc."12

A second major expedition (the Dvina Force) was organized by Poole to chase the retreating Bolsheviks on the Dvina River. Poole's goal was the capture of Kotlas, four hundred miles to the southeast. A branch of the Trans-Siberian Railroad terminated at Kotlas and thus the capture of the city would have the effect of isolating the Bolsheviks' contact with the Czeca. On 6 August a force of about four hundred French, British, Russians, and Poles departed in three steamers. As Poole recalled, these troops "were equipped and despatched under very great difficulties. We were short of ships as the Bolsheviks had taken all the best and fastest ones." Furthermore, noted Poole, "the French officers of the unit's noncommissioned officers had served in the German army and both had been wounded fighting against the Allies on the western front."13

As had been the case on the railroad, progress at first difficulties of the railroad was not easy. In two days the Dvina Force advanced 140 miles to Beresnik without encountering significant opposition. The river route to Kotlas appeared to be wide open. But at Beresnik, strategically located near the confluence of the Vaga River and the Dvina, unexpectedly strong opposition was encountered. Four Bolshevik gunboats firing long-distance guns by the French commander of the river expedition was "severely wounded by rifle shot," and the remaining troops were pinned down by the Bolsheviks' shelling. Poole then placed Colonel John Josselyn in command. With the assistance of two improvised gunboats and the monitor
M25, Josselyn was soon able to drive the Bolsheviks further up river. Still a number of formidable problems remained. Supplies had to be brought almost 200 miles by boat on the swift and unpredictable Dvina, a river that in its lower reaches was almost two miles across, but that at other places was so narrow "that a fisherman could make a cast from one side to the other." It was a river with a reputation for never giving up its dead. To haul supplies by barges, tugboats were necessary and the few that remained were, according to Poole, "in a bad state and this renders difficulties for our supply questions for the river force." Also deficient were the improvised gunboats which were "too weak to stand the strain of constant employment and after a few weeks began to leak badly, suffer from engine troubles and need constant overhaul. Moreover the decks were too flimsy to stand the strain of discharge of the guns, and thus our guns were constantly going out of action at the critical moment."  

Even the monitor, reputed to be "a veritable dreadnought," proved ill-adapted to river fighting as it was too bulky and deep in draft to maneuver easily on the swift meandering stream. With the monitor invulnerable to attack. On 28 August, M25 fought a duel with a Bolshevik artillery battery, managing to silence it but at a heavy cost of four dead and seven wounded. As a result of this and other unhappy encounters with Bolshevik artillery, Josselyn suggested that tactics of extreme caution be adopted in the future. In particular, Josselyn warned commanders to beware of the Bolsheviks' skill in camouflaging artillery batteries:

One form of ambush much practiced by the enemy was the concealment of batteries of light guns and machine guns in the forest on the banks of the river and the endeavor to draw out our Naval Forces on to a close range of these concealed batteries by retreating their gunboats when in action with our Naval Forces. These batteries are perfectly concealed and aerial reconnaissances can only discover them by possibly being able to draw them into firing on the reconnoitering aeroplane.

If the Naval Forces get drawn into operations ahead of the advance guards of the Land Forces very careful watch on the banks ahead should be kept, and in particular any apparent encouragement by inhabitants on the banks to continue their pursuing action should be viewed with suspicion.

For his artillery support Poole had no choice but to rely on the gunboats, as he found it "most difficult" to find qualified British personnel to man his eighteen-pound guns. Forty Polish officers trained at Murmansk served as the nucleus of Poole's artillery, but attempts to train Russians as gunners proved a frustrating experience. The uneducated Russian is very hard to teach," Poole once tersely noted.  

Only a minority of the population actually assisted the Bolsheviks by joining their forces or by signaling to their gunboats and shore batteries. The majority of the North Russian peasants pragmatically straddled the political fence: they had no particular love for the Bolsheviks, but could stoically put up with them. General R. O. Finlayson observed that most of the inhabitants "were more pleased than not to see us, for we gave the promise of more food and tobacco, both of which they were beginning to run short." However, the "only ones who were really glad" to see the Allies were "the industrious and the letter-to-do peasants" whose surpluses had been confiscated by the Bolsheviks and disdained by "their lazy followers who had produced nothing."

The general desire to avoid taking sides was also demonstrated by the unimpressive progress made in recruiting troops, as fewer than 1,000 enlisted during August. In the opinion of Poole, the lack of volunteers was attributable to "a regrettable tendency for the Allies to offer pay and protection, thus leaving the Russians themselves free to indulge in their favourite pastime of political intrigue." To Felix Cole the recruiting disappointments could not have come as a surprise since, as he had earlier warned the State Department, "intervention cannot reckon on active support from Russians. All the fight is out of Russia." Still Poole was optimistic that a general mobilization, which the Chaikovsky government declared under duress on 20 August, would enable him to raise an army of 10,000 Russians for a spring offensive.  

Political troubles also confounded Poole as he found that "the Government which had assumed control about two hours before our arrival here was hopeless to a degree. It was composed entirely of Left Bolshevik Revolutionaries who in politics and ideas are not far removed from Bolsheviks." From Poole's perspective President Chaikovsky and his fellow socialists were impractical idealists who "were totally incapable of understanding the necessity of any military
precautions being taken for the safety of the Port. Any action of this kind they considered as repressive and as undue interference with the liberties of the people." Disgusted by the government's "absolute neglect" of "urgent necessities," Poole arbitrarily ruled as military governor; he placed the occupied areas under British martial law and notified Chaikovsky by letter of his decisions after the fact. Also highly dissatisfied with the new government was Captain Chaplin, who had been appointed by Chaikovsky as commander of the Russian troops. Chaplin had been under the impression that the cabinet would represent the business interests of the region and he was angered when Chaikovsky selected only Socialist ministers. Having already overthrown one government, it is hardly surprising that Chaplin began to contemplate a new coup.

Another complication for Poole was the arrival at Archangel on 9 August of the Allied ambassadors from Kandalaksha. At first the diplomats were preoccupied with locating housing in overcrowded Archangel. Ambassador Francis was forced to stay on board for eight days before being able to rent a three-room apartment. Thereafter, with little else to occupy their time, the ambassadors devoted attention to meddling in military affairs and local politics. Frequently Chaikovsky and his ministers sought to outflank Poole by enlisting the support of the diplomats. Of the socialist ministers an exasperated Poole wrote: "Past masters of intrigue, they immediately commenced to play off the Military against the Diplomatic Representatives. Thus we have in one small area, the separate interests of the Government, the Diplomatic Corps and the Military with a singularly unhappy result. It does not require a deep study of history to realise the outcome of continual attempts of civilian interference in military measures." Yet, according to the reports of Felix Cole, Poole's dictatorial reign was anything but popular within the city. Poole was also widely blamed, a criticism encouraged by Bolshevik agents, for the failure of the Allies to send food ships. Cole at least had the good judgment not to remind the State Department of his earlier warnings that the anti-Bolshevik leaders were merely "discredited office holders seeking to regain power, and that, because the ground for intervention had not been properly prepared by offering "baksheesh" to the population, "the North of Russia is nowhere near as pro-Ally as it might be."17

Despite the accumulated problems, Poole remained optimistic in outlook. "Generally speaking," he reported on 17 August, "I am quite satisfied with the results so far attained but progress would be much quicker if only the reinforcements of Western European Troops could arrive." The sanguine Poole estimated that he would capture Kotlas by 20 September and then push on to Viatka during the winter. To facilitate the advance Poole requested some Scottish pipers, a brass band, and a battalion of British garrison troops. "Already," he explained on 15 August, "I find it very necessary and shall want it much more when I occupy Vologda, Kotlas, and Viatka and it is a serious handicap with my small forces to tie up active men." Based on the early successes of the expedition and the apparent ineptitude of the Bolsheviks, Poole's confidence appeared justified. But even had he received all the foreign troops and Russian recruits he anticipated, Poole was becoming more and more overextended with each advance. As Felix Cole had written: "Intervention will begin on a small scale but with each step forward will grow in its demands for ships, men, money, and materials... Every foreign invasion that has gone deep into Russia has been swallowed up... If we intervene, going further into Russia as we succeed, we shall be swallowed up." The amateurish nature of the enterprise deeply shocked realistic observers such as the British representative in Moscow, Bruce Lockhart. "We had committed," the incredulous Lockhart noted in his memoirs, "the unbelievable folly of landing at Archangel with fewer than twelve hundred men."19 Further folly was soon added when the intervention was expanded following the arrival at Archangel in early September of the American reinforcements.
The Americans Arrive

Being sent to fight the Bolsheviks came as a complete surprise to the Americans who composed the 339th Infantry Regiment. Originally drafted in June 1918 to fight in France, most of the 4,487 men were from Michigan. In fact, the regiment was commonly referred to as "Detroit's Own." To fill vacancies about 500 draftees from Wisconsin were added. Three smaller units were also assigned to the expedition: the 310th Engineers, the 337th Field Hospital, and the 337th Ambulance Company. Approximately half of the 788 engineers were from Wisconsin; the medical units were almost entirely staffed by soldiers from Michigan, except for a few Wisconsin physicians. Altogether 5,710 Americans were diverted from France to Archangel.1

Unquestionably the troops were inexperience as their training had consisted only of a month at Camp Custer, followed by a second month spent in crossing the Atlantic. Arriving at Aldershot, England, they were outfitted by the British with winter equipment, including snowshoes, fur caps, long woolen coats, and the Shackleton boot. Colonel George E. Stewart, the commander of the 339th Infantry, facetiously asked the British whether they intended to carry out the "Britishizing" process to its ultimate extent by issuing him 5,000 monocles. The soldiers' American rifles were replaced by Russian rifles (manufactured by Westinghouse), but the men had little confidence in them as the ammunition frequently jammed and they were said to be so inaccurate as to shoot around corners. Moreover, the bayonet was fixed immovably to the rifle and rapid fire was impossible. Each man had fired only ten rounds with the rifle on a range before the 339th departed from Newcastle on 26 August 1918. Even more unsatisfactory than the rifles was the Shackleton boot, which proved warm, but extremely
slippery and vulnerable to dampness. When Sir Ernest Shackleton, the explorer and designer of the boat, later visited Archangel he observed a soldier walking on a trail wearing ordinary leather ammunition boots and asked, "Why are you not wearing your snow boots, my man?" "You see Sir," he replied, "they are all very well as drawing room slippers but they're no bloody good outside." 2

While assembled for life boat drill the troops learned officially for the first time that their destination was North Russia. The captain of one vessel announced that further drills were being discontinued since the water was so cold that no one could live in it more than five minutes anyway. "Isn't that a dandy," was the reaction of one American. Another hazard soon appeared as a virulent strain of influenza broke out on two of the three British transports. The illness frequently proved fatal even to young men in good health and it spread rapidly due to the close quarters on shipboard. "They stored us in the hold in a dirty place," one soldier recorded in his diary; dead of the like sardines, 16 to a table and hammocks were issued to sleep in. We are very crowded at night." Another diarist noted: "Spanish influenza breaks out; men begging for medical attention. Insufficient medical personnel." By mistake practically no medical supplies had been placed on board the ships, and the few left over from training at Custer were soon exhausted. "Congestion was so bad," recalled one soldier, "that men with a temperature of only 101° or 102° were not put into the hospital but lay in their hammocks or the decks." On board the Nagoya, characterized as "one of the dirtiest transports in use on the high seas," one soldier was "awakened at night by cries of one of the sick men, who is delirious with Spanish influenza and calling for his mother." 3

Therefore, when the men arrived at Archangel on 4 September the situation was serious, but only twenty-five ill Americans could be accommodated by the British 53rd Stationary Hospital. Under the direction of Major Jonas R. Longley of Fond du Lac, Wis., who himself was himself "nearly dead of the disease," an American hospital was established with supplies and nurses furnished by the American Red Cross and the Russian Red Cross. "The patients had no beds," recalled one medic. "They lay on stretchers without mattresses or pillows, lying in their O.D. uniforms, with only a simple blanket for covering. The place was a bedlam of sinister sounds of rasping, stertorous breathing, coughings, hackings, moans and incoherent cries." In September 378 Americans were afflicted by influenza and eventually seventeen-two died of the disease or the resulting pneumonia. Lieutenant Marcus T. Casey of New Richmond, Wisconsin, a law student at the University of Wisconsin, was one of the first to succumb to the disease. At Archangel, Casey received an elaborate military funeral that was heavily attended by the well-to-do. However, as had been the case when General Poole landed a month and a half before, the laboring classes were conspicuously absent. 4

For a time the local manufacturers of coffins were unable to keep up with the demand, and the churches worked overtime conducting funerals for the American and Russian victims. One American medical officer observed that the Orthodox priests routinely used the same yellow robe to cover all corpses and during the funeral chants each member of the congregation kissed the same spot on an icon held by the priest. "It is their belief," he noted, "that during a religious service it is impossible to contract disease." The high death rate may have been aggravated by the general lack of sanitation at Archangel. The sewer system consisted merely of ditches under the sidewalks that emptied into large, frequently overflowing cesspools. The barracks where the sick men were confined were unventilated, had filthy latrines, and were surrounded by grounds contaminated by sewage and the excrement of dogs and horses. "This is some city," reported Lieutenant Charles Ryan to Professor John R. Commons of the University of Wisconsin. "The wind can be smelled for quite a distance. Among his other crimes, Peter the Great was responsible for this place." Another arriving soldier recorded, "Never did I strike such a fine set of assorted odors." And with only slight exaggeration the American Sentinel, a house organ printed at Archangel for the American troops, reported: "Up here in this tough town there are 269,831 inhabitants, of which 61,128 are human beings and 208,702 are dogs. The wind whistles across the Dvina River like the Twentieth Century Limited passing Podunk." 5

Under normal circumstances the cesspools were periodically emptied and their contents carted off to the swamps and tundra. But as Major Longley put it: "Due to the disorganizing results of war conditions, the labor necessary to effect this had been lacking, the cess pits had overfilled, flush latrines had become plugged and human excreta was conspicuous and abundant both inside and outside of buildings." Under the supervision of the 310th Engineers the odoriferous job of emptying and cleaning
British warship returned the president and his ministers to Archangel. Chaplin, defended by Poole, escaped the firing on the court-martial on trial. Although Chaikovsky was restored to power the entire affair demonstrated how dependent the weak government was upon the Allies. As a result of the coup the government suffered a blow to its prestige from which it never really recovered.

In the meantime General Poole sent about half the American troops southward in the direction of Vologda. Their immediate destination was Oberskaya, seventy miles away, a town that the French had seized on 4 September while inflicting heavy casualties on the Bolsheviks and taking 200 prisoners. However, further progress proved agonizingly slow as the Bolsheviks took advantage of the swampy terrain. As summed up by Poole: "The country consisting of practically nothing but forest and bog presents the most extraordinary difficulties. This renders any attempt at a turning movement both difficult and slow. For a detachment to have to wade waist deep in bog even on patrol work is almost a daily occurrence." Between Archangel and Vologda (425 miles to the south) there were no roads and, noted Poole, "as my forces stand at present I shall be held up at every bridge, each of which takes some days to repair."

At first the Americans' inexperience was painfully evident. Two columns of American troops naively held roll call along the railroad track when "an excited little French officer popped out of his dish and made a Madras salute at the ground." Fortunately, the troops were dispersed before the Bolsheviks opened artillery fire from what appeared to be a sawmill smokestack three miles down the track. In fact, the "smokestack" was a naval gun mounted on a Bolshevik armored train. "Suddenly it flashed," recalled one observer. "Then came the distant boom. Come then the twist-whistling shell that passed over us and shattered shrapnel near the tanks and lay our reserves." Through good luck and inaccurate Bolshevik marksmanship the amateur soldiers escaped injury. After three weeks of training the Americans were considered sufficiently prepared to attempt an offensive against the Bolshevik armored train, located ten miles to the southwest at Berezov. Now the British had assembled their own armored train equipped with an eighteen-pound artillery piece, one 75-mm cannon, and two 3.3-inch naval guns. The large guns were mounted on coal cars protected by sandbags and defended by a carload of soldiers armed with...
Vickers machine guns and Lewis automatic rifles. On the afternoon of 28 September, one company of American soldiers was ordered to outflank the Bolsheviks. One soldier from the battalion died of influenza and the corpse was placed in an improvised coffin. Thereupon, as described by Private Edwin Arkins, "Blood from underneath coffin trickled across floor of barge while we eat our hard tack and black tea. Sleep on our blankets on bottom of barge; very damp. Our faces and uniforms are black with moist cold dirt." By the time the barges reached Beresnik, without encountering opposition, two more soldiers had died. "On the barge there was no heat, and no beds," recalled one participant. "The men died on their blankets on the bare floor."

Two weeks later the Americans attempted a similar attack. The plan was for a party of engineers to slip to the rear of vers 455, destroy the track, and trap the Bolshevik armored train. Once again the strategy miscarried as the engineers were unable to get behind the Bolsheviks. Therefore, when the Allies attacked at 6:40 a.m. on 14 October the Bolsheviks simply withdrew their armored train and troop train to the rear, destroyed another bridge, and surrendered three vehicles (or a two-miles) of patrol party, without their barracks bags or tents, the infantrymen found themselves drenched from rain and half-frozen from camping on the tundra. One private noted in his diary: "Spent the worst night ever, no blankets, no fires, and soaking wet, could not even sit down. I have not had any sleep since Saturday night." Nothing happened but rain and mosquitoes bit us. We are not as well equipped as were our soldiers in the Spanish War."

Another soldier recalled that when the Bolsheviks opened fire with machine guns and artillery "our boys had to go right in the swamps up to their knees in water and mud." And when one American was shot through the head by a sniper he was buried in what one soldier characterized as "a most dismal spot, a clearing in the woods a mile or so behind the front lines. The place was swampy and water stood in the grave; the dank forest rose like a smoldering wall to encircle us." The tenacity of the Russian resistance and the accuracy of their fire again led Poole to the mistaken conclusion that German officers were masterminding the defense. Poole's operations on the Dvina during September were somewhat more successful. Three days after their arrival at Archangel, four companies of Americans were loaded onto coal barges, which reminded one passenger of Noah's Ark. After a five-day journey, towed by a wood-burning tugboat, they reached their initial destination of Beresnik 140 miles upstream. On the second day, another party of Americans was attacked by a Bolshevik counterattack, taking back all the ground they had lost. Contributing to the fiasco were malfunctioning machine guns and inept shelling by the Allied armored train, which mistakenly hit a bridge held by American troops.

The Americans Arrive

After two days of training at Beresnik one company of Americans was ordered to advance up the Dvina on 24 October. At first the amateur soldiers met only token opposition from a few snipers which was fortunate as their lack of experience was painfully evident. In particular the troops were inclined to fire at anything that moved. In occupying a nearby village Arkins recorded: "A little excitement when scouting party mistakes runaway horse for enemy attack. Several shots fired. No one hurt." And a few days later, when a Bolshevik position returned practically empty-handed. "All we bring back," noted Arkins, "is dead chicken after firing fusillade in error."

From his base at Beresnik, Poole's strategy was to launch a two-pronged offensive against Kotlas. His main attack was directed at the Bolshevik flotilla on the Dvina. On land the brunt of operations fell to the Royal Scots, who advanced on both sides of the river via primitive mud-choked roads. The less experienced Americans were ordered to advance up the west bank of the Dvina. "The movements of these troops," noted Poole, "were seriously impeded by the boggy nature of the roads and their guns had to be brought up by barges eventually. British and Russian aeroplanes and seaplanes have been continually flying observing and bombing the enemy." The plan counted upon the British monitor and supporting ships being able to defeat the gunboats of the Bolsheviks. As Poole optimistically wrote:

I hope that with this force I may be able to bring off a coup which will sink or capture the enemy fleet annihilate the force and capture the guns. If I can bring this off successfully at an early date I do not think I shall meet with any more serious opposition before reaching Kotlas which I
am reckoning on being able to occupy by
September 20th and push on towards Viatka
during the winter.15

A second feature of Poole's strategy was to advance
up the Vaga River with the objective of outflanking
the Bolsheviks by means of a turning movement from
the west.
The Vaga phase of the operation went exceptionally
well. Preceded by two gunboats, a company of
Americans in barges advanced toward the town of
Shenkurak forty miles upstream. In just two days the
Americans, meeting only a few snipers, were able to
occupy their objective. However, the offensive on
the Dvina met determined resistance as Poole found
the Bolsheviks to be "in considerable force on both
banks of the river, and in considerable force also
in ships." The fighting was especially fierce for
Chamska, located on the west bank of the Dvina
fifteen miles from Beresnik. Here the Bolshevik
gunboat Moochovga was surprised in the fog by M25 and
sunk by a barrage of 7.5-mm shells. However, reported
Poole, the Allied flotilla was shelled by concealed
shore batteries "and our ships were compelled to
withdraw again to the mouth of the Vaga." By dawn on
15 September the Royal Scots succeeded in occupying
the town where they captured several three-inch guns,
some gun carriages, an automobile, and a few horses.
The next day a number of the Royal Scots fell victim
to a ruse when a Bolshevik steamer brazenly docked at
Chamova. Mistaking the vessel for an Allied supply
ship, several of the Scots unwisely approached the
unarmed steamer. Upon the Red sailors pouring a fire
three of their adversaries using small axes, which
Russians customarily wore in their belts. At this
point M25 arrived and, according to the diary of
Henry Katz, "planted a shell in the Bolshevik boat
and set it on fire. Several loud explosions took
place and the boat sank." Shellfire from M25 also
damaged the Bolshevik gunboat Bogaty which was later
reported to have sunk.16

Meanwhile, a day's march behind, two companies
of green American infantrymen occupied the positions
vacated by the Scots. "It was a bad march through
mud and swamp," Lieutenant Glen Weeks noted in his
diary. "We were all homesick." Twenty-five miles
further the Americans, supported by White Russian
men, stove the Bolsheviks out and taking twenty-three prisoners, but at the cost of four
ekilled, eight wounded, and one missing. "The sight
of that first casualty I'll never forget," recorded
Edwin Arkin. "The lower part of face a bloody mass;
the eye lids swollen and blue and the head resting on
the inside of the upturned helmet." One of the dead
was Corporal Harris Foley who was hit in the face by
machine-gun fire. Among the troops the story was told
that Foley "fell and took off his pack and unrolled
his blanket and laid down before he died." Later
three Bolshevik gunboats shelled the town before
being driven off by artillery.17

By the end of September Poole had advanced
fifteen miles and in the process the Allies sank four
enemy ships and two barges, killed an estimated 200
Bolsheviks, and captured 100 prisoners in addition
to assorted guns, ammunition, horses, carts, and
uniforms. However, the Bolsheviks then blocked the
river by sinking two lines of sand-filled barges which
were supplemented by mine fields. Always stressing
the positive, Poole praised his small forces for
having "carried out its operations under most
difficult conditions to my entire satisfaction." Yet
the hard fact was that Poole's offensive had
stalled, having advanced only about half way toward
its objective of Kotlas. As Poole explained the
situation: "The approach of winter, lateness in
arriving stores and supplies of ammunition, and the
barges of supplies up the river have decided me not
to attempt a further advance toward Kotlas until the
spring."18

Now, two months after President Wilson's aide-
memoire of 17 July 1918 (which restricted American
troops in Russia to guarding military stores), did
two American battalions come to find themselves
engaged in a shooting war against the Bolsheviks deep
in the interior of North Russia? In the opinion of
the American soldiers the responsibility for their
predicament lay squarely in the lap of General Poole.
As summoned up by Captain Robert P. Boyd, Poole
naively thought that his name alone would work wonders, and
that the Russians would do the fighting while the
Allies supplied the supplies. But, explained Boyd,
the result was that "the Russians stole the supplies
and we did the fighting." Undoubtedly Poole richly
deserved criticism for his general egotism and
arrogance, for his establishment of a military
dictatorship at a time when Wilson was stressing
self-determination, and for his total underestimation
of the Bolsheviks' actual tenacity in command, General Edmund Ironside, that the Bolsheviks,
lacking officers and knowledge of warfare, would soon
be in a hopeless position and unable to stand up to
the avalanche that would bury them. However, the
general's disregard of the inept and feuding Russian
politicians at Archangel was fully justified in his
eyes inasmuch as Poole himself viewed the expedition as a wild gamble whose success depended upon ruthless efficiency rather than on a legalistic concern for democracy. Moreover, there is considerable doubt that Poole was even aware of the restrictions imposed by Wilson concerning the use of American troops until four weeks after the 339th Infantry landed at Archangel.

When Poole occupied Archangel on 2 August he operated under a vague set of orders that had been drafted on 18 May 1918 by General Henry Wilson, commander of the Imperial General Staff. Since at that time it was unknown whether the United States would even agree to participate in the intervention, Poole was told to organize the Czechs, White Russians, and whatever Allied forces arrived in North Russia. After the capture of Archangel, Poole was provided with a new set of instructions on 10 August, necessitated by the failure of the Czechs to penetrate to the northern ports. Once again Poole was told to make contact with the Czechs "and to secure with their assistance, control of the Archangel-Vologda-Ekaterinburg Railway and the river and railway line connecting Viatka and Archangel."

In the same time Poole was to recruit armed forces among the Russian population, support "any administration which may be friendly to the Allies," provide relief to the civil population, and engage in "judicious propaganda." Already, however, the War Office was having second thoughts about the practicality of linking the Czecho-Slovak and American intervention forces. Wilson had told that if he were unable to establish contact with the Czechs he should concentrate his efforts upon recruiting troops and upon organizing the defense of Archangel. Finally Poole was informed that no more troops could be sent, beyond the American battalions then in route, but his instructions failed to mention any restrictions upon the use of the Americans. 20

Poole was exasperated by the American ambassador David R. Francis, who had been present at Archangel since 9 August. Francis, despite difficulties in communicating with Washington, was not ignorant of the fact that Wilson had limited the role of American troops in Russia to guarding military stores. On 23 August Francis acknowledged receiving a cable from the State Department which stated Wilson's policy on the use of American troops. The president's 17 July aide-mémoire, however, was worded in such abstract terms that it was open to numerous interpretations. As an interventionist, Francis chose to interpret liberally Wilson's policy as sanctioning the pursuit of American supplies to wherever the Bolsheviks had shipped them, including Moscow and Petrograd. And in his communications with the State Department, Francis made his intention clear to conceal his views. A week before the arrival of the 339th Infantry, Francis reported that he would "encourage American troops if and when landed to proceed to such points in the interior as Kotlas, Sukhona, and Vologda" in order to reclaim military supplies "which the Soviet Government, in violation of its promises and agreements, has transferred to Archangel." In addition, Francis informed the State Department, he would "encourage American troops to obey the commands of General Poole in his effort to effect a junction with the Czechoslovaks." Francis did not justify assisting the Czechs as a step to protect war stores, but maintained that the actions would aid in suppressing the "menace" of Bolshevism which was "virtually inspired and directed from Germany." Because Francis mailed his dispatch it was not received in Washington until 15 October. However, in a cable sent the day before the arrival of the 339th Infantry at Archangel, Francis plainly stated that he would not object if General Poole asked permission to proceed to the interior. 21

Although Francis was seriously misinterpreting the policy of his own government, three weeks passed before Washington raised objections. The delay was especially unfortunate for the men of the 339th Infantry since during the first three weeks of September they were being deployed by General Poole into the most backward Russian interior. The war cabinet, however, was now cautious and approved Wilson's policy to end the American intervention. The cabinet, however, was now cautious and approved Wilson's policy to end the American intervention. 22
agreed to intervene at Murmansk and Archangel "with
very great reluctance and that its sole idea was that
the American troops sent there were for the sole
purpose of guarding certain military stores supposed
to have been left at those ports, and of preventing
the Germans from occupying those ports." It was not
his business to question Wilson's decision, wrote
Bliss, "and I accept it loyally."22

Based on the slim information coming from
Russia, President Wilson became increasingly irate
about Poole's direction of the campaign. As early
as 5 September Wilson complained to Lansing that
Poole was disregarding his wishes by seeking to bring
the Czechs westward (for use against the Bolsheviks)
instead of evacuating them to the east. Wilson's
dissatisfaction deepened as he received reports of
Poole's "high-handed" conduct in dealing with the
Chaikovsky government. By 18 September Wilson asked
Lansing to prepare a note reiterating his opposition to
any scheme for reforming the eastern front since
such an idea was "absolutely impracticable from a
military point of view and unwise as a matter of
political action." More than ever Wilson was
concerned that Poole's predictions were even less than
wishful thinking. The large number of Russian
volunteers counted upon by Poole had not materialized
and, wrote Wilson, "the situation is not at all what
it was anticipated that it would develop into."23

Finally, on 26 September, three weeks after the
arrival of the 303rd Infantry, Lansing formally
clarified American policy. Using an opportunity provided
by the president, Lansing notified Francis "that all
military effort in northern Russia [must] be given
up except the guarding of the ports themselves and
as much of the country round them as may develop
threatening conditions." But Francis was not
censured for encouraging Poole; rather, in the same
communication, he was told: "The course which you
have followed is most earnestly commended. It has
the entire admiration of the President who has
characterized it as being thoroughly American.
I highly approve of your actions. They have been
consistent and have been guided by a very sound
judgment exercised under the most trying and difficult
circumstances." Presumably Lansing's praise was meant
to only encourage the ambassador's encouragement of
an independent Russian government at Archangel rather
than to his support of Poole.24

Six days later (2 October 1918), Poole had "a
long and very friendly talk" with Francis in which
the ambassador produced Lansing's cable and explained
that the American troops were to be used only for
defensive purposes. "The Ambassador says in
confidence," Poole reported, "that he will take
a very liberal view of the latter part of this
order, but he is a man so easily influenced by the
last speaker, that it may easily raise an awkward
situation and hamper us in any operations as out
of 5 allied battalions here, 3 are American." This
setback did cause Poole to modify his plans by
relegating the American battalions to serve as base
and supply troops. "They cannot be taken into account
as troops destined for any further fighting," Poole
concluded. To replace the Americans Poole urged the
War Office to transfer from Murmansk four British
batteries as well as three British artillery
batteries. With the addition of these forces Poole
envisaged a winter campaign against Vologda along
the railroad. "If we succeed in reaching Vologda,"
he predicted, "we may well open up line to Viïata."25

By now only Poole retained enthusiasm for an
expansion of the conflict. At Versailles General
Bliss reiterated the American opposition to sending
reinforcements to Russia. In London, General Henry
Wilson backed away from Poole's grandiose plans and
told General Ironside on his departure for Archangel:
"Wishing business in North Russia is to be
confined to the fort until the local Russians can take the
field." Moreover, the military situation on the western front
was improving to the point where a campaign for "the
restoration of Russia... to enable the Russians to
again take the field... by the side of the Allies"
(the War Office's 10 August instructions to Poole) no
longer seemed necessary or feasible. By the surprise
of Ironside, Poole decided to present his case in
person to the War Office. Taking advantage of the
return of H.M.S. Attentive to England, Poole left
Archangel on 14 October for what was planned as a
short leave of thirty days. While Poole was on the
water the War Office rejected his proposal citing
the opposition of the Wilson administration as well
as material and logistic difficulties. On his arrival
in London Poole found that not only his plan had been
turned down but that he was being replaced by the
thirty-eight-year-old Ironside. The change in command
meant also a major change in strategy, as Ironside was
instructed that his operations were to be "limited to
the defensive and to the training of the Russians."26
To replace the unpopular Poole, General Henry Wilson selected a thirty-eight-year-old career officer with an unusual name—but one which beffited his profession—General William Edmund Ironside. Besides his distinctive name, Ironside was noted for his immense size; he stood six feet four inches tall and weighed well over 200 pounds. On very short notice he was selected to go to Russia. On 19 September he was still commander of an infantry brigade in France; twelve days later he arrived at Archangel on the S.S. Stephen, a vessel which also carried the nearly 500 members of the badly needed 16th Brigade of the Canadian Field Artillery. An expert linguist, Ironside already possessed a fluent command of the Russian language, but he frankly admitted, "I knew nothing of the northern region. Archangel was to me but a legend of Peter the Great and Richard Chancellor." Likewise, he found the Russian officers so far removed to be unfamiliar with the techniques of river and forest fighting as they "all, before the war, looked upon Archangel and the Northern Region as a horrible place of exile." Undaunted, Ironside found a reliable source of military advice in "the old and well-tried textbook, 'Small Wars,' which was found an infallible guide."

The new commander was a man of great energy and ambition, qualities which Poole also had possessed to a high degree. However, Ironside possessed several characteristics that his predecessor lacked. As a former staff officer he was well equipped to reorganize Poole's tangled administrative structure. Another of his attributes was a generous supply of humility that enabled Ironside philosophically to accept the inevitable nicknames that were applied to him, such as "Tiny," "Big Bill," or "Tin Ribs." He also made a practice of frequently and informally
mingling with soldiers and demonstrating his concern for their well-being by candidly inquiring about their needs. Colonel Stewart recalled an occasion in November when Ironside, uncharacteristically, took an interest in the number of letters each American soldier had received during the previous month. The first replied: "Twenty-two, Sir." Another replied in answer to the same query, "Thirty-four, Sir," and a third replied, "Sixty-two, Sir." The General said, "Never heard of such a thing, why I have been here two months and I have not yet gotten a letter from my family." At which there was a howl of mirth and we moved on."

Probably the most visible difference between the two British generals was that Ironside, in contrast to the tactless Poole, possessed considerable political ability. Indeed, the necessity of dealing with the Allied ambassadors, the Chaikovsky government, and a polyglot army required a first-rate politician. In this respect Ironside was a great success. As Ambassador Francis put it, "General Ironsides [sic] seems to have impressed everybody favorably." President Chaikovsky told Francis that he was very pleased by the general's respectful attitude toward his government. Even the American soldiers, who were universally critical of the British officer corps, respected their new commander. John Cudahy remembered Ironside as "a great tower of a man, the very embodiment of soldierly force and resolution." Another American characterized him as "a man and a soldier, par excellence. As a good politician, Ironside carefully concealed from the Americans his low opinion of their fighting ability and his conviction that the British army and its methods were far superior to those of the other Allies. Likewise, Ironside was tactful enough not to mention his real opinion of President Chaikovsky and his Socialist-Revolutionary party. In fact, he considered the president to be "an old plotter" who "was living quietly in the past," a representative of a party that had "no vigorous plan to put into effect." Short, Ironside soon came to share the views earlier expressed by Felix Cole in regard to the anti-Bolshevik intellectuals: "Their place is around the steaming samovar, not in the halls of government. Their invitation to enter Russia is an invitation from the Red Guards to their own people. They misjudge the temper of the Russian people to-day as badly as they did a year ago." Finally, his reputation as a diplomat not withstanding, Ironside could be even more hardboiled and intimidating than General Poole.

Certainly it took many months for the new commander to become acquainted with the personalities involved and to take stock of the troops at his disposal. Ironside was unable to make a personal inspection of his far-flung forces since he found the country to be "a sea of impassable mud," which made travel by airplane risky. At the same time, ice floes on the Dvina ruled out the use of seaplanes and barges. In fact the worsening weather was a blessing in disguise to the air force. Although there was a lull in the fighting, which lasted for much of the month of October.

On the railroad front the emphasis was now upon preparing a strong defensive position. First of all, the front line at verst 455 was strongly fortified with barbed wire entanglements (constructed from 40,000 rolls of wire found in Archangel), and these were supplemented by 316 shellproof blockhouses, 273 machine gunemplacements, and 167 infantry outposts. One of the most tedious and back-breaking jobs was constructing blockhouses and clearing lanes of fire through the dense timber. In the immediate vicinity of the blockhouses only underbrush was cleared. Ironside insisted that the blockhouses must be constructed in forest cover so as to be concealed from the enemy artillery. "In the open sky," he explained, "a blockhouse merely becomes a deathtrap." According to an American observer the defense was very skillfully prepared, the blockhouses being "well located for the protection of the flanks and approaches, giving mutual support by means of lanes and open fields through the timber. The case of operations was located nine verst from the rear. It consisted of several barracks, used primarily for medical purposes and Y.M.C.A. work, several blockhouses, and a high observation tower. Compared with the housing facilities available elsewhere in North Russia the troops of the railroad enjoyed luxury accommodations in converted railroad cars. The engineers insulated the walls with sawdust, and they installed bunks and stoves. Further to the rear at Oberskaya, where the Royal Air Force maintained a flying field, the train that housed the officers was equipped with steam heat supplied by an old engine and at dusk an electric light began operation. As summed up by a visiting Canadian, "All in all, it is a great reconstruction of the equipment of the railroad that has been undertaken." On the Bolshevist side similar winter preparations were undertaken as revealed by the sound of axes ringing across no man's land. With so much energy being spent on defense the fighting was
confined to an occasional clash of patrols or exchange of artillery fire.

The month of October on the Dvina front was also relatively uneventful as the troops worked at patrolling, drilling, holding target practice, and, when it was not raining, building fortifications. Shenkursk, the base for the American troops on the Vaga River, was a solidly constructed town of about 3,000, featuring brick and frame buildings, a monastery, and several churches. Ralph Albertson, a Y.M.C.A. worker at Shenkursk, described the place as "something of an educational center and summer resort..." There were many comfortable houses here, some mansions, some interesting people, a most comfortable place to spend the winter." And it was generally believed by the troops at Shenkursk that the worst was over; that they were going into winter quarters and that fighting would be suspended for the duration of the winter. In his diary Lieutenant Glen Weeks noted that much of his time was occupied with writing letters and opening mail, having his teeth cleaned, and shooting three wild turkeys which were served with an excellent peach pie. Other delicacies available in the vicinity included wild ducks, geese, partridge, and rabbit, as well as fish which could be easily caught after having been stunned with a hand grenade.6

Accommodations at Shenkursk and its outpost of Ust Padenga, eighteen miles upstream, were fairly adequate. Typically the troops were billeted in solidly constructed Russian homes, usually in the summer section of the house, which consisted of one large room equipped with single windows. The Russian family occupied the winter quarters, which were better insulated with thicker walls and double windows. Each house displayed an icon near the entrance, and, therefore, much bowing and genuflecting was required when coming and going. Many of the Americans found the constant crossing (after and before meals, upon taking a bath, entering or leaving the dining room) to be a curious but tedious custom. Heat for the home was provided by a large wood-burning brick stove. During the cold months it was common for the occupants to sleep near or on the stove. When the fire had died down to coals food was cooked in pots of earthenware crockery and customarily the family then dined from the same bowl using wooden spoons.7

During periods of intense cold, chickens, dogs, and even sheep and ponies were permitted to sleep near the stove. Needless to say, the circumstances were ideal for the flourishing of vermin. "I soon learned not to lean on the walls," recalled one pilot, "as the packing between the logs was full of bugs." Invariably the soldiers found themselves infested with these pests. The standard procedure for coping with these pests was to locate the lice with the use of wood or bone combs. "When found," recalled Hugh McPhail, "the louse would be placed on a thumbnail and the other thumbnail would be used to crack the louse with a decided plopping noise." To relieve boredom, races between giant lice known as Catholic squirrels (so named because of black crosses on their backs) were occasionally staged at the occupied table. The pests were completely disrespectful of rank; even Ambassador Francis had problems, and his servant Philip Jordan urgently requested from Mrs. Francis "two large boxes of gitits best roast powder or the best kind. I would appreciate this very much. Also three boxes rough on rats or the best. They crawl all over me at night. None to be had in Russia."8

Even frequent bathing in saunas, a standard feature of peasant homes, failed to dislodge all the vermin. Within the sauna there were usually three levels, with the most intense heat and steam being experienced on the higher platforms. Only the Russians were able to tolerate the upper levels. "Always there was the smell of the undertaker before following suit," noted one soldier. Despite the practice of steam bathing in the winter and river bathing in the summer, the troops were acutely aware of a persistent olfactory affront. The unique smell of Russia appeared to be a blend of sweat, sewage, manure, incense, and fish oil. Soapy American conscripts, according to one Russian immortalized it: "It's the land of the cootie and bed-bug,/ the herring and mud-colored crow./ My strongest impression of Russia/ gets into my head through my nose./ It's the land of the infernal odor,/ the land of the national smell./ The average American soldier/ would rather be quartered in hell."9

Still the troops became so accustomed to the Russian odor that, after leaving a barracks, they realized that something was different, "and it was some time before a clever Yank thought of the reason."10

Unfortunately the most bitter complaints were reserved for the British field ration. It consisted primarily of bully beef (a kind of corned beef from Argentina), Mc[eat] and V[eggie] [mixture (mainly vegetables and a gelatinous meat](mostly liquid of beef)] and jam. Unaccustomed to tea, the American troops greatly missed coffee; they found the biscuits (four inches long, two inches wide, and a quarter of an inch thick) almost impossible to break or soften;
and the jam, consisting of rhubarb and ginger, often concealed a pellet of lead that could break the teeth of the unwary. Equally unpopular were the "deer's ears" stews. "These were just impossible," recalled Hugh McPhail. "Even after a good three-day soak in warm water, the vegetables were as unpalatable-looking and as tough to eat as they looked." Captain Joel R. Moore recalled an occasion when the menu featured "grass stew," which was concocted from dehydrated vegetables, and one soldier gave his portion to a Russian woman. "She tasted it," recorded Moore, "and then threw it on some hay before the cow. The cow refused to eat either the "grass stew" or the hay." Then there was what one pilot characterized as "a revolting food I have not encountered elsewhere—tinned kidneys—which were apparently made by soaking balls of sawdust in a particularly nasty gravy."

Nevertheless, the cooks showed great ingenuity in disguising the British rations and with supplementing meals with local supplies of bread, eggs, and potatoes, as well as sausage and wiener, which it was suspected were stuffed largely with horse and dog meat. "Where," inquired a puzzled corporal, "is that half million dogs that were in Archangel when we arrived last September?" When the Americans were served "hansenpfennig" by the French they observed that a long feline tail decorated the plate. "Then we remembered the Frenchies throwing their bayonets at cats on the street with great accuracy. We didn't eat seconds."

At least on special occasions, the food was better than usual. A Thanksgiving menu of "Turkey a la Rusky," "Roast Beef a la Finish," "Kartophle a la Bolshevik," "Sauerkrat a la Berlin," "Tart a la Peach et Apricot," "Doughnuts—don't eat the center," "coffee au Lait," "Tobacco a Bull Durham," and "Cigars a la Etats Uni." If the winter quarters lacked all the comforts of home, they at least provided the Allied troops with relative safety once the initial fighting was over. The general sense of well-being and security seemed further justified by the Allies' control of the skies, which, at least in theory, should have given ample warning of possible Bolshevik attacks. Initially, however, the skies were played only a minor role in the campaign as it took several months for the Royal Air Force to develop flying facilities and to train pilots to cope with flying in arctic conditions. Originally General Poole's expedition was supplied with only eight DH-4 biplanes. At Archangel, however, the Allies were fortunate enough to discover, among the supplies previously sent to Russia, sufficient RE-8s, Nieuport 17s, and Sopwith 1 1/2 Strutters, to form two squadrons. To fly this improvised collection of aircraft, thirty young pilots arrived from England. The commander, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Reid Van der Spuy, was from South Africa, while the deputy commander, Lieutenant Colonel Robin Grey, was English. Almost half of the thirty pilots and observers were from Canada. Fresh from flight training in England, most had no more than twenty hours of flight time. Far more experienced were twenty-seven Russian aviators, veterans of the Russian Flying Corps, whose bravery and skill came as a pleasant surprise.

Four flying fields were maintained. The headquarters was established at Archangel where two permanent hangars were constructed. They featured double walls insulated with sawdust, wooden floors, wood-burning stoves, and such amenities as electric lights and a telephone. Here was located the main machine shop of the expedition, where £30 men were kept busy assembling, repairing, and overhauling aircraft. Nearby at Bakaritsa there was a long and narrow (400-by-150-yard) field destined for winter use. A seaplane station equipped with hangars and a crane was also located here. Further inland at Oberskaya, Flight A, equipped with DH-4s, operated from a funnel-shaped clearing in the woods. The fourth base was at Beresnik on the Dvina River, from which Flight B flew Sopwith Strutters, RE-8s, and Nieuport 17s. Only canvas hangars were available at Oberskaya and Beresnik and in these, only minor repairs were ordinarily performed.

Keeping track of Bolshhevik positions was the first task of the novice flyers. To their discomfort they soon discovered that the geography and climate were of the most difficult nature imaginable. Few natural landing places existed in the forests and swamps of North Russia. Therefore, explained Lieutenant Colonel Gray:

A forced landing when flying across country is almost certain to mean a bad crash, and at the best the loss of a machine. Even if the crash should not be very serious, extreme difficulty is experienced in rendering assistance owing to inaccessibility. Any machine forced to land in swamp or forest can seldom, if at all, be salvaged.
Even with a compass it is extremely difficult to keep direction in these forests, and going is very slow. Should both pilot and observer be injured on crashing in the forest the chances of their being saved are nil. Even if only one of the occupants was injured, the chances of rescuing him in time, during the winter, are exceedingly small, as the temperature at night frequently exceeds 60 degrees (Fahr.) of frost. Apart from this the relief party would in all probability be unable to find the machine.14

Engine failure was a depressingly frequent occurrence. With the ever present possibility of mechanical trouble in mind, the pilots were instructed to keep either the railroad or the river in sight at all times. By so doing it was hoped to facilitate rescue should the possibility of the machine becoming lost over the heavily forested terrain. The least reliable of the aircraft were the DH-4s and the RE-8s. In a typical incident an DH-4 returning from a bombing raid crashed in a swamp thirty miles south of Archangel when the engine "conked." The pilot and observer, who were luckily unhurt, struggled through the forest for a while before being found. When they came to the railroad and safety, the first search party sent to salvage the wreckage was unable to locate the machine. On the second attempt the plane was found with the aid of bearings provided from the air. Despite clouds of mosquitoes, thirty laborers then constructed a road of logs and, over a five-day period, hauled the fuselage to the railroad. At the end it was concluded that the plane was so badly damaged as not to have been worth such an extensive salvage effort.15

Six RE-8s which left Archangel for Beresnik also developed problems. Only five planes arrived, because the motor of the sixth jammed in the air causing the propeller to break apart. Fortunately the pilot was able to land in a frozen marsh and was brought out the next day by woodcutters using a sleigh. Another of the RE-8s was soon lost when it was struck by machine-gun fire and crashed in trees in Bolshevist-controlled territory. The two Canadian pilots, believing they were too close to the enemy to burn the wreckage, left their "bus in the trees and marched snowward through deep snow. Suffering from exhaustion and frostbitten feet, they reached the Allied lines three days later. A few days afterward two other Canadians experienced a close call when it was discovered that a bullet had pierced their control column without, for some reason, striking either the pilot or observer. Not so fortunate were two Russian flyers who were killed when their plane was hit by machine-gun fire and crashed at an elevation of 1,000 feet. Due to the volume and accuracy of Bolshevist ground fire, the Allied aviators became a good deal more careful about flying lower than was absolutely necessary.16

Overloading by the inexperienced ground crews at Beresnik accounted for the disabling of another RE-8. On the day of the Armistice a British pilot, accompanied by observer Frank Shrieve of Hamilton, Ontario, attempted to take off with four twenty-pound Cooper bombs under each wing, in addition to four drums of machine-gun ammunition and a 200-pound bomb attached to the undercarriage. The plane managed to become airborne, but in the process struck a stump, lost its left wheel, and suffered serious damage to the wing stabilizer wires. The pilot was ordered to "drop those bloody bombs," but due to a jammed cable only the four under the right wing released, falling near the headquarters and causing "one hell of a panic." The 200-pounder was disposed of over the river (where the explosion lifted the crippled plane some fifty feet and woke the town of Beresnik). Finally, the pilot managed to crash land on a right wheel with four bombs hanging from their safety hooks. Except for a badly smashed plane, the only serious damage was sustained by the outhouse at headquarters which required extensive remodeling. "Quite a day," noted Shrieve in his diary, "and I have learned why the R.armor. F. [lying] C. [corps] and now the R.royal A. [ir] F. [corps] are reputed to be prone to good whiskey."17

The observer's taste for this potent British beverage was no doubt stimulated by a narrow brush with disaster experienced during his next flight in an RE-8. Taking the place of a sick observer, Shrieve accompanied an English pilot who was instructed to bomb a house with a blue roof located at a village fifteen miles inside Bolshevist territory. Once the target was reached it was discovered that all the roofs were covered with snow and "we couldn't tell one from another." As a compromise, the eight Cooper bombs were dropped on several river barges that were the nearest available targets. Next the village was showered with propaganda leaflets. Several of the paper leaflets jammed in the rudder control wires so that the plane was able to turn in one direction only. The solution was for Shrieve to crawl on his stomach to the tail, punch a hole through the fabric, and remove the leaflets. "This I did," he recorded,
"but getting back to the cockpit was another matter, as my feet threatened to go through the bottom canvas, and to be honest I sure was scared." To prevent a reoccurrence of this "harrowing experience," it was decided in the future to insert propaganda leaflets inside of cigarette packages containing one cigarette each so as to avoid fouling the rudder control wires.18

With the arrival of winter the Allies' aviation apparatus had progressed from a curiosity to a valuable force for reconnaissance, for bombing Bolshevik boats, guns, and villages, as well as for directing artillery fire and distributing propaganda. Ordinarily flying would have been suspended during the months of intense cold so as not to risk unnecessarily the planes and pilots. Unfortunately for the Allies, the Bolsheviks had no intention of sitting out the winter.

Some Unpleasant Surprises

For the first two months the North Russian campaign was a modest success. Almost immediately General Poole realized that he had no chance of reaching Vologda or Kotlas before winter. Therefore, Poole concentrated upon securing what he had already occupied and upon recruiting an army of Russians that was optimistically expected to reach 15,000 or 20,000. Led by the French, Allied troops were able to penetrate south 100 miles on the Vologda Railroad. On the Dvina and its tributary the Vaga the British and Americans also made impressive progress by capturing the cities of Tulgas and Shenkursk. The latter was regarded as the most important city of the region except for Archangel. And in the third week of October a company of Americans traveling by barge easily occupied Pineda, a city of 3,000 inhabitants, and several nearby villages.

Unlike the fighting in France, the front was not continuous. The Allies only held strategic strong points; great expanses of swamp, forest, and tundra were left unoccupied. In developing what General Finlayson called "a forward protective screen," it was necessary to establish good lateral communications. The British objective was to base the defense on a line extending in the west from Onega to Plesetskaya (on the railroad) to Shenkursk (on the Vaga) to Puchega (on the Dvina). As it turned out, two of the objectives were unattainable: the Allies were unable to capture either Plesetskaya or Puchega. In his memoirs, General Ironside graciously credited Poole with having achieved much "with great dash and vigour." Writing to the War Office on 8 November 1918, Ironside also praised Poole. "I think," he stated, "that what has already been done by the military command here is extraordinary as the material they have had to deal with has been so extraordinarily
bad both from physique and training." Yet, as the American Joseph Cudahy noted in his memoir of the campaign, "...before these forces had been salted, already the Vaga Expedition had gone too far, thrust out nearly one hundred miles from the Railway, and fifty miles further south than the Dvina River party, it presented inviting opportunity for enemy encirclement."

For the Allies and their new British commander some unpleasant surprises were in store. One shock was the realization that the Bolsheviks had no intention of suspending the fighting. General Finlayson, the highly regarded officer whom Ironside appointed to command the Allied forces on the river, expressed the generally held view when he wrote on 6 October, it is believed that the Bolsheviks will close down operations for the winter. "Thus," he cannot imagine that in the present state of the weather and the roads the enemy will attempt to move this side of Kotlas." Yet the Bolsheviks, displaying superiority in long-range artillery, unexpectedly renewed the campaign on 19 October. Two weeks previously the British naval flotilla on the Dvina, fearing the imminent freezing of the river at Archangel. The withdrawal, which left the Dvina Force without heavy artillery support, was premature by at least a month. Exploiting their advantage, the Bolshevik flotilla of twenty boats supported by 1,700 infantry launched an artillery barrage which, Ironside reported, "outclassed and outranged our field battery and had rendered completely harmless the Bolsheviks' ...and some Vickers machine guns had to be abandoned after being rendered useless." The Bolshevik attack, Finlayson recalled, "completely overpowered our troops," forcing them to retreat ten miles from Seltso to a new defensive line at Tulgas. The disparity in artillery continued after the freezing of the Dvina in early November as the Bolsheviks unloaded their guns for winter use. Ironside concluded, "he was better in his information by 3 weeks and caused us considerable annoyance and losses.""1

The third month of the campaign also revealed severe shortcomings in the training, leadership, and morale of the Allied forces, especially on the river front. Just a month after arriving at Archangel, Ironside received a dispatch that he had received impressions concerning the forces under his command: "1. The poor quality of the Commanders sent out to Russia [and] 2. The poor quality of the troops." Only the best troops and commanders, he maintained, could be expected to cope with the extended fronts and isolated conditions. "The distances are enormous," Ironside pointed out. "Forces are completely isolated when they have started and if the Column Commander has no complete heart this goes wrong. Only the responsibility upon one of these Column Commanders is very much greater than on a Battalion Commander in France and yet the level of such officers is exceedingly low and a very large number of them have not the slightest knowledge of military matters.""3

Illustrative of these deficiencies was the sorry performance of a company of Royal Scots, members of a famous regiment, when they, together with a company of Russians and Poles, attacked Kuliga village, between Tulgas and Seltso on 27 October. Apparently a Bolshevik spy had alerted the defenders, who launched a vigorous counterattack that cost seventy-seven Allied casualties. Only the Poles and eight Canadian and British artillerymen performed well in covering the Allied retreat. "These men," Finlayson reported, "behaved themselves as soldiers should, were the last to withdraw and in consequence came away unharmed, having made their presence very severely felt by the enemy." But both the Russians and the Royal Scots succumbed to panic. At the first sign of enemy the Poles bolted and, after their officers were killed, two platoons of Royal Scots likewise fled. When Finlayson questioned several of the Scots as to why they had lost their arms and equipment, "the answer generally received was 'they prevented me from running fast enough' and the speakers in some cases were not ashamed of their feelings. ..." Four eighteen-pounder guns, the men said, 'is not the kind of work for 'b' category men to have to do and we never expected it.'"

In Finlayson's opinion much of the explanation for the poor showing was that none of the men had been a soldier before the war and only 10 percent had seen service in France. "Add to that," he noted, "the fact that all these men were told by the doctors in England that they were unfit for winter levels, so that they would have a 'cushy holiday' in Russia, then one can see the difficulties which present themselves with every move." Only a thorough reorganization and reinforcement could remedy the troops' "faint heartedness." In the opinion of Ironside the Royal Scots were "certainly not fit to carry out active operations in France. They have carried out Garrison duties but that is all." From a purely military standpoint the setback was not of great significance, but the psychological effect was devastating. "Such a minor disaster," Ironside wrote, "...cannot but have the worst effect upon the people of this country who look to us as unlike
people who have come to assist them." As a result of the failure at Kuliga, concluded Finlayson, "British prestige is suffering very greatly, not only in the eyes of our friends the Poles, the Americans and the few Russians who help us, but we are descending without a doubt in the eyes of even the Bolsheviks."  

According to a memorandum possessed by Colonel George Stewart, the commander of the 339th Infantry, the Royal Scots—about two weeks after their disgraceful performance at Kuliga—found themselves already tarnished reputation. Stewart's memorandum was provided by First Lieutenant Charles E. Lewis and purported to be "a true extract" from a confidential report filed by General Finlayson in which he described an attack on 14 November by 140 Bolsheviks upon a village that constituted the outer defenses on the west bank of the Dvina.

This village was held by 30 Royal Scots under Lt. Dalziel. The result of this attack for us was not glorious for Lt. Dalziel appears to have been the only man who showed any resistance. He was shot through the neck in the first few minutes and thereafter the whole of the rest of the men took to flight, even passing Lieut. Dalziel as he lay upon the ground wounded and not even offering to help carry him away.

A woman inhabitant of the village reports that Lt. Dalziel could not stand up as the Bolsheviks approached, but raised himself on his elbow and attempted to draw his revolver, whereupon two Bolsheviks stepped up to him and clubbed him on the head with their rifle butts, killing him outright. His body was recovered later, and its appearance helps to bear out this statement.

Just how Lewis acquired the Finlayson report is not clear. But although the original has apparently not survived, Stewart's memorandum appears to be authentic: its writing is stylistically similar to that of Finlayson's and the unsavory incident described is not dissimilar from the conduct of the Royal Scots at Kuliga. The accumulation of such troubles will have contributed to the exhaustion of General Finlayson, who in December was hospitalised by his doctors to return to England. For Ironside the departure of Finlayson was "a severe blow," as there was no experienced replacement available to take his place.  

The 1,650-man French Colonial Infantry received far more favorable reviews during its first two months in the field. But by October the French were physically and morally demoralized by the terms of an armistice on the western front. Moreover, the French commander, in Ironside's opinion, "proved himself weak and useless." On two separate occasions the French troops on the railroad refused to obey orders to advance toward Plesetskaya. As a result, reported Ironside, "I had personally to go and interview both officers and men accompanied by the French Military Attaché." The battalion, he found, "was in a thoroughly disaffected state. The men, encouraged by some of the younger officers, have openly stated that, if there is an armistice in France, they do not intend to fight and this attitude was acquiesced in by the Battalion Commander, hence the increase in ill-discipline in the Battalion." Despite the efforts of Ironside and French ambassador Noël to restore order, the French soon degenerated into what Finlayson termed "a sullen band of strikers and shirkers, who increase the difficulties of the commander enormously."  

Worst of all the Allied troops, in the opinion of the French generals, were the Americans of the 339th Infantry, Ironside observed: "I have seen many American Regiments in France and had them under my command but I have never seen anything quite so bad as this Regiment which consists of a very large proportion of foreigners—Poles, Russians and Jews." Many of the soldiers from Detroit, complained Finlayson, "were not even supplied with Ironside's opinion "this was the very worst class of material to send out to Russia," because the Russian-speaking soldiers were easily influenced by Bolshevik ideas and propaganda which they disseminated to their fellows. Ironside conceded that the Americans, unlike the disaffected French, would obey orders, but his estimate of the military value of the 339th Infantry was devastating: "The Regiment had received absolutely no training and the officers were, one and all, of the lowest value imaginable." Without exception the officers were "quite incapable of commanding any force of any size. They are inexperienced to a degree that I have never seen before in American troops in France. On one occasion troops..."  

In conclusion, Ironside concurred in Ironside's assessment, noting that while a few members of the 339th Infantry were "truly American and stouthearted," the majority...
were "not soldiers, never will be and show a very poor morale." The only American contingent to escape the wrath of the British generals was the 339th Engineers whose skill in repairing bridges and constructing defenses won consistent praise.

Much of the blame for the apparent ineptness of the 339th Infantry was placed at the door of its commander, Colonel George E. Stewart. According to Ironside, Colonel Stewart was "not a man of much energy. Under his command his Regiment has been found out with various columns and he himself has taken no command in military operations. I do not think he would have been capable of undertaking any operations." This critical assessment was written not long after Ironside had had a "disappointing" interview with Stewart in the colonel's Archangel office. To Stewart's surprise, Ironside asked him to take over command of the railroad front. After thinking the offer over for a few minutes, Stewart declined on the ground he would be exceeding his instructions if he were to leave Archangel. And even though Ironside "pressed him hard" he would not change his mind.

Soon Ironside recorded that Stewart was having a "particularly hard time" in controlling serious misconduct on the part of his officers. "We have had numerous cases amongst the American Officers from living with women to selling the men's rations and embezzlement of funds. There have been cases of cowardice also." Furthermore, complained Ironside, Stewart was either unwilling or unable to make the American officers assigned as warehouse sentries understand that they were there to stop pilfering and trafficking in supplies by American troops. "It is this fact," noted Richardson, "which makes it impossible for me to recommend Colonel Stewart for an award for meritorious service in this Northern Russian Campaign."

Only General Poole seems to have been more unpunishingly of Colonel Stewart. Practically speaking, no one, either at the time or afterward, had much praise for him. Soldiers who served under Stewart criticized him for remaining in Archangel with the "steam heat" troops while they served in the field under severe conditions. He was accused of having weakly abandoned his command to the British, and criticized for failing to offer a coherent explanation as to why the expedition was fighting in Russia at all. One soldier blithely added, "He was not a great success as a 1st lieutenant under his commanding officer. He fell down under his great responsibility." An even blunter judgment came from another soldier who recalled Stewart as "our very weak half-assed commander." Nevertheless, his qualifications appeared to well suit Stewart for his difficult assignment. At the age of nineteen, Stewart had immigrated to the United States from his native Australia. Entering the army as a private in 1899, he rose rapidly to the rank of second lieutenant in 1899. That same year he distinguished himself during the Philippine Insurrection by winning the Congressional Medal of Honor. "While crossing a river in the face of the enemy," read his citation, "his officer plunged in and at immediate risk of his own life saved from drowning an enlisted man of his regiment." Promotions to first lieutenant and captain soon followed. From 1908 to 1910 Stewart was commander of a post in Alaska and he found that experience was invaluable to him when he went to about the same latitude in Russia during the war." Once America entered World War I, experienced military men were in short supply and Stewart was made a temporary major in 1917 and to colonel a year later. He was forty-six years old when he arrived at Archangel. Almost immediately Stewart found himself in an untenable position. Everything that went wrong was blamed on him. He was criticized by the British for the failure of the railway column to capture Vologda. And, as all too well, the troops were in the British food ration and delays in the sending of winter equipment. No doubt Stewart was confused as to what his role should be. A few weeks after arriving at Archangel, Stewart was told by the War Department that for "tactical purposes and for administrative matters involving the entire command" he was to follow the orders of the British commander. Only "matters of internal administration" remained under Stewart's jurisdiction. Most of his time was, therefore, spent in Archangel attempting with a small staff to cope with bureaucratic details. Ironside urged Stewart to leave his headquarters and make frequent trips to the field "so that his men could see that he was still in command." But to visit his troops invariably placed Stewart in a perilous position, as his men were serving under the British flag and under British officers. To all observers it must have been obvious that Stewart was not in command and was basically powerless. On one occasion Ironside asked Stewart to send him the names of soldiers who were performing
good work so that he might award them ribbons and medals. "I could do what I will," recorded the frustrated Colonel, 'I would give millions to have the power to do that.'

In his occasional visits to the troops Stewart, instead of inspiring confidence, invariably created a bad impression. During a short trip to the railroad front in October, for example, the colonel appeared to be preoccupied and hurriedly left for Archangel without taking the time to attend a funeral service for three Americans. As First Lieutenant Jakubowski pointed out, the troops were resentful since "they expected their Colonel to be present at the ceremony of burial of his first three men killed in action, which he could have done by remaining five minutes additional to what he had already remained."

At Shenkursk, two months later, Stewart dropped his mitten on a porch and made himself appear foolish by insinuating that someone had stolen it. Neither was Stewart, nor anyone else for that matter, able to provide a convincing rationale for fighting a war against the Bolshevics. Addressing troops on the Dvina front, Stewart remarked that his work at Archangel was just as difficult as theirs, if not more so. The soldiers, reported the correspondent, "were very disappointed by the talk he made to them as it did not explain what they were here for."

Possibly Stewart erred by rejecting Ironside's offer to become commander of the railroad front. However, acceptance of the position would not have allayed the fact that he was essentially a high-level clerk who ranked beneath Ironside and Ambassador Francis in the Archangel power structure. The departure of the ill ambassador on the Olympia in early November left Stewart as the highest ranking American at Archangel, but the colonel still had little voice in determining the disposition of the American troops. Perhaps a more politically minded leader might have been more successful in establishing rapport with the infantrymen and in inspiring respect for his office. But fundamentally the troops were complaining not so much about Stewart's policies, but about being ordered to fight in Russia after the war had ended in Europe. Essentially his position was an impossible one and it is hardly surprising that the emaciated colonel developed a painful case of stomach ulcers besides suffering an attack of appendicitis.

According to General Richardson, much of the criticism of the American commander was attributable to "Colonel Stewart's temperament and to a certain lack of diplomatic finesse." Also, as Richardson pointed out, Stewart was sent to Russia "without an experienced and competent staff" and as a result Stewart was overly burdened with administrative details. In his own defense, Stewart maintained that his critics "only knew what had occurred in their own little sector." Therefore, they had little appreciation of the overall situation and simplistically blamed Stewart for their troubles.

A further disappointment for Ironside was the unspectacular pace of recruiting among the Russian population. A prime assumption of British policy had been that the Allied kingdom would produce a "revulsion of feeling" that would lead to the appearance of a substantial anti-Bolshevik army. Under Poole the main recruiting effort was directed toward organizing a Slavo-British Legion. But only about three thousand "motley" volunteers came forth and of these only five hundred were fit for service. To the Americans the apathetic response of the army Russians was incomprehensible considering the stakes involved. As expressed by First Lieutenant William F. Higgins: "These people are fighting for their own homes, families and their lives and really everything they have, and I never saw a bigger bunch of cowards. They won't turn over a hand to help themselves. They expect us to do it all." The Russian is totally averse to any voluntary action on his own part," Ironside observed. "Order him, and he will do what you order him to do, but of initiative he has none." According to an American observer, the members of the Slavo-British Legion were "utterly unreliable—they are in it only for the food they get—rationnaires as the French say."

Far more emphasis was placed upon developing a Russian National Army through a general mobilization that began in earnest during the month of October. Eventually almost 18,000 troops of questionable ability were gathered, but initial progress was unimpressive. The Chalkovsky government, which had been briefly deposed by Chaplin's military coup, proved extremely cautious about creating a new army which might be used against it. As of 1 October only 1,500 troops had joined the new army and they were characterized by Ironside as "mostly old soldiers and returned prisoners of war, unorganized and distinctly mutinous." Finding qualified Russian officers to lead these troops proved a serious problem for Ironside. New from the Kremlin General Boris Douroff of the Ironside Staff T. Samarim "were possessed of any outstanding qualities." Douroff had gained his position, Ironside claimed, by "ingratiating" himself with President Chalkovsky, but he was "weak and without energy." Samarim, in Ironside's opinion, was even worse. "He
is a man of no military value and knows it. None of the old regime officers will serve under him," Ironside reported. "He it was who signed the order abolishing saluting in the Russian Army [under the Provisional Government of Alexander Kerensky]. He was absolutely unsuited for his position; I might even call him stupid."15

The dispute between Ironside and the generals appointed by Chaikovsky came to a head on 31 October when the Archangel Regiment of the Russian Navy, which had refused an order by Samarim to parade. The men shouted "We will not salute," "Increase the bread ration," and "Abolish the order concerning saluting." Samarim then interviewed the soldiers "allowing them to crowd round with cigarettes in their mouths while explaining their grievances." Samarim stated that no attention need be paid the requirement that soldiers must salute their officers. Ironside was especially outraged to learn that "General Samarim actually used the word Tovarish or comrade to one soldier, and said that he was glad to shake hands with a true Russian who would not be ordered about by foreign officers. I at once saw the President and informed him that if General Samarim did not resign both officers and that day I should at once try them by Court Martial for inciting mutiny and discontent. After a stormy interview I gained my point." The next day (2 November) the elderly president reluctantly removed both men from office. Douroff then went into exile in England, while Samarim enlisted as a private in the British foreign legion. His immediate superior was Corporal Leonid I. Strakovsky, who later distinguished himself as the author of the standard scholarly study of the Archangel intervention. Actually Samarim was only a private for a few months before being made a captain and a company commander.16

The undisciplined condition of the Russian troops at Archangel continued for the next few weeks despite Ironside's efforts to force the men to work under the direction of British officers. But in Ironside's opinion the British training staff was itself deficient. The officers selected as instructors, complained Ironside, appeared to have been culled from "the scum of the officers of England," and the general found it necessary to return several "useless" instructors to England. "If I could force the difficulties of selecting officers for a 'side show' like this," Ironside stated, "but a drunken officer is the worst kind of man to send to this country where he may be sent to an isolated post under no supervision." Likewise, President Chaikovsky was not much help in establishing military discipline. Despite the mutiny, the elderly president continued to believe that a democratic army could be created on the Kerensky model. And he immersed himself in such bureaucratic minutiae as personally writing a decree abolishing the office of assistant governor-general for civil affairs, and in issuing "Regulations pertaining to the proper procedure during the meetings of the Provisional Government," "Estimates of expenditures for salaries of the Regional State Bank," and "Rules to be effected in the wording of some articles of the Postal-Telegraph statutes."17

A slight improvement in discipline occurred following the arrival from Paris on 17 November of General Vladimir V. Marushevsky. He had previously commanded Russian troops on the western front, but Marushevsky was a strange choice as a disciplinarian because of his diminutive stature. In contrast to the six-foot-four Ironside he stood only about five feet tall and the soldiers said of him: "Whether he sits or stands it is all the same." Upon his arrival Ironside informed Marushevsky that "we must enforce discipline at once and deal with any trouble with a severe hand, and that I was prepared to support him." After three weeks of drilling the two generals agreed that the time had come "to put the matter of discipline to the test." Thus, on the afternoon of 11 December, Ironside ordered a parade of the 1,750-man Archangel Regiment prior to its being sent to the railroad front. Instead of turning out as ordered the men mutinied and locked themselves in the Arbat and Nevsky barracks. "The situation was easily dealt with," Ironside recounted, "by firing a couple of shots from a Stokes Mortar into the Barracks. The men came out quickly and fell in, delivering up thirteen men voluntarily as the leaders of the mutiny, and these were executed at once."18 Although the regiment departed for the front only three hours behind schedule the incident was hardly reassuring. Nor was the execution of thirteen men, without even the pretense of a trial, a flattering commentary on the democratic principles of the North Russian government.

Morale among the American and western European troops was certainly far better than among the Russians. In fact, the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918 produced a general mood of elation. The troops believed that the end of the war in France meant that their war was about to end as well. "Wild reports of immediate demobilisation at home, and the impossibility of giving a definite policy aggravated matters," noted Ironside. Until the Armistice the campaign had been justified as
essential to contain German ambitions in Russia. After the Armistice the purpose of the mission was decidedly ambivalent. When the V.M.C. Officer Ralph Albertson toured the fronts in December he found that "Everywhere, on every occasion, I was asked persistently and importantly, 'What are we here for? 'The Armistice is signed, why are we fighting?' 'What have we against the Bolsheviks?' The American and Canadian troops were particularly outspoken in their resentment at being at war at all, and at being sent against nobody and for nothing in particular when the rest of the world had stopped fighting." Ironside reported that he was forced to spend much of his time combating talk among British officers "the tenour of which has been 'We've done our bit, why stay and fight for these damned Russians, who have always let us down.'"

If the British troops were inclined to blame the Russians for their difficulties, the dispirited Americans universally blamed the British. Antagonism between the two "allies" dated from the first day of the campaign. General Poole inaugurated a policy of elevating British officers to temporary ranks higher than those of the other Allied officers. From the British point of view it was only sensible for their officers to outrank those of their allies so as to insure a logical chain of command. In a conversation with Colonel Stewart, Ironside defended the practice on the ground that only the British had provided "troops of all arms and a complete service of administration." In practice, lower-ranking British officers were frequently less than tactful. In the words of Ralph Albertson: "They set their own petty officers upon the Americans in a manner that was most irritating to American national self-esteem and bitterly resented." Albertson also recalled hearing English soldiers singing an insulting version of the popular song "Over There," which began with "The Yanks are coming, the Yanks are running everywhere," and concluded, "And they didn't do a damn thing about it over there." General Wilds P. Richardson also found an overbearing spirit of superiority on the part of the British command. British policy, Richardson reported, "has not been one, in any sense, of cooperation with their Allies, but merely of employing such forces as were obtainable from the other Allies, some of which were very significant of British policy. Richardson soon after his arrival in April 1919, said Richardson, he discovered that "I would fulfill the expectations concerning myself, provided that I should see that the troops under me obeyed the orders issued by the British command, and that my officers and men conducted themselves with due and proper respect to officers in the British service."

Among American infantrymen, virulent Anglophobia was widespread. One soldier, whose letter was discovered by military censors, unwisely wrote, "We are under British control. Mind you the English own us; they can do with us as they please. Good God you can't believe how those English officers are hated around here. They have Officers that out rank our officers. If one of our Officers is promoted as high as theirs, they promote one higher again. And just think we must do as they say and the God damn fools are of more harm than good. They can't fight.

Would you believe it? We haven't enough men or supplies to fight with. The Bols [slang for Bolsheviks] have better Artillery than we have and they can use it also. Of course its English doings. But think of the disgrace to the Americans who are pushed in to this dead fire by those English, and must be hotter, which an American hates to do. It's hell I'm telling you.

Another soldier was detected writing "contemptuous and disrespectful words" against the president of the United States for expressing the view that British diplomats "pulled the wool" over Woodrow Wilson's eyes and for saying that Wilson had permitted the 39th Infantry to be used as "mere toys in the hands of Englishmen." Lieutenant Henry Katz, who had written "censored, O.K." on the envelope containing the critical epistle, was directed to explain "why it was that he made such endorsement upon a letter containing such criticisms of the President, of the conduct and policy of the Government and of our British allies."

General Ironside was not held personally responsible by the Americans for their difficulties. A consummate politician, Ironside established a universal reputation for fairness. According to John Cudahy, Ironside conducted the campaign with "inspiring leadership, with unfailing heartsome courage" and he "won the sympathy of all by his rare tact and understanding." Richardson was very impressed with the overall quality of the British officers, was another enthusiastic admirer. In his final report on operations, Richardson wrote: "High credit, in my judgment and the judgment of all with whom I have spoken, is due to the Allied
Commander-in-Chief, Major General Ironside, for his resolute spirit and inspiring example of soldierly qualities, coupled with rare good judgment in the exercise of command over these diverse and restless elements."

Yet, Ironside had great difficulty in impressing on many of his arrogant and supercilious officers the wisdom of following his own example of tactful leadership. In the tradition of General Poole, the British officer corps often displayed a spirit of contemptuous superiority such as was customary in dealing with native troops of the British Empire. As one soldier summed up the American dilemma: "So there we were—British food, British tobacco, Russian guns and under the command of the British." Declining hours of daylight, bitterly cold weather, the closing of Archangel by ice, and the realization that there was no end in sight to the campaign further added to the general feeling of melancholia. At least the dispirited American troops in the field were furnished the same liquor allowance as the British. "The value of the rum ration was more proved than ever," concluded Ironside, "and I wish I could have had some of the placid prohibitionists on sentry go for an hour in 74 degrees of frost, and they would have changed their opinions as to whether it should be issued or not."23

6

The Start of Winter Fighting

Demonstrating a familiarity with the terrain and ignoring the arctic winter, the Bolsheviks gradually took the offensive against the overextended Allied forces. At 7:45 a.m. on 11 November, the very day the war ended on the western front, the Bolsheviks launched a surprise attack against the American defenses at Tulgas on the west bank of the Dvina. According to accounts obtained afterwards from prisoners, the 600 attackers left Selsbo on 9 November marching through woods and swamps and camping without fires. Attacking across an undefended marsh, the Bolsheviks came very close to capturing the town. As recounted by Ironside, the day was saved "by the exceedingly gallant behavior of the drivers of a Canadian battery." Reversing their guns, they opened fire at point-blank range "and annihilated a strong enemy force which had got round the rear of our forces and threatened them with capture." The next day five enemy gunboats, positioned just out of the range of the Canadian artillery, took advantage of thawing conditions to unleash a devastating barrage. Much of the damage was inflicted by a barge armed with two six-inch guns. As described by one diarist:

At 8 a.m. a shell hit the hay stack a few feet from us, at 10 a.m. they were dropping all around... at 11 a.m. one hit the base of the blockhouse covering our Vickers [machine gun] with sand. At 11:30 one hit the roof—3 killed and 5 wounded, a piece of shell went in my hand and shoulder, we crawled out and they opened fire, a bullet went through my overcoat, crawled to first house, there's a horrible sight inside, the whole family outside of a little girl, lay
killed. [Private Charles] Bell was lying there seriously wounded, helped dress wounds, a shell hit the building as we lay huddled together. Finally, darkness came and with that our relief, feel all broken up inside. ¹

For the next two days the sleepless Americans were subjected to constant artillery fire. Yet the Bolsheviks were apparently too weakened to attempt further ground assaults. Furthermore, British airplanes from Beresnik aided the American line, strafing the Bolsheviks by bombing and machine gunning the Bolshevik flotilla. Not so helpful, however, was a strangely timed telegram sent to Captain Robert Boyd by the British quartermaster from the opposite side of the Dvina. Despite the constant shelling, Boyd was instructed immediately to account for thirty-six scaves for which proper receipts had not been issued. Finally, on 14 November as snow began falling, the Bolshevik shelling slackened and the exhausted Americans launched a counterattack that regained their original position. To improve the defenses of Tulgas the Allies proceeded to burn the small village of Upper Tulgas after giving the despairsing inhabitants three hours to remove their possessions. ²

Meanwhile the Vaga column experienced increased pressure. Lieutenant Glen Weeks, who was stationed at the most advanced American outpost of Ust Padenga (located eighteen miles from Shenkursk), recorded in his diary numerous instances of increased Bolshevik activity. On 13 November a four-man patrol fell into a trap from which only one escaped. The three victims were "mutilated badly." Four days later "we caught two spies trying to find out our position, outpost strength, etc. Lieutenant [Francis W.] Cuff [of Rio, Wisconsin], Lieutenant [J.D.] Winslow [of the Canadian Field Artillery], and myself took one of them out in the woods and shot him." The next day in honor of the first sunny day in three weeks, "we went out and buried [the body]." ³ On 29 November an American patrol of sixty men, seeking to discover the exact location of the Bolsheviks, ran into a strongly defended position in a forest clearing. An enemy force estimated at 400 men tried to surround the Americans who hastily retreated, being "seriously handled in the process." Fifteen men, including Lieutenant Cuff, who "was killed after he was almost out of enemy territory." Several stories were distributed concerning Cuff's death. According to the original version, the enemy severed the dead lieutenant's arms and legs with axes. A more dramatic, if less believable, account surfaced during Cuff's funeral at Shenkursk when an American captain delivered a short speech. According to medical corpsman G. L. Anderson, the British military told him that the Bolshievik had shot the American officer, whereupon Cuff had killed himself with his own pistol. "That is the kind of enemy you are fighting," he warned. ³

The circulation of dubious atrocity stories was a tactic used frequently by both sides to inspire hatred of the opposition. The Bolsheviks were accused of such brutality as castrating the wounded while they were still alive, ripping open their abdomens, and cutting off their fingers, noses, and ears. As one apprehensive British pilot noted in his diary, "I should hate to have my tummy ripped open in cold blood and my appendages removed. Ugh!" And during a Bolshevik attack near Pinega an American was observed throwing away his ring and exclaiming, "They won't cut my finger off." Colonel Pleshkovsky, a picturesque Cossack leader at Shenkursk, was reported to have been shot by the Bolsheviks, his body dismembered, and the various pieces thrown into the firebox of a tugboat. Ironside, in his memoirs, repeated this story, but with the more dramatic addition that the colonel was supposedly thrown into the firebox in one piece and while still living. Not surprisingly the Bolsheviks also disseminated horrifying atrocity stories involving the Allies. A British aviator described a scene in which a Bolshevik prisoner threw himself on the ground, clasped the officer by the legs, and poured out a torrent of pleading words to the Allied participants, which were far more numerous than the sanitized Soviet versions of the conflict, contain numerous accounts of brutality toward Bolshevik prisoners. According to Ralph Alberson, the Allied officers routinely instructed their men "to take no prisoners, to kill them even if they came in unarmed, and I have been told a few of them killed themselves when this was done." The prisoners who were taken, said Alberson, were invariably robbed by their captors. Corporal John Toormann, stationed at Pinega, recalled that both sides in that district habitually shot prisoners. He told also of being detailed to shoot
a White Russian officer who was compelled to dig his
own grave or disciplining an American soldier for
molesting a fifteen-year-old girl. The second was
sent by English intelligence officers in the middle
of the night to arrest suspected spies. According to
his account,

We would go with a couple of sleighs, mostly
at night, surround the house so no one
could get away, as there were no locks
on the doors. Someone would then go inside
and get a light and get the family out of
bed. By this time all of us would be inside
in order to get out of the cold. Grandma,
mother and the children were all crying by
this time. The husband was told to get
dressed. His wife gave him a couple of
coins and we took him along. A few days
later a fellow whom I knew from Kalamazo
told me that they had taken the husband to
the river, then stuck him with bayonets
until he had backed into a hole in the ice.
This was the place where everybody came
to get water every day. The man who was killed
had been suspected of being a Bolo.

Soviet accounts of the Archangel intervention also
emphasized brutal treatment of prisoners, especially
at the White Russian prison camp on Mudug Island.
On the other hand, ten American prisoners who were
eventually rescued through Finland told of being
beaten, robbed, cursed, spat upon, and
propagandized. Once they reached Moscow, however,
their treatment abruptly improved and they were
permitted to tour the city virtually as tourists
prior to their release.

Once the conflict was over and passions had
cooled somewhat, several American participants were
willing to concede that the Bolshevists had actually
been no more brutal than the Allies. Ralph Albertson
told of hearing detailed stories, supposedly provided
by Allied spies, of Bolshevist murders, rapes, and
tortures. Later he found that the accusations were
mostly groundless, and he could find no evidence the
Bolshevists shot prisoners as did the Allies. Even
the historian of the 335th Infantry conceded that
tales of Bolshevist atrocities were exaggerated by
90 percent. Reflecting the cruel conditions of the
North Russian civil war, both sides generally offered
no quarter to the opposition. Despite the claims of
their respective propagandists, neither side had a
monopoly on virtue or on brutality.

During the month of December, Bolshevik probing
became more and more persistent and, in response,
Ironside ordered increased Allied patrol activity to
disrupt enemy strength's movements. Learning that 200
Bolsheviks had occupied Kodema, located twenty miles
east of Shenkursk, Colonel C. Graham, the British
commander at Shenkursk, ordered a similar sized force
of Americans and Cossacks to recapture the place.

Weeks, who participated in the operation, recorded
that the column made its approach march at night
in a snowstorm. Arriving at Kodema at 5:45 a.m.
on 7 December, the troops prepared to attack but
abandoned the plan when "the pom pom [a small
one-pound cannon] would not work." Lieutenant
Henry Katz, who was assigned as regimental medical
officer, observed that the machine guns froze also
and therefore "we retired without firing a shot."

A week later Katz was present as a second American
attack on Kodema miscarried. Due to "some mistak
in orders" the frostbitten Americans failed to advance
in support of 100 attacking Cossacks. "It was very
cold and trip very hard on the men," he noted. A
completely different interpretation was recorded by
Ironside. In his view the attacks "failed owing to the
weakness of the U.S. troops and the behaviour of
one of their officers, and gave the enemy an idea of
the value of our troops opposed to them."7

Then a few weeks later the 280-man Caucasian
Cossack Regiment, despite two months of training,
also failed in an attack upon Kodema. The operation
was preceded by a fierce demonstration in which the
Cossacks displayed external loyalty to their colonel
and promised to wreak dire destruction upon the foe.
Nevertheless, as recorded by Colonel Graham, "the
enemy were noticed to be in greater numbers than had
been expected, and in addition to the committing of
several tactical mistakes the Cossack cavalry got out
of hand and could not be rallied." Graham found it
necessary to send Weeks and his troops from Shenkursk
to gather stragglers and re-establish order. Believing
that their colonel had perished, the
returning Cossacks proceeded to loot the possessions
of their leader, only to discover a few days later
that the colonel was very much alive after all.
"For days thereafter," it was noted, "the garrison
resounded to the cracking of the Colonel's knout,
and this time the wailing and shedding of tears was
undoubtedly more real than any that had
previously to that time." In Ironside's opinion
the disastrous performance of the Cossacks further
demonstrated to the Bolshevists "the lack of value
of our troops."8
The setbacks suffered by both sides—at Tulga by the Bolsheviks and at Kodema by the Allies—illustrated one of the major characteristics of winter fighting in North Russia: the advantage enjoyed by the defense. It was to a great extent a war fought to defend the housing required to protect the troops from the elements. As Ironside pointed out,

If your accommodation was destroyed, even to the extent of breaking your windows, you had to evacuate your position. Prolonged operations in the open were an impossibility. The defense had thus an enormous advantage. I found that many of the defenses put up were false in principle, and I had to remodel the whole of them in consequence. They did not assure the accommodation. If the enemy could get up his guns and shell the accommodation he had you out in the end by sheer physical exhaustion from the cold. They had, therefore, to be designed to protect this accommodation efficiently, and the principle in the end became somewhat similar to the forts d'arret on mountain frontiers. If you blocked a road the enemy could not get his guns up, as it was too long and tedious to cut and make roads through the forest.

Moreover, the cold and snow, combined with the reduced light and heavily forested terrain, had an insidious effect upon the men's already frayed nerves. "Sentry and patrol work in the forest was found a very nervy business at first," observed Ironside. "Peering long into a forest is dangerous to those who have not stout hearts. I have interrogated many sentries on this subject and always found the same state of mind. Of course, no sentry should be allowed under any circumstances."9

Under arctic conditions even minor injuries frequently proved fatal as the injured soldier was likely to freeze to death before he could be rescued. Ironside received a vivid illustration of the dangers of winter fighting when he visited an American blockhouse near Seletskoe at dusk on a frigid December afternoon. A sentry suddenly challenged a Bolshevik patrol, and the troops, from the security of the warm blockhouse, responded with mortar and machine-gun fire. After five minutes of silence, Ironside and an American captain decided to investigate and observed a chilling sight:

Some hundred yards beyond the wire we came across six bodies lying in the snow. They were dressed in long white smocks and were on short skis, which were bound with rough sacks to keep them from slipping. All were quite dead and frozen stiff in the intense cold. Two had been wounded in the legs and had died of exhaustion and loss of blood. They must have died within a few minutes of being hit.

The incident once again demonstrated to the British commander the advantage of a strong defense under arctic conditions.10

A good defense was needed all the more because the arrival of snow and frigid temperatures severely restricted the ability of the primitive R.A.F. airplanes to lend assistance. Beginning in October flying was hampered by shorter days, periodic snowstorms, and low temperatures. In November the lowest temperature recorded was -10°F. December was relatively mild with a low of only -5°F; however, in January the low temperature reached -40°F and in February, -53°F. To cope with such extremes, the flyers were issued silk gloves, socks, and underwear. Over this was worn regular wool winter clothing and the "Sidcot suit," consisting of electrically heated gloves, insoles, and waistcoat. Once in the airplane, the electrically heated units were plugged in with the power being supplied by a wing-mounted generator. Notwithstanding these precautions, frostbite was a common occurrence.

For the mechanics, the hardships created by such conditions were enormous. The extreme cold made it almost impossible to handle tools or metal. "Minor adjustments to machines or engines," noted Lieutenant Colonel Robin Gray, "which under ordinary conditions would take but a few minutes, frequently occupied a party of men a very considerable time." Great amounts of energy were also expended shoveling snow from hangar roofs and thawing the frozen curtains and ropes of the canvas hangars. As Frank Shrieve noted in his diary: "Our hangars are no protection from the cold, as they are just canvas tents, and except for keeping the snow from the machines do little other good. The mechanics have a ruddy cold job and we all think they are a fine bunch of fellows. The ladies have to take care of the machine of the machine in a small shack with a stove in it: it would be almost impossible to load the drums out in the open as bare hands would stick to the metal, and you just can't load drums with heavy gloves on."11
Engines had to be insulated with thick-padded engine covers augmented by six or more flameless lamps. Even so there was constant trouble with radiators cracking while empty, despite maximum efforts to keep them warm. Numerous instances were recorded of flying wires snapping on landing due to the extreme cold. Grey's account of an attempt to fly a D.H.-4, which was equipped with a water-cooled R.A.F. 3A engine, provides a graphic example of the mechanical difficulties encountered:

From December 6th, 1918, a D.H. 4 was stored in a Bessoneau Hangar, and the engine kept warm day and night by means of flameless lamps and covers. On December 17th, the machine was brought out for flight, and five gallons of hot water passed through the cooling system to take the chill off the metal. The draincock froze up after two gallons had passed through, and had to be taken out in order to allow the remainder of the water to be drained off. The engine was then filled with warm water and oil and gave 1,575 revolutions steadily for three minutes. Upon attempting to slow down the engine, it was found that the throttle barrel was frozen and could not be moved by the control. Upon removing the barrel it was noticed that the air intake pipes and mixing chambers were covered with ice an eighth of an inch thick, also the exhaust gas release from the induction heating system was frozen solid to a depth of three quarters of an inch, due to condensation on the pipe which runs to the edge of the outlet.

After the throttle barrel had been removed it was found that the controls were stiff due to freezing of the oil on the joints. All grades of lubricants were tried, and finally the best results were obtained by cleaning all lubricants off the joints and fulcums and leaving them dry.

During this period there were several snowstorms. On December 23rd, the engine was started inside the hangar. It took twenty minutes to taxi to the "run-off" because of the loose snow on the road. The engine was giving 1,500 revolutions all the time, and the water was very hot. The pilot then tried to open out to take off and broke the control rods owing to the throttle being frozen again. The cowls were at once removed and it was found that the air intake pipe was coated both inside and outside with 1/4" of ice; the induction pipe and mixing chamber also had a coat of ice upon them, and the exhaust return from the induction heating system was frozen solid to a depth of 1".

Later, when this aircraft did succeed in taking off it caught fire in the air, killing its pilot. Only the Sopwiths, equipped with rotary motors, were dependable during the winter months. The RE-8 proved too heavy to carry bombs when equipped with skis, which all landplanes required in order to make safe landings and takeoffs.12

During the months of extreme temperatures and overcast conditions flying was severely curtailed so as not unnecessarily to risk the fragile machines and the lives of the pilots. Therefore, the airplanes were unavailable when Ironside decided to embark upon a winter offensive along the railroad. Previously operations in this area had been stymied by swamplike conditions. The freezing of the ground made the advance feasible, at least in theory. The offensive was designed so that American, British, and Russian troops would advance via the "Petropavlov Road" and drive the Bolsheviks from Kodish. At the same time American and French troops on the railroad would attack Plesetskaya thirty miles to the south. It was expected that many prisoners would be taken, that the Bolshevik fortifications would be destroyed, and the enemy driven back at least fifty miles. Ironside approved the plans for the offensive but even he admitted that it "failed miserably."13

On the railroad the plans of the Allies were thwarted when the Bolsheviks unexpectedly, on the afternoon of 30 December, opened a devastating artillery barrage. "Their shelling was very good," noted Captain Eugene Prince, "and nearly hit our armored train which was at [first] post 447 and also they cut the Railway in four places." For the next three days heavy and accurate shelling continued until the American machine gunners were forced to abandon their blockhouses. "Their battery of 4.2-inch guns was particularly good," Prince reported, "and they also displayed great knowledge of the location of our blockhouses." The apparent explanation for the debacle was that four deserters betrayed the Bolsheviks to the forthcoming attack and had provided detailed information about the Allies' defenses.14

Meanwhile the Allied operation against Kodish also miscarried. The attacking force was to consist of two American companies supported by a company of Russians.
and a company of British troops. H. A. Doolittle of the American embassy staff at Archangel, personally delivered the order to attack and witnessed the ensuing battle. On schedule the Canadian artillery began shelling Kodish at 6:00 a.m. on 30 December, but only the American infantry advanced. As one American soldier recorded in his diary: "Several men had their feet frozen. Our force was to have been assisted by the forces on the left and by the railroad. By some unknown cause the forces did not participate in the attack, therefore E, K, and part of the L Company had all the work to do thus making it very hard for us."

The Russians--part of the same company that had mutinied at Archangel--flatly refused to move. The explanation from the Russian commander was that "it was not the right kind of day" to fight. Furthermore, the British column never appeared at all. In this case it was stated that the British had reached a point one and a half miles from Kodish but, hearing no firing, concluded that the American attack had failed and thus they returned to their original position. In Doolittle's opinion, this version seemed "very improbable" as there was heavy firing the entire morning from artillery, machine guns, and rifles from both sides.¹³

A subsequent investigation by Ironside discovered the real reason for the fiasco: the intoxication of Captain Gilbey, the commander of the British column. Ironside's inquiry found that the preparations for the attack were "totally inadequate and an important detail such as small toboggans for drawing the Vickers guns after leaving the sleighs was forgotten." In removing the unfortunate officer from his command, Ironside concluded there had been no valid reason for abandoning the attack. Furthermore, wrote an enraged Ironside, "The Russian platoon with him had done all it was asked to do and the action of Captain Gilbey was commented upon by the Russian officer in charge. Such an example shown by a British officer in front of Russian troops was nothing short of disgraceful."¹⁴

Surprisingly, the outnumbered Americans, struggling through knee-deep snow, managed to drive the 1,200 Bolsheviks of the Onega Regiment from Kodish. Overnight the Bolsheviks received reinforcements and on New Year's Eve they made a determined effort to regain the town. Doolittle, who witnessed the unsuccessful Bolshevik counterattack, recorded that "the rattle of the machine gun and rifle fire was practically continuous and in addition the shouts of the Bolsheviks who were counter-attacking and singing as they came could be easily heard. Inasmuch as, from a civilian standpoint, things at
Defeat at Shenkursk

It was an accident of war that led the Allies to select Shenkursk as their most advanced outpost in North Russia. Originally General Poole had intended to push as far south as Kotlas and Vologda. The arrival of winter, Poole's removal as commander, and the shift to a defensive strategy left the Americans at Shenkursk in an isolated position that was militarily unsound. Major General Aleksandr A. Samoilo, a former Czarist officer who commanded Soviet forces on the northern front, was quick to note the vulnerable position of the Vaga column. Accordingly, he planned in elaborate detail an offensive to drive the Allies from Shenkursk and destroy the garrison in the process. For the operation he had available about 3,100 troops compared to only 1,700 for the Allies, a figure that included 400 Russian conscripts of dubious value and loyalty. Samoilo counted upon superiority in artillery and manpower to nullify the traditional advantage enjoyed by the defense in winter fighting.1

General Ironside was not ignorant of the precarious location of Shenkursk. However, his instructions were "to cut my coat according to my cloth" and to withdraw from dangerous positions that invited attack. As long as there was no military pressure against Shenkursk, Ironside considered it "out of the question" to withdraw. Furthermore, sixty days of supplies had been stockpiled, and the town and its outpost strongly fortified under the direction of Colonel C. L. Graham, who in Ironside's judgment was "a commander of great promise." Besides, he noted, "I considered that my intelligence was good enough to give me sufficient warning to operate a successful evacuation in time to prevent our force from being shut in." A further consideration in Ironside's mind was that Shenkursk was the most
important city of the region except for Archangel, and thus an evacuation without firing a shot would have dealt a serious blow to the morale of the North Russian garrison. "I therefore decided," concluded Ironside, "to hold on as long as I could from a military point of view in order to calm the minds of the authorities." 2

In retrospect, there were some warnings that a Bolshevik offensive was imminent. Rumors of an impending attack were widely circulated among residents of Shenkursk. Bolshevik patrols also became more active near the American outpost of Ust Padenga, eighteen miles southwest of Shenkursk. And Allied intelligence did provide some warning of the forthcoming assault. On 13 January, for example, an Allied spy ("Agent S.I.S.") reported that the Bolsheviks were awaiting the arrival of two fresh regiments and that they intended to "operate on a large scale" attacking simultaneously all fronts, including the American defenses on the Vaga. And on 16 January the Bolsheviks began a light shelling of Ust Padenga. 3

In Shenkursk itself all was quiet during the Christmas season (celebrated by the Allies on Christmas Eve, 25 December, by the Russians thirteen days later). The diary entries of Lieutenant Glenn mentioned "very good" singing by the Russian Y.M.C.A. on a visit to the local jeweler, card playing, reconstruction of Shenkursk's fortifications, and extreme cold that reached -27°. On Christmas day the Red Cross presented each soldier with a stocking filled with candy, dates, nuts, raisins, and cigarettes. For dinner the menu featured roast beef, hominy, pork, mashed potatoes and gravy, canned tomatoes, canned peaches, and cake. After the meal "America" was sung by the assembled multitude in the mess hall. And on Christmas evening (as recorded by Edwin Arkins) the Y.M.C.A. at Shenkursk presented a special program including the following entertainments:

1. Russian stringed instrument.
2. Russian solo by young Russian woman.
4. Violin and piano duet by American soldier, violinist and Russian lady pianist.
5. Russian stringed instruments.
6. "Down in Texas Town" by Russian teacher.
7. Song by Canadian Artilleryman, parody on "Way down South in Dixie."
8. Recitation by Canadian.

10. Story by "Y" man.
11. Two songs by Russian soloist.
12. Song by Canadian Gunner.
13. Recitation in Russian by Cossack.
14. Song by Russian Cossack.
15. Russian National march.
16. Recitation "Casey at the Bat" by Co. C. man.
17. Song by Cossack.
18. Recitation by Canadian Sergeant.

On New Year's Day another special meal was served and the troops celebrated by firing rifles and consuming illegally acquired "gabby water." 4

Both Colonel Stewart and General Ironside visited Shenkursk for the first time during this period. Stewart was in the middle of a twenty-eight-day tour in which he covered 600 miles by rail, horse, and sleigh. According to Weeks, Stewart "gave the men a fine talk." Later Stewart and the officers talked in their quarters until midnight. "He left a very good feeling with us," Weeks recorded. The next two weeks were unusually uneventful. Weeks found his time occupied with snowstorms, undisturbed airwaves, and trouble with an intelligence officer as a result of "too much girl and not enough business." Typical entries by Crissman and Arkins were "nothing new," "nothing materializes," or "nothing unusual." "Not much change in conditions in general," noted Weeks on 17 January. The next day General Ironside arrived in Shenkursk for an inspection and was thus present when the Bolsheviks launched their surprise New Year's offensive. 5

At 6:15 a.m. on 19 January 1919 Bolshevik artillery, firing from a position that the Allies were never able to locate, began to bombard the American positions at Ust Padenga with three field guns. About 7:30 a.m. the Americans were attacked by 150 scouts dressed in white, supported by an estimated 1,200 infantry. "And as fast as one of them got nicked another one took his place," recalled one officer. "Believe me, there were a hell of a lot of 'em." In spite of what Ironside called "a gallant resistance," the Americans and the Cossack infantry were driven in by force of numbers. All the Troops, both Russian and American, did very well as did the guns. An estimated 150 casualties were inflicted on the attackers, but the Americans were forced to evacuate their outer posts and suffered heavy losses in the process. Of the 43 Americans in the 4th Platoon of Company "A" there were 32 casualties. "It's a real
war now," Sergeant John Crissman recorded in his diary. For three days heavy artillery fire continued as the Bolsheviks brought up a fourth field gun. Ironside estimated that the Bolsheviks fired 1,000 rounds on 19 January and 800 rounds on the days following. On the afternoon of 22 January, Graham ordered the evacuation of Ust Padenga and sent all available sleighs to assist in bringing out supplies and the wounded. During the afternoon the Bolsheviks launched an infantry attack that was repulsed by the Canadian Field Artillery. Under cover of darkness the Americans (at 1:10 a.m.) on 23 January evacuated Ust Padenga and headed for Shenkursk. "The Bolos were right after us," noted Crissman. "They opened artillery fire but could not locate us. We had to leave one piece of artillery on the road." So far bad weather had prevented the use of the airplanes was Beresnik. But on the 23rd, operating at a temperature of -30° Fahrenheit, the R.A.F. bombed the advancing Bolshevik columns. "Our aeroplanes cooperated successfully in the defence," Ironside recorded. Ordinarily 200-pound bombs would have been dropped from bomb racks. However, because of chronic power failure, the release gear failed in the light, each carrier carried eight Cooper 200-pounders in his seat which were then dropped on the enemy by hand. Despite the use of electrically heated flying suits, several of the pilots were frostbitten.

By the morning of 24 January the Americans had been driven back to Spaskoe, 2.4 miles southwest of Shenkursk. For the first time the Bolsheviks used two 4.2-inch howitzers and brought up 700 infantry who, in the opinion of Colonel Graham, "appeared quite fresh and well handled." At Spaskoe Captain Otto Odyard, who was regarded by Ironside as an "exceptionally fine" company commander, was seriously wounded in the neck by shrapnel. Captain O. A. Mowat of the Canadian Field Artillery was fatally wounded and killed. For the Canadians' eighteen guns destroyed by shell fire. At 2:00 p.m. the Allied force retreated to Shenkursk which promptly came under siege. Private Edwin Arkins, while loading machine-gun belts at Shenkursk, recorded in his diary: "Shell hits Company billets breaking orderly room windows. Also hits Canadian Artillery stables killing one of the horses. Shenkursk shelled by 4.2 inch building near billets setting it on fire. 'A' Company coming into Shenkursk while 'C' Company goes out to cover their retreat. 'A' Company man (Captain's orderly) is out of his head from shell shock. Machine guns and artillery can be heard on all sides of us."

In the opinion of Graham the situation was critical. "The arrival of the 4.2-inch howitzers along with infantry reinforcements," he noted, "made it clear that the enemy intended to capture Shenkursk, an operation he practiced making certain of by bringing up field howitzers, which the defence were not capable of resisting. . . . Evacuation was being considered but the possibility of getting clear with a long convoy of wounded seemed very doubtful."8 In the meantime Ironside, who had returned to Archangel by horse and sleigh, anxiously monitored the battle reports. Although he "resisted sending panic wires" to London, Ironside—with good reason—was worried that the Vaga column would be "shut in with no chance of relief." It was even possible, he feared, that the Allies might be forced to abandon Beresnik, where extensive stores of food and ammunition had been stockpiled for the winter. To avert such a disaster. Ironside asked for more British troops, specifically requesting that two battalions of infantry and a machine gun company stationed at Murmansk be sent to Archangel. And on the sixth day of the battle Ironside ordered the entire Vaga column to retreat. "Seeing that the enemy was now more strongly established and that casualties had increased," Ironside reported, "I ordered the evacuation of Shenkursk late on the 24th." The operation, he predicted, would not be "an easy one" and would "of course have a great moral effect." But Ironside felt he had no choice but to abandon Shenkursk since he had few troops available to hold it. By the end of the winter of 1919-20 he had been considerably strengthened and have certainly been fighting better than was to be expected."9

The evacuation order was delivered both by air and by telegraph. Frank Shrive, a Canadian observer, accompanied a Russian pilot from Beresnik to Shenkursk to deliver Ironside's message. The pilot, who was familiar with the area, noted that the Bolsheviks had not yet occupied a little-used winter road. The trail was usable only when frozen as it was too swampy to be passable during the summer. Before communicating the evacuation order to the Shenkursk command, it was decided on the spur of the moment to bomb a nearby Bolshevik gun position. On the second bombing run, Shrive observed that the Bolsheviks were firing at the © 1920 Lewis machine gun and "in no time I felt the thud of bullets on the machine gun. An attempt to return fire was thwarted by the freezing of Shrive's Lewis machine gun as the temperature still held at -30° Fahrenheit. Only when the plane landed on the frozen Vaga River
At Shunkursk a few minutes later did Shrive realize that the pilot had been seriously wounded by a bullet that had penetrated his chest and lung. As it turned out, the evacuation order brought in the evacuation order was unnecessary, since the message had been repeated by telephone and was acknowledged at Shunkursk just before the Bolsheviks cut the wire to Beresnik. Certainly, however, the news that an escape route lay open was highly welcome. A daring night retreat was quickly organized by Graham, as he commented: "It would have been impossible to have moved the convoy under the enemy's gunfire by day and the secret withdrawal under cover of darkness was considered the only chance as the place was surrounded." First, seeking to give the impression of preparing for a siege, Graham ordered all refugees to leave the town by 3:00 the following morning. The actual order to evacuate was not given until 9:30 p.m., after which the town gates were closed to prevent anyone from leaving. "Every individual," read the orders, "is to be made to understand that shouting, talking, or smoking during the night march will endanger the lives of everyone in the column." The main convoy departed at midnight, followed an hour and a half later by 100 wounded Americans in sleeping bag on sleighs. The primitive winter road, pockmarked by "Invisible horse hoof holes," was used for the escape and 200 Bolsheviks who controlled the main road with machine guns were avoided. "I keep going," Arkins recorded, "by taking a swig of coffee supplied us by the YMCA before leaving Shunkursk. Have to get that slush ice in mouth of canteen with finger to reach coffee." During the march to Shegovari, sixty miles away, many of the men threw away their slippery Shackleton boots and marched wearing multiple pairs of socks instead. Arkins almost threw away his heavy sheepskin-lined overcoat. However, he noted, "A Canadian artilleryman, seeing my plight, offered to take it across his horse's saddle. I drew it to him and was much relieved. Real guys, those Canadians." In their retreat the Allies had to abandon all their ammunition, most of their clothing and equipment, and two of their eighteen-pound guns. Supplies such as snowshoes and skis were smashed prior to the retreat, but Graham decided not to destroy the ammunition since the resulting fires would have been revealed to the Bolsheviks that the Allies were about to flee. As one soldier wrote his mother, "We lost everything but the clothes on our backs. It was a narrow escape. Down in the interior about three hundred miles and if we hadn't got out that night we would have been surrounded and all killed. It was just a big miracle." Ironside basically concurred in this view, noting that Graham's success in evacuating Shunkursk "in the nick of time." Forcing the Allies to retreat seventy-five miles cost the Bolsheviks an estimated 500 casualties, with many of their wounded reported as having frozen to death. Yet, the Shunkursk offensive demonstrated that the Bolshevik army was an ineffective fighting force. In the opinion of General Finlayson "the Bolshevik Army on the Archangel Front is a well equipped, organised and fairly well trained one." Graham also expressed professional admiration, concluding: "I consider the enemy troops well organized, well trained, and well handled." And Ironside was also impressed by his encounter with General Saniofo, conceding that the Bolshevik general "had been very un-Russian and well above the average of what we have encountered hitherto." For two weeks the atmosphere remained tense as the Bolsheviks probed with patrols and lobbed artillery shells. Fortunately the Bolsheviks were not as aggressive in their pursuit as in their initial attack on Shunkursk. Twelve days after the fighting in subzero cold had taken their toll on Bolshevik morale, and the heated buildings and foodstuffs captured at Shunkursk proved an alluring attraction. As John Cadahy commented: "When later the attacks of February and March came, they were sporadic, and lacked the fury, the sustained, and vehement driving power of the first February's assault. By early February, the military pressure subsided as Allied planes reported that the Bolsheviks had pulled back their troops and artillery. On 7 February, for the first time since the start of the Shunkursk offensive, Weeks was able to change clothes and get a good night's sleep. Much of the lieutenant's time was now taken up with letter writing, playing dominoes and cards (black jack and "doubles"

Despite its relatively small scale, the Shunkursk battle—fought within 300 miles of the Arctic Circle—was the most extensive modern experience in winter combat until the Russo-Finnish War of 1939 and the
German invasion of Russia in 1941. Ordinarily during the North Russian fighting the defense had enjoyed a substantial advantage. But in the Shenkursk battle General Samoilo overcame the defenders through the use of superior artillery and by exploiting a two-to-one advantage in manpower. Both sides were seriously hampered in their operations by frostbite and the freezing of weapons. The Allies, in particular, were prevented by intense cold and snow storms from taking full advantage of their superiority in the air. But in a sense the harsh conditions aided the Allies in that the weather impeded Bolshevik efforts to pursue the Allies after their withdrawal. Curiously, however, neither side made any effort to employ troops on skis, a tactic that often proved effective during the winter campaigns of World War II. No doubt the Bolsheviks should have won an even more decisive victory than they achieved, as by midnight on 24 January the Bolsheviks had surrounded Shenkursk with three columns. Only Graham's risky night retreat prevented the annihilation of the Vaga column. Thus the Bolsheviks, despite winning a psychological and tactical victory, failed in their objective of capturing the garrison at Shenkursk and driving the Allies from the Vaga valley. From the Allied perspective the only positive result was that the defeat suffered at the hands of Samoilo could have been much worse.

8

A Crisis of Morale

In view of all the factors against them—enemy attacks, bitter cold and snow, long hours of duty and darkness, unappetizing food, the lack of reserves, and the unending nature of the conflict—it is hardly surprising that General Ironside's polyglot army experienced a severe crisis of morale. Much of Ironside's time and energy was now directed toward enforcing discipline and restoring morale among his disaffected forces. At Solatskoe on 22 February troops of the Yorkshire Battalion, newly arrived from Murmansk, disobeyed an order to occupy front line positions near Kodish. The Yorks demanded answers to such questions as "Why are we in Russia?" "Why are we fighting the Bolsheviks?" and "How long are we to remain?" News of the affair, which spread in exaggerated form with great rapidity among the Allied forces, came as a great shock to the British commander. "I had never in my life experienced a mutiny among British troops," Ironside recalled in his memoirs, "and I hated to think that the first signs of indiscipline should come from them, of all the Allied contingents." Two sergeants, the ringleaders of the affair, were placed under arrest, after which the remainder of the Yorks went forward and occupied the positions. After Ironside had addressed the men and observed their "hang-dog appearance," he telephoned Colonel Stewart and said, among other things, "The Yorks wanted to talk to Lloyd George about it." Unknown to Stewart, he was soon to be placed in a similar position and required to quell a mutiny among his own troops.

The French were the next to rebel. On 1 March a French battalion, which was scheduled to relieve American troops on the railroad, mutinied at Archangel and, according to a note sent by Ironside to Colonel Stewart, "absolutely refused to go up."
The men took the position that Russians, not Frenchmen, should occupy the front line. Accompanied by the French military attaché, Ironside went to the quarters of the rebellious battalion and found an attitude of determined insubordination. The mutineers refused to stand up when the two men entered their billet and they ridiculed the military attaché when he appealed to their patriotism. As a result Ironside found it necessary to disarm and imprison 113 French soldiers. Hoping to head off the spreading mood of disaffection, Ironside wrote to Stewart: "A certain amount of talk has been going on among the American companies of not going back again when their turn comes in 3 weeks or a month and know you will do everything you can to prevent such a situation arising."  

Certainly Ironside's concern about the morale of the 39th Infantry was well founded. As one injured American noted after his return to America in April, "A spirit of restlessness has been spreading over the whole regiment since the armistice. No one has been able to tell the men why they were fighting in Russia, and naturally their morale was not what it should have been." Dr. Arthur Nugent, a medical officer from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, pointed out that the Americans who fought Germany on the western front were having difficulty in understanding their mission. "But we were fighting a people against whom war had never been declared and we didn't know why we were fighting them." Under the circumstances, the 39th Infantry felt forgotten and abandoned. The disillusioned soldier expressed bitter remarks such as "hell to hang on, but it's death to stop," or "We are one outfit that hasn't had to worry about finding jobs after the war. We keep right on with what we are doing."  

Critical letters detailing the shaky morale of the troops began to filter through the heavy veil of official censorship. Most of the letters were smuggled out of Russia by wounded soldiers and then printed in the Congressional Record or released to the press by critics of the venture such as Senators Charles E. Townsend of Michigan, Robert La Follette of Wisconsin, and Hiram Johnson of California. The letters he had received about conditions in North Russia, said Senator Johnson, made "an American hang his head." One common theme was despair. "This is the most Godforsaken country I have ever seen," wrote a Milwaukee mechanic. "I'm full up on Russia, and ready to move now," wrote another Milwaukeean. Others wrote of the disagreeable British food ration: "All we got was canned willy corned beef] and hard tack." Not even the dogs would touch the stuff, complained another soldier, and he concluded: "We are living worse than a bunch of hobo cattle, which should not see us. We are dirty, ragged, no hair cut, no shave, and you should see your ragged soldier now." The response of the War Department was to order Colonel Stewart to enforce censorship more effectively so as to prevent the sending of letters "most unsoldierly in tone and anti-British in sentiment."  

In all, the American troops, like the Yanks, asked why they were being ordered to fight the Bolsheviks after the Germans, their original enemy, had capitulated. A typical expression of discontent was a typed statement entitled "Facts and Questions Concerning the N.R.E.F." According to Colonel James A. Ruggles of the American Military Mission, who furnished a copy to Colonel Stewart, the document was "written by an American officer with the Divia force and it is reported that it is widely circulated among the American troops at the front and the men consider that it fully covers their ideas regarding the reasons why American troops are kept here." Stewart launched an immediate inquiry seeking to discover the author of the piece, but he couldn't find out for sure. The thesis of the document was that the troops should be sent home inasmuch as the original purpose of the intervention—the defeat of Germany—had long since been accomplished. Instead, "we are now meddling with a Russian revolution and counterrevolution." Moreover, "we have been unable to reconcile this expedition with American ideals and principles adhered to within us."  

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In America the War Department, while not actually employing propagandists, sought to emphasize the positive when releasing information on the Archangel expedition to the public. Press reports based upon War Department sources stressed that the American forces were "cooperating splendidly," that the necessary equipment had been obtained and that the comfort and welfare of the men [was] carefully guarded. The health of the troops was described as "excellent," morale as "very good," and the food conditions as merely "good." Colonel Stewart was
quoted as saying that he had found "the general health, discipline, and morale of the men excellent, and their clothing and equipment ample." Stewart was also reported as stating that the troops were "being well taken care of in every way... and the Allied command is capable of taking care of itself against the whole Bolshevik army."\(^6\)

Actually the War Department, in its press releases, made a highly selective use of Stewart's statements concerning the good health, discipline, and morale of American troops were excerpted from a report filed on 7 January before the Bolshevik offensive at Shikursk. At the time of their publication in America during the month of February these statements were both out of date and misleading. On the other hand, Stewart's cable of 17 February saying that the troops were being well cared for and ready and able to defend themselves was accurately and promptly published. By this time accounts of the Shikursk offensive and adverse living conditions had been widely distributed. The purpose of Stewart's reassuring telegram of 17 February, as its author readily conceded, was to counter the effect of what Stewart called "alarmism" and "highly exaggerated reports." In publishing this chummy statement the War Department omitted to mention that it had received numerous complaints about Stewart's lack of leadership and lack of sensitivity. Nor did the War Department see fit to release Stewart's report of 3 February in which he stated that the enemy was becoming more numerous to the American forces. The Allied command reported, "is small and we have no reserves and are holding an outpost line from four hundred miles in length and one hundred to two hundred and sixty miles from Archangel." Ten days later Stewart informed the War Department that his men, "due to primitive conditions of life and continuous service in the field under Arctic conditions," were "beginning to feel the strain." And on 17 March Stewart pleaded with his superiors to give him some information concerning the possibility of relief so as to combat the problem of declining morale.\(^7\) Instead of trying to reconcile the contradictions in Stewart's reports the War Department, seeking to put its best foot forward, selected the most favorable of the colonel's statements for its press release.

Still, most Americans had little if any awareness of the North Russian campaign until the press carried sensational accounts of a "mutiny" by American troops at Archangel. According to the reports and a subsequent press release by the War Department, members of "I" Company, at the conclusion of a ten-day rest period at Archangel, refused on 30 March to obey an order to pack their equipment and return to the railroad front. The troops' question was "Why are we fighting in Russia?" and "Why are we being sent to the front now that the war on the Western Front has ended?" The news was especially ominous because an inspection report just a few weeks before had characterized "I" Company as "undoubtedly the strongest of the companies on this front." Captain Horatio Winslow of Madison, Wisconsin, the commander of Company "I," was the recipient of much unwanted publicity. One Wisconsin newspaper ungraciously speculated that Winslow had been subverted by insidious socialist and Bolshevik propaganda.\(^8\)

Half an hour after learning of the trouble, Colonel Stewart arrived and delivered a blunt forty-minute lecture on the theme that he and the nation expected every man to perform his duty as a soldier. As recalled by Stewart, in a memorandum written several months later, he appealed to the soldiers' patriotism and sense of pride:

I drew the attention of the company to the fact that their action was unprecedented in the history of the United States Army.

I also invited their attention to the impression that would be created in the United States if they persisted in their conduct, so that it would be necessary for me to report the matter by cable to the United States and tell them what their wives or mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers would think of them.

Following his talk Stewart answered questions. With "some hesitation" one soldier questioned the sense of fighting on behalf of a people who were "either incapable or unwilling to help themselves."

Apparently the colonel's response was adequate since when he asked whether any man present would now not obey orders, none would come forward. The troops then packed their equipment and marched to the railway station. As Stewart recorded: "I mingled with the men during this preparation and talked with many of them regarding their equipment, service and other matters. It was a day of relief and spirits, and two of the platoons specially marched off to the railway station singing."\(^9\)

All connected with the affair agreed that the term "mutiny" was a distortion of what was basically a trivial incident. One returning soldier recalled,
We kicked like hell, but we didn't mutiny"; another called it "a case of shattered nerves, not mutiny." Major J. Brooks Nichols of Detroit regarded the incident as a misunderstanding and said, "I have heard more 'bunk' about this mutiny than could be written in a dozen books." Captain Winslow concurred stating, "There was no mutiny." A thorough investigation by Brigadier General Wilds P. Richardson confirmed that the incident was "of not a very serious character." In his report, the noncommissioned officers could have handled the affair more forcefully, but he commended Colonel Stewart for talking to the men and explaining the serious consequences of disobeying an order. Further action in the case "could not have served any good military purpose," Richardson concluded. However, Dawitt Pools, the American chargé at Archangel, regarded the incident as an object lesson and urged the State Department to announce a definite date for the withdrawal of the troops. To leave the 339th Infantry in Russia past the month of June was "quite out of the question." 10

Fortunately, Stewart's appeal to "A" Company proved effective as, at that very moment, the presence of the troops was dearly needed on the railroad front. Two weeks before, General Samioło had launched a surprise spring offensive against the village of Bolshe Ozerke, which was strategically located between Oenga and the White Sea and the town of Oberskaya on the railroad. During the winter snow and ice from Oenga had surrounded nine thousand men and supplies from Murmansk to Archangel. Thus, Samioło's immediate objective was to sever the link to Murmansk and then, if possible, seize Oberskaya and destroy the Allied force on the railroad. On paper the odds seemed to favor the Bolshevists as they enjoyed a numerical advantage of about 7,000 troops to only 2,000 for the Allies. However, the soldiery of the British and American troops was familiar with the operation had been shipped only recently by railroad from the region of the southern Volga. They were not experienced in winter fighting and were deployed without the customary sheepskin coats and felt boots. Thawing conditions and deep snow banks, which soaked the clothing and feet of combatants on both sides, produced more casualties from frostbite than there had been at any other time during the entire Archangel campaign. According to a conservative estimate, based upon Soviet sources, Bolshevik casualties totaled at least 2,000.

In the initial fighting the Bolshevists easily carried the day. At Bolshe Ozerke, garrisoned by the French foreign legion, the 120 defenders were overwhelmed by about 700 attackers led by Commander Petr A. Boldukhin. Fearing that the Bolshevists might outflank the railroad from the west, Ironside assumed personal command of the front. On 23 March Ironside tried to retake Bolshe Ozerke with a two-pronged offensive. Yet, the 700 British, American, and French troops, exhausted by deep wet snow, were repulsed by heavy machine-gun fire and suffered 75 casualties. At the same time, however, the Bolshevists were also demoralized by deep snow drifts and by numerous cases of frostbite that resulted from nighttime temperatures as low as -22° Fahrenheit. Unable to retake Bolshe Ozerke, Ironside leveled the town with artillery fire on 25 March before returning to Archangel. 11

On 31 March a second phase of the spring offensive began with an attack against the railroad front, whose American defenders were by now well forewarned. At 8:30 a.m. the Bolshevists cut the telephone line between Archangel and the railroad troops. Half an hour later three battalions of the Second Moscow Regiment on skis attacked with machine guns in the rear. The Americans responded with Lewis guns and with point-blank fire from two three-inch artillery pieces. The striving nine men were found on the railroad and it was presumed that many additional dead had been dragged off into the trees. A prisoner testified that the Bolshevist attack had failed due to the demoralizing effect of American artillery and automatic-weapons fire. Heavy fighting continued for two days as the 97th Saratov Regiment attacked the prisoners and killing 103 killed, including its commander who was shot while riding a white horse. "A" Company performed credibly in the defense. "After they once got started from Archangel," reported an observer, "they went up to the front all right and they seem to be standing the continuous shelling and the raiding that they have had in the last 2 days pretty well." 12

At Shred Mekhrenga were attacked by a large Bolshevik force. Three companies of Green Howards, firing from strongly fortified blockhouses, repulsed the assault after thirteen hours of fighting. Eighty prisoners were
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taken and 100 corpses—victims of artillery fire—were counted lying before the blockhouses. 13

The end result of the spring offensive was a continued stalemate, which again demonstrated the enormous advantage possessed by the defense. Only the original Bolshevik attack on Bolshe Ozerke, accomplished with overwhelming numbers and complete surprise, was a success. In the other battles it was the defenders who prevailed. Apparently the strategy of the Bolsheviks was militarily defective. Since they failed to coordinate their attacks against Bolshe Ozerke and Oberskaya. As Ironside pointed out, "Had the enemy attacked on the railway at the same moment it is possible that the railway front would have collapsed." 14

Prior to the Paris Peace Conference it is doubtful whether President Wilson directed much, if any, attention to the unfolding of the Archangel campaign. Even in the summer of 1918 he had found it difficult to organize his thoughts on what policy should be followed toward Russia. Only after a painful mental struggle had Wilson agreed to participate in the intervention while, in theory, strictly limiting American forces to the role of noncombatants. Understandably Wilson's mind in the fall of 1918 was preoccupied with more pressing matters such as the end of the war in Europe, the congressional elections, and preparations for the peace conference. But the president was familiar enough with the British-led campaign in North Russia to feel distinctly uncomfortable. In late November Wilson agreed with Secretary of War Newton D. Baker when he pointed out that American troops in North Russia and Siberia were being used for purposes other than those agreed to by the president. And Wilson remarked in frustration that he found it "harder to get out than it was to get in."

At the peace conference the president, reflecting the caution he had consistently demonstrated in regard to intervention in Russia, looked for ways and means "to get out." First, Wilson in January 1919 sponsored the ambiguous and ambitious Prinkipo Proposal whereby the Allies invited all concerned parties to a conference at Prinkipo in the Princes Islands near Constantinople. Although the Bolsheviks responded with enthusiasm, the plan faltered when Russian anti-Bolshevik groups flatly rejected the idea. President Chaikovsky of the Archangel government played a prominent role in thwarting the conference, contending that such a meeting would be immoral and that reconciliation with the Bolsheviks was
impossible. William C. Bullitt, the American diplomat who had originated the Prinkipo Proposal, was so furious with Chaikovsky that he suggested the moment had arrived for ending further American support for the North Russian government. To prevent a military disaster, he proposed withdrawing the American troops by icebreaker. Although Colonel House advised that Bullitt's idea was "worth considering," Wilson, for the time being, rejected a unilateral American withdrawal, presumably because such a course would be too harmful to American prestige and Allied unity. Nevertheless, the President's desire to get out of Russia continued undiminished. In mid-February Winston Churchill, who had just replaced Lord Milner as British secretary of state for war, advocated sending arms and volunteers to anti-Bolshevik groups in Russia. En route to America aboard his liner the George Washington, Wilson cabled that he "would not be in favor of any course contrary to that which may mean the earliest practical withdrawal of military forces. It would be fatal to be led further into the Russian chaos."

In announcing his decision to intervene in the summer of 1918, the president had consolidated his views in a complicated, lengthy document. This time Wilson, harried by the demands of peacemaking and domestic politics, declined to explain his views in a formal statement. No doubt the president appreciated that a unilateral American withdrawal announcement would offend the Allies, whose support he needed on other issues at the peace conference. Wilson found his solution by adopting an indirect, but tactically adroit, strategy of withdrawal devised by General Tasker Bliss. Shortly after the Allied defeat at Shenkursk, Bliss had recommended the approval of a British request for sending to Murmansk two companies of American railroad troops to repair the dilapidated Murman Railroad. Constructed during World War I, this route ran southward from Murmansk toward Petrograd and was occupied almost as far south as Lake Onega by British forces under General Clarence Maynard. During the winter months, when Archangel was closed by ice, the Murman Railroad had served as a roundabout source of supplies from Europe. From the ice-free port of Murmansk supplies would be shipped on the railroad southward to Soroka. Then, because there was no rail link between Soroka and Archangel, the supplies had to be unloaded and laboriously transported by wagon or sledge to Oberskaya where the road finally joined the Archangel-Vologda Railroad.

Bliss argued that the repair of the Murman Railroad would help protect the American forces at Archangel in two ways: by making it possible to send them reinforcements and by providing a route for their withdrawal, if necessary. In approving the plan on 14 February, Wilson told Bliss that he should send copies to his British, French, and Italian colleagues on the Supreme War Council. Having carried out the president's instruction, Bliss triumphantly wrote Secretary of War Baker, "This as far as I see it, commits us irrevocably to withdrawal of American troops; the moment the weather conditions in the spring will permit. The sending of the railway companies in question will greatly facilitate their prompt withdrawal."

To thus ass this circuitous process was perfectly clear: it pointed the way toward withdrawal and avoided an open breach with the Allies. Baker concurred and on 18 February wrote a letter to the House and Senate Military Affairs Committees in which he communicated the president's decision to send the two railway companies to Murmansk. One of the purposes of the action, Baker explained, was "to facilitate the prompt withdrawal of American and Allied troops in North Russia at the earliest possible moment that weather conditions in the spring will permit." Baker's statement was published in the American Sentinel and thus it soon became common knowledge among the American troops in North Russia. But those at sea, like Colonel Stewart remained uneasy about their status and wondered why no official confirmation was forthcoming from Washington. What was perfectly clear to Wilson, Baker, and Bliss was anything but clear to the Americans marooned in the frozen Russian arctic.

Protests at home from opponents of the intervention further impressed upon the Wilson administration the wisdom of extricating itself from what the president had termed "the Russian chaos." Led by Senator Hiram Johnson of California, isolationist critics assailed Wilson for having submitted to a de facto league of nations by accepting British command over the Americans in North Russia. "Under the orders of foreign nations Americans wage war," Johnson declaimed by the American Congress or the consent of the American people, he charged. Johnson caused Wilson additional embarrassment when, on 14 February, he almost succeeded in getting through the Senate a resolution demanding the withdrawal of the 339th Infantry. The vote ended in a tie and the ballot of Vice President Thomas R. Marshall was required to defeat it. Governor E. L. Philipp of
Independently the British reached a similar conclusion. On 4 March the War Cabinet, on practical grounds, decided to terminate the British presence in North Russia. From a military standpoint it was felt that North Russia was of less importance than Siberia and southern Russia. Moreover, a continuation of the campaign using drafted troops was politically untenable. After the exhausted conscripts, the War Office announced a drive to recruit 8,000 volunteer soldiers and aviators who were supposedly to be used only for defensive operations. Launched at a time when civilian employment was in short supply, the campaign was a complete success. For the time being it was decided to keep the decision to withdraw a secret from the Archangel government.\(^5\)

For months following their arrival at Archangel the Allies had nurtured the pleasant notion that the "Provisional Government of the Northern Region" was a democratic government enjoying broad popular support throughout the region. The Allied ambassadors, who had little else to do, spent much of their time offering free advice to Poole and Chakovsky. Gradually, as the ambassadors returned to the West (Francis left in November and Noulens a month later), the original emphasis upon preparing the region for democracy faded. The prestige of the government also declined when Chakovsky, apparently bored with his role as a figurehead, departed from Archangel in January to attend the Moscow Conference. Technically Chakovsky retained the title of president, but the real power lay in the governor-general and foreign minister, General Eugene K. Miller, a fifty-one-year-old professional soldier and native of the Baltic region. Under Miller the government was more a military dictatorship than a democracy; militarily and financially it was dependent upon the Allies for its very existence.\(^6\)

Ironside's perspective was distrustful of tending to issue bombastic proclamations and to waste time on unimportant paper work, was a decided improvement over Chaikovsky and Samarin. Ironside was especially pleased with the apparent progress made by Miller in mobilizing the Russian National Army. By the beginning of April, 14,000 partially trained troops were available. Russian officers were in very short supply and therefore Ironside found it "was necessary to make the best of even the most unpromising material." Much of the training was supervised by British officers who emphasized physical training as a means of preserving morale during the long winter months. Pronouncing the mobilization "an enormous success," Ironside optimistically concluded: "I think it shows the greatest example of what good British officers... can do with good material in a short time and under great difficulties owing to lack of interpreters." Ironside was almost as optimistic concerning the 3,875-man Slavo-British Legion. Originally organized by Poole, this group had been de-emphasized by Ironside in favor of building the Russian National Army. However, as the fighting progressed large numbers of captured Bolshevik soldiers, deserters, political prisoners, and common criminals became available at the Archangel prison. Seeing that these groups were not suitable candidates for the Russian National Army, Ironside accepted their enlistment in the Slavo-British Legion. On the road to Archangel, the showing of these units was impressive. The acid test of their loyalty and effectiveness did not come until they were sent to the front to complete their military training.\(^7\)

To the great relief of the demoralized and fatigued Allied forces, the expected all-out Bolshevik spring offensive on the Dvina failed to materialize. Theoretically the April thaw should have given the Bolsheviks a decided advantage as the river ice disintegrated upstream first, presenting the Bolsheviks with a golden opportunity to attack with gunboats while the Allied vessels were still icebound at Archangel. To avert such a catastrophe, the British dispatched the S.S. Wargrange to Archangel with DHMS sheltered six S.1/26s, the S.1/26s, and 184 seaplanes. The idea was to attack the Bolshevik gunboats while they were still frozen in the Dvina at Kotlas. However, the plan miscarried when the Wargrange became marooned in the frozen White Sea and did not reach its destination until after the breakup
of the ice. A further worry for the Allied commanders was that the spring thaw temporarily immobilized the Allie planes already in North Russia by covering the flying fields with up to six inches of slush. In mid-April, when the skies were removed from two of the Sopwiths at Oberskaya, the ground was too soft to permit a takeoff; according to Frank Shrieve, "a seaplane would have had more success." However, drainage ditches were dug and within a few days the field was again usable. Not until 25 April did the Bolsheviks attempt to put their forces in action against the well-prepared British and Russian defenders. Between the efforts of the planes and sixty-pound guns manned by Russians, the Bolshevik gunboats were kept at bay. 8

Ominously, however, the performance of the Russian troops was unreliable. Twice during the spring the Russians mutinied. The most serious trouble occurred at Tulgas on 25 April when 300 Russians murdered their officers and deserted. A less serious incident of disaffection took place at Pinge on 14 May where two officers were shot in a pay dispute. To restore discipline Ironside ordered the execution of fifteen malefactors. In each case, Ironside reported, "the real cause was the lack of administrative ability on the part of the Authorities and Regimental officers. The Government allowed the pay to fall into arrears, and the officers failed to understand that when not fighting they had to occupy themselves with their men in training and recreation. Like all troops, Russian troops become discontented if left long in idleness." Readiness, Ironside felt, had no alternative except to send the Russians into the field and into replacements for the departing Allied troops.

Even though the loyalty and fighting ability of the White Russians were dubious, the Bolsheviks came out of the winter in even worse condition. On the Dvina front hundreds of deserters surrendered at the end of April, and Ironside found that "all were in miserable condition, badly fed and clothed, and indescribably dirty." Optimistically, Ironside felt that with continued training on the British model the freshly organized troops could be shaped into an effective fighting force. But he overlooked the example set during the Shenhurk campaign when newly mobilized Russian troops had proved to be highly susceptible to Bolshevik propaganda. Meantime, Ironside was forced to base his hopes on a weak reed. 9

On the Dvina the spring thaw had been the signal for renewed skirmishing. Elsewhere the country was a quagmire, which effectively ruled out offensive action by either side. On the railroad the main occupation of the troops was to repair the track which was described as being in "very bad condition" after the winter's ordeal. Frequent delays occurred in the railway sheds, where the locomotive engineers were forced to slow their trains "to a walking pace to avoid drowning of the train and crew in the swamps on either side of the track." The Bolsheviks also had problems in maintaining the track and equipment under their control. In late April Captain J. A. Harzfeld was permitted to cross to the Bolsheivik side of the railroad front and travel to Vologda in a car to return an American prisoner of war who was exchanged for four Bolsheiviks. After a two-hour dinner in the private car of the Soviet commander of the railroad front, Harzfeld proceeded by rail to Vologda, a journey that required twenty hours to cover 400 verst (265 miles). During his five days at Vologda he was permitted "complete freedom of movement," and observed bustling rail traffic and an abundance of rolling stock, most of which was in need of repair. But, in Harzfeld's opinion, the repair facilities at Vologda no longer were able to perform competently as the refurbished car on which he returned to the front had three flat wheels. 10

For the American troops the railroad war came to a virtual end in the third week of April. Then Ironside informed the new American commander, General Richardson: "I propose to withdraw all the American Infantry from the Railway Line by the second week in May. It will not then be the intention to employ them in the field again." To transport the troops to Archangel only two woodburning freight cars, which frequently broke down, were available. Top speed was limited to twenty miles per hour, and with stops the 100-mile trip from Oberskaya to Archangel required several hours. Despite the low speeds, travel on the railroad was a surprisingly hazardous experience. On 25 May thirty-five Americans were injured and one killed when a British train running backward was mistakenly switched onto a siding where it struck box cars filled with engineers. One soldier from Detroit had both legs broken and his right hand was so badly mangled it had to be amputated. 11

The prospect of leaving Russia did wonders for morale as did the arrival of spring, accompanied by round-the-clock daylight. On 13 May the Canadian aviator Frank Shrieve recorded in his diary,

Mentioned some time back that this railroad runs true north and south. Last night it was as clear as a bell and towards ten-thirty the sun dipped down just to the
left of the track. Mac and I watched as it disappeared. We then decided to get some beer from the Mess and come out to watch it come up. Almost right on the dot at one-thirty and at about the same distance to the right of the track it came into view. Of course even at midnight it never did get dark.

The chief worry of the Americans was no longer the Bolshevik armored train, but how to win the baseball championship of North Russia. To the exasperation of the R.A.P., the Americans insisted on using the airfield at Oberskaya for baseball practice. It took several low passes by a Scopwith Camel before the Americans were persuaded to take their game elsewhere.12

On the Dvina the American withdrawal got under way a month earlier than on the railroad. "Everything looks as if we are on the way home," noted John Crissman in his diary on 5 April. "Other companies from front are moving toward Archangel." At Beresnik Crissman was "billeted in an old barn which was for the time being converted into a bath, have his clothes deloused, wonder at the novelty of electric lights, see a movie, and attend a minstrel show. Stationed a few miles upstream, Edwin Arkins recorded the arrival of much warmer weather, slushy muddy roads, and "very poor" sanitary conditions. "Nothing unusual," was one of Arkins's most frequent observations. In the evening the troops were often entertained by improvised talent shows of minstrels and singers. "One of the main attractions," recorded Arkins, "was an instrument made out of hard tack can, and corn beef can and a piece of wood made similar to a banjo. Produces very good music."13

Likewise the diary of Glen Weeks, which had previously contained detailed accounts of fire fights, now dealt with such matters as melting snow, fishing, duck hunting, card playing, two fighting roosters falling into a well, and the court-martialing of several of his men to determine where they had got their liquor. A woman presented Weeks with two dogs that were appropriately named Lenin and Trotsky. Retreating toward Archangel Weeks laconically noted: "First man to fall in the column was B. Shuskega," and on 2 May he recorded: "Beautiful day... Gunboats bombarded Kurkomen. Burned two churches. We took a couple of prisoners; also arrested a family caught signalling to the Bolo gunboats. They had a dance at the Y. I wrote a couple of letters in the evening." By late May the main subject of the diarist's concern was how to defeat the Canadian artillerymen at baseball. Unfortunately, in the last game we went two to none and the Canadians beat us." A rematch was aborted when the baseball refused to stay in one piece. Meanwhile, the American headquarters at Archangel, no longer fearful of being driven into the sea, busied itself with harassing soldiers for such infractions of military decorum as being improperly shaven or failing to salute, or for appearing in public with their coats or blouses dirty, ripped, or unbuttoned.14

Finally at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday 7 June, Weeks and his troops arrived at Archangel by boat and eight days later, dodging large ice floes in the White Sea, the transports Menominee and Porto evacuated all but a small rear guard of the American North Russian Expeditionary Force. But not even the withdrawal erased the Americans' latent feelings of bitterness. Due to misinformation as to the sailing time of the Porto, Ironside arrived too late to thank the 339th Infantry in person for their efforts. As a good politician, Ironside took pains to assure Colonel Stewart that the incident was not intended as a snub. "In view of your statement I have written the thing up properly," Ironside apologized. Presumably the departing troops should have been grateful for the generous supply of medals conferred upon them by British headquarters. But General Richardson, for one, was not at all impressed. He sensed condensing overtones of British imperialism in the copious awarding of decorations. In the evening the troops had been treated in the manner of colonial forces from Africa or India. The policy of making liberal awards, he contended, "has been done apparently in much the same manner as the distribution of gifts by masters to their slaves in the South, in the ante-bellum days. In other words, it is accompanied throughout by a spirit of superiority on the part of the donors. This, although politically not inadmissible, nevertheless cannot be concealed. This has become a traditional spirit in the British Army through generations of handling troops of inferior races."15

During a brief stopover at Murmansk, described by one observer as a "dirty town of shack buildings," the troops experienced their last taste of combat. Under the watchful eyes of the British, who had been busy training reinforcements at Archangel. Among the British volunteers the story was rife that the American performance in Russia had been mutinous and cowardly. "Why was it that the Yanks turned tail at Ust Padenga?" was a question often addressed to Ralph Albertson. What began as
mere "ribald banter" between British sailors and American soldiers soon degenerated into an exchange of insults. According to a British pilot who witnessed the affair, it was the Americans (objecting to being called "bloody hobos") who began throwing lumps of coal. Before the pilot "could say 'Jack Robinson' buckets of coal were being handed up from below at amazing speed." Numerous casualties were recorded on both sides, but it was the British, throwing bottles in addition to coal, who took the honors. "I saw one Yank take an enormous lump full in the face," recorded the British observer. "One of our men is hit by bottle thrown from opposite ship," Edwin Arkins noted in his diary. Finally, one of the Americans "committed a dastardly act," by throwing an open jackknife that missed its target. Such cowardice, maintained pilot Ira Jones, explained the Americans' "unenviable war record in Russia."

The remainder of the trip was far less eventful. On 26 June the Menominee arrived at Brest, and five days later Lieutenant Weeks and members of the 339th Infantry sailed for America on the S.S. President Grant.16

10

From Optimism to Despair

The first ten months of the Allied intervention in North Russia (August 1918-May 1919) were marked by a pattern of initial buoyant optimism followed by abject despair. On a lesser scale the final four months of the British presence repeated the pattern.

A mood of elation was briefly established by the arrival at Archangel on 26 May of four troop-carrying transports escorted by the American cruiser Des Moines. On board was Grogan's Brigade, named after its commander, Brigadier General G. W. St. G. Grogan, winner of the Victoria Cross, an award comparable to the American Congressional Medal of Honor. When the troops disembarked the following day they were greeted by sunshine and the pealing of church bells and were welcomed by General Miller who presented platters of bread and salt. A crowd estimated by Ironside to number 20,000 demonstrated its approval, although Ironside noted with irritation that approximately 3,000 able-bodied men were present who had apparently escaped being drafted into the Russian National Army. Additional enthusiasm greeted the arrival of the second contingent of British volunteers on 10 June under the command of Brigadier General L. W. de V. Sadleir-Jackson. He was escorted by a refurbished naval flotilla under Captain E. Altham, a veteran of fighting on the Dvina the previous fall. Upon the arrival of the reinforcements the evacuation of all British troops who had spent the winter in North Russia was commenced.11

Likewise in London there was great, but mistaken, optimism that the White Russians would finally prevail over the Bolsheviks. Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak, the White leader in Siberia, appeared well positioned in the spring of 1919 to establish a military link with Archangel. That such a junction was feasible was apparently demonstrated in late March when a group
of twenty volunteers managed to cross the 400 miles separating the North Russian and Siberian forces. Prime Minister David Lloyd George was primarily concerned with the deliberations of the Paris Peace Conference and gave only sporadic attention to implementing the evacuation policy decided upon by the War Cabinet on 4 March. However, several members of his government, especially Winston Churchill and General Henry Wilson, were quick to see the military and political advantages of delaying the evacuation until the winter of 1919 so as to leave the White Russians in as strong a position as possible. Britain might then disengage with honor and, presumably, criticism of those who had advocated the intervention in the first place would be minimized.  

General Wilson, not dismayed by Poole's experience the previous fall, advocated sending Ironside with his new troops and flotilla on an offensive against Kotlas to join up with Kolchak. His only intent, Wilson argued, was to strike a disengaging blow against the Bolsheviks and to facilitate a union of the forces of North Russia with Kolchak. Wilson flatly rejected the "moonshine" any insinuation that his main purpose was to promote an escalation of the fighting rather than carry out the avowed policy of withdrawal. Churchill was likewise an enthusiastic proponent of offensive operations against the Bolsheviks. It was he who had originated the plan for sending the two British relief brigades to Archangel. He also flirted with various schemes for attacking Petrograd with a Finnish-German force supported by the Royal Navy. Equally fantastic was Churchill's proposal whereby 30,000 Czechs would be encouraged to fight their way from Siberia to Archangel. Although Churchill was able to get Cabinet approval of the plan, the Czechs showed no interest in the idea, preferring to be repatriated instead through Vladivostok.

Beginning in June, however, discouraging news from both Siberia and Archangel considerably diminished the earlier mood of optimism. In the first place, it was learned on 12 June that Admiral Kolchak had suffered a crushing reverse in Siberia, a setback that effectively doomed any hope that the White Russians would be able to advance to Kotlas. Foreign Secretary Curzon, who presided over the War Cabinet while Lloyd George completed the final details of the Versailles Treaty, began to question the wisdom of the planned Dvina offensive. He felt no lasting purpose would be served in capturing Kotlas unless the forces of Kolchak were able to arrive there also. And he pointed to the strong opposition by British unions to a military campaign in Russia. For the time being, Churchill and General Wilson, the optimists in the cabinet, carried the debate by emphasizing that the attack against Kotlas was necessary in order to permit the unimpeded evacuation of British forces.

On paper the planned offensive was highly ambitious. The main advance on the Dvina was to be preceded by mine-sweeping operations carried out by the naval flotilla supported by airplanes from Beresnik. Meanwhile, Russian troops on the railroad would capture Plesetskaya, a goal that had previously eluded both Poole and Ironside. On the river British and Russian troops would drive the Bolsheviks from Pinega and Kotlas. If all went according to plan, the Bolsheviks would be deprived of winter bases and the British would be able to disengage, leaving the North Russians in a strong defensive position. Perhaps the forces of Kolchak would be so encouraged that they would join the North Russians at Kotlas after all.

Privately, however, Ironside had serious doubts as to whether he could achieve such a military coup. Certainly the past performance of the Russian troops, who were counted upon to do the bulk of the fighting, did not inspire confidence. Another consideration that had to be taken into account was the weather. This time the problem was constant daylight and drought. The water level of the Dvina steadily receded, until on 9 July the river reached an all-time low. In the words of a "narrative of events" drawn up by the War Office: "This immobilized the Naval flotilla and rendered its co-operation in operations up the river impossible and, moreover, all arrangements for the river transport of the force." Nevertheless, Ironside did have the use of two gunboats when he ordered Graham to undertake a modest advance up the Dvina on 20 June. The objective was to capture high ground used by the Bolsheviks for observation posts in the vicinity of Troitsa and to swamp the river from the river. On this occasion the troops of the Russian National Army performed satisfactorily: however, British troops under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John Sherwood-Kelly failed, either due to a misunderstanding or a loss of nerve, to participate. Four hundred prisoners and three field guns were captured, and several Bolshevik boats were sunk or damaged. Stills further complicating the demoralized and famished state of the Bolsheviks, Ironside felt the offensive "had not been as overwhelming a success as it should have been." The month of June thus ended with a mood of mild disillusionment, only to be followed in July by a descent into despair.
Mainly responsible for the collapse of British confidence was a determined mutiny that occurred at Troitsa on 7 July in Ironside's prid and led by the Slavo-British Legion. The shock was especially great because there was no suspicion at all that trouble was brewing. According to the official report, eight mutineers from Dyer's battalion, named in honor of a Canadian officer who had commanded the group prior to his death, broke into the officers' quarters at 2:30 a.m. and shot to death five British and four Russian officers. "Not content with this," recorded Ira Jones, "they tore their intestines open with knives and batters their faces with them." The eight ringleaders, armed with revolvers, then compelled or convinced more than 200 of the troops to flee to the Bolshevik lines. Only half an hour before, a Russian officer had visited the officers' billets and found everything to be quiet. The murderers, until the moment of the crime, escaped suspicion, having established reputations as "some of the best behaved and most efficient soldiers in the Battalion."

By barge Ironside traveled to Troitsa to investigate. His decision was to disarm the Dyer's battalion except for a machine-gun company that was considered to be loyal. Most of the battalion was converted into a labor company and sent back to Archangel. None of the ringleaders were apprehended, but as an example Ironside decided to execute "about 20" who were caught trying to reach the Bolshevik lines. When the War Office protested the shooting of so large a number, Ironside made the executions just eleven. The sentences were carried out on 20 July by members of the Slavo-British Legion who had not mutinied and who were themselves covered by machine gunners of the 45th Royal Fusiliers. Ira Jones witnessed the ensuing drama that consisted, he said, of three acts:

Act 1. The prisoners--thirteen in all--were in tents and a priest went to bless them and take any messages to relatives. Each one was sprinkled with Holy water, and the priest kissed each one. Act 2. The prisoners were marched under escort to the place of execution, where Russian and English troops formed on three sides and the Pussy-side being taken by spectators. The doomed men were placed in a row with their backs to the place of execution and their sentences read out. Two were reprieved and sentenced to imprisonment. Act 3. Those to be shot were blindfolded and the stripes of a fine-looking sergeant were torn off his coat sleeves. Each man was then taken by the arm by British soldiers and led to posts where they were tied and feet. A disc was placed on their breasts opposite their hearts, as a target. Some of the cowardly ones cried hysterically, but the sergeant was a real stoic. . . . The signal to fire was when the Russian officer dropped his upraised sword. Then when the officer lifted his sword, then a strange thing happened which lengthened the lives and agony of those Bolos for about one minute. A little dog appeared from somewhere and trotted up to one of the prisoners and snuffed at his legs. The dog had to be got away before the officer dropped his sword. I shall never forget the rattle of those machine-guns and the wriggling bodies as their life was shot out of them. The executioner of the sergeant, either deliberately missed him or became very nervous, because when the smoke of the guns cleared the N.C.O. had pulled off his handkerchief and was shouting 'Long live Bolshevism.'

The survivor was dispatched with pistol shots and the corpses buried in a mass grave that the condemned men had themselves dug several hours before. Jones saw the bodies being marched to confinement and "it was obvious they had made a mess in their trousers. In similar circumstances I suppose I would do the same," Jones observed.

Prior to the mutiny of the Slavo-British Legion, Ironside had assumed, at least outwardly, an attitude of confidence. He had maintained that it was his duty as a soldier to overcome whatever obstacles were put in his path. From now on, though, he was hardly able to conceal his discouragement. General Marushevsky, who urged Ironside to push up the Dvina to Kotlas, observed that the British commander had become withdrawn and morose. In fact, Ironside's patience was wearing thin. From a tactical standpoint he felt a disengaging blow was essential to permit the British to evacuate and leave the Russians in a strong defensive position. But he was extremely dubious of trying to advance deep into the interior despite the assurances of Miller and Marushevsky that the inhabitants would rise in support of the Allied cause. On the contrary, Ironside reported, "My own experience is that population does not join willingly
and always sits on the fence." He would leave the Russians sufficient food for the winter but that was all. No British troops or even a British military mission should stay. In a handwritten outline, in which he consolidated his thoughts, Ironside reasoned that a continued military presence would lead to embarrassing questions in the House of Commons, and would merely encourage the Russians to continue leaning on Britain for support. In a nutshell, Ironside's view was: (a) No British troops; (b) No mission unless remainder of Russia admits of it." And, to the War Office he bluntly stated his disillusionment: "I personally do not think after what we have done for Russia that we now owe them anything and that we should set our faces against evacuating any but Allies. They are not worth fighting for if they do not stand up."

Two days after writing this gloomy assessment Ironside was compelled to report another major mutiny at the end of July. This time the trouble broke out at Onega where miners at 1:00 a.m. 20 July handed over the entire area to the Bolsheviks. Even Ironside conceded that his bright hopes for the Russian troops had been shattered. As he admitted to the War Office: "State of Russian troops such that it is certain my efforts to consolidate Russian National Army are definitely a failure. As early evacuation as possible essential now unless British force here is to be increased." It was Ironside's opinion that the withdrawal should be carried out as a "complete military evacuation" with the destruction of all military supplies of any use to the Bolsheviks. He also proposed to issue a blunt proclamation to the population at the moment the evacuation began. In no uncertain terms this document stated what Ironside proposed to do and what were the consequences of opposing him:

I have been appointed Military dictator of the Archangel region occupied by Allied forces. I am disarming the Russian National Army of the Northern region and dismissing men to their homes. I am withdrawing Allied forces to Archangel and to embark them there for evacuation. I warn you that if you attempt to interfere with this evacuation I shall employ the full force of Army and Navy against you and will deal ruthlessly with all agents committing acts against law and order.

I am setting up in Archangel a temporary local Authority chosen by the community with which you may deal when I have evacuated the town.

No executions of prisoners in my hands will take place from the date of my assuming dictatorship.

I am prepared to exchange all prisoners held by me prior to evacuation against all British subjects held by you.

I shall evacuate these prisoners as hostages should you not agree to this."

The next day (29 July) the War Cabinet made up its mind once and for all to withdraw from North Russia as soon as possible. Ironside was authorized to assume the status of military dictator "from any date you consider desirable." But he was specifically forbidden to negotiate an armistice with the Bolsheviks "as this would have the worst possible effects on the other fronts and compromise the political situation." Ironside's hard line advice not to evacuate civilians was overruled on humanitarian grounds and he was told to prepare to transport "all Russians and others up to a total of 13,500. All military stores that could not be removed were to be destroyed to deny them to the Bolsheviks. The remaining food supplies were to be distributed over as wide an area as possible. Finally, the War Cabinet accepted the recommendation of General Wilson to appoint a senior officer, General Sir Henry S. Rawlinson, to supervise the evacuation accompanied by three tanks, two machine-gun battalions, an infantry battalion, and a field ambulance group. Rawlinson hurriedly departed from Newcastle on 4 August on the steamer Czaritsa."

In the meantime, as wild rumors of the impending evacuation circulated throughout Archangel province, Ironside twice met with members of the Archangel government (on 27 and 28 July) and confirmed for the first time that no British troops or ships would remain during the winter. He did not, however, reveal that he planned to complete the process by 1 October and left the impression that the withdrawal would not be completed for at least another month. After a long debate, the government took the position that they had little chance of holding the region without British military support. But they denied any intention of surrendering, telling Ironside "that they considered it their duty to continue after our departure to fight for the good of the common cause that of defeating Bolshevism."
Two questions remained to be decided: the timing of the long-contemplated disengaging blow, and the composition of the attacking force. Personally, Ironside, who had lost all confidence in the Russian troops, preferred to exclude them from the operation entirely. In his opinion it was "very doubtful" whether the Russians would fight at all. And even if they did agree to participate the result could only be an inevitable disaster. But General Miller had his heart set on an immediate offensive of Russian soldiers as the only means to restore morale. Also General Rawlinson favored an immediate attack to break the Bolshevik front and permit an evacuation before the enemy could recover. "In my opinion," Rawlinson, "it will be necessary to give the enemy a good hard knock either just before or very soon after withdrawal from our present forward positions begins." Ironside then flew by seaplane to consult with General Sadleir-Jackson, who commanded the Dvina front. Concluding that his plans were both bold and meticulous Ironside ordered the offensive to begin on 10 August. Meanwhile, Ironside returned to Archangel to report to Rawlinson. 

The resulting 3,000 troops advanced twenty miles and in the process shattered the defenses of an estimated 6,000 Bolsheviks. Soon more than 2,000 prisoners were "in the cages"; eighteen guns and numerous machine guns were also captured. An estimated 500 of the enemy were killed, 800 wounded, and about 300 incapacitated by 600 gas shells, the flaring orange glow of which took the Bolsheviks completely by surprise. Despite the low water in the Dvina, the naval flotilla was able to assist the advance by sweeping mines and shelling. Additional help was furnished by a rejuvenated Royal Air Force contingent at Beresnik. Thirty-six new DH-9A bombers and sixty fresh pilots had arrived early in the summer and these were used to harass Bolshevik gunboats and bring in food; the next day before the offensive began, a DH-9A caught a squad of enemy soldiers in the open and, as recorded by Ira Jones, "Many a Bolo was giving his dying kick as we left the battle-scarred scene, after having used up my five hundred rounds of ammunition." On 11 August seven of the airplanes started for a Bolshevik village on the Dvina, only two were able to get back to Beresnik. But by the afternoon of 14 August the weather cleared sufficiently to permit a bombing attack on Puchega. Jones's aircraft dropped six phosphorous bombs from a height of 300 feet and "had a great time doing it. We could see people running all over the place and I peppered them very plentifully with my machine-gun. Three of these bombs hit houses and set them on fire. Very exciting." The only sour note was the uninspiring performance, which Ironside had predicted, of the Russians. On one occasion two companies of Russians, who were left as an occupation force at a village on the Dvina, flatly disobeyed orders and fled to the rear. Afterwards one disgusted British officer described the Russian troops as being of "very little use" and as "not worth ten British soldiers." On the railroad front, however, the Russians performed somewhat better. At the end of August, General Miller undertook a limited offensive that captured nearly 1,000 prisoners and that, as Ironside recollected, "succeeded beyond anything I had expected." In part the success was attributable to a surprise bayonet attack by two companies of Australians—members of Sadleir-Jackson's Brigade—that preceded the Russian advance. Moreover, the Russian offensive on the railroad front was greatly assisted by another surprise tactic—aircraft gas attacks carried out over a seven-day period by R.A.F. DH-9s.

The resulting 361 bombs containing 20,000 gallons of liquid gas were dropped on three targets of the railroad and all except three functions well, producing a dense cloud of lethal smoke. After the initial attack at Emsya, 120 miles to the south of Archangel, the pilots reported a "marked absence of Machine Gun and A.A. fire, the accuracy of which had previously caused through low-flying planes." One of my pilots, a prisoner testified that the very appearance of Allied planes, even if they did not actually drop gas bombs, invariably produced a mass panic among the Bolshevik soldiers. Undoubtedly the aerial gas attacks gave the Allies an important psychological advantage. Overall, Ironside was greatly pleased with the results of the August offensives and concluded that they were "just what we needed for our peaceful evacuation."
feet, five inches, which was too deep to pass over the sand bars above Beresnik. Through the use of depth charges a channel was blasted through the upper and lower bars at Konezgori that enabled M25 to be pulled across, but M27 stuck fast on the lower bar and could not be freed. A similar fate befell M25 on the next major sand bar at Chamova.

Another project that preceded the evacuation was the laying of an extensive mine field between Puchega and Seltso. As a result the Bolsheviks had to contend with an advanced mine field of eight "horned" mines and a second field of fifteen "whisker" mines. As Captain Altham explained, "These were solely intended to delay the Enemy Flotilla and prevent their bombarding our positions during the evacuation." As planned, the first two mine fields delayed the Bolsheviks for three days during which they lost a paddle-wheel steamer that sank after striking a mine. Once past the initial barrier the Bolshevik Flotilla had to face a three mine field of thirty "H" sinner mines laid at Seltso in three lines of ten each, and a final field of thirty "H" mines laid in five rows of six each. In addition, an extensive mine field of thirty mines spread along the Vaga near its junction with the Divina. The only hitch in the preparations was the dismal shoving of the North Russian troops. On 29 August, Sadlier-Jackson had to disarm two companies of the 4th North Russian Rifles as they were reported by their commanders to be on the verge of mutiny. Two days later General Miller appeared and, while waiting to decide which of several defensive positions to occupy, requested (to the horror of their officers) that the two companies be rearmed. As Captain Altham reported, "This vacillating policy, the knowledge that at best the morale of the Russians was exceedingly low, even where they were not actually treacherous, their lack of organization and supplies, the very bad quality of their officers and general instability could not but add considerably to the difficulties of our evacuation."16

Meanwhile at Archangel the last of the foreign diplomats were packing to leave. Somewhat ironically the task of dismantling the United States embassy, as the old one was called, fell upon Felix Cole, who had outspokenly opposed the evacuation from the very beginning. Since the departure of DeWitt Poole in mid-June, Cole had been chargé d'affaires. Not much was left for Cole to dispose of as the embassy's inventory was now limited to just "one good desk, two small marble combination lock safes, nine plain pine tables, 34 miscellaneous chairs, four desk lamps, three small rugs and a good lot of small articles of slight value." Considering this it would cost more to ship the goods than they were worth, Cole recommended, and the State Department concurred, that everything should be sold for whatever it would bring prior to the evacuation.17

Personal matters also intruded. Cole was faced with the ever-present expense of maintaining his wife and infant daughter at Harbin, Manchuria, where they had taken refuge two years earlier. Furthermore, his wife's plan to come to Archangel in August 1919 was thwarted by Bolshevik gains in Siberia. Cole also had to contend with a violent personality clash with consul Shelby Strother, who wrote critical letters to the State Department accusing Cole of having expelled him unjustly from the embassy living quarters without cooking utensils and with having issued passports to three Russian women who harbored "Bolshevik tendencies." Cole counter-attacked by pointing out to the State Department that Strother had refused to move from Cole's quarters "as I had indicated he could do without regret on my part during several of our disputes," and had secretly offered to pay double rent to have the living room and third if the Russian women were "removed individually." The personal frictions were finally resolved by the evacuation of the embassy on 14 September, Strother being assigned to Amsterdam and Cole returning to Washington. Three days later the French diplomatic mission also left Archangel.18

Simultaneously the British withdrawal on the Divna got under way. One of the parties which blew up the bridges spanning the river roads on either side of the Divna. Next they dynamited the wreck of the gunboat H.M.S. Sword Dance that had been sunk near Tulgas by a mine on 24 June. The crew then turned their attention to M25 and M27 that had been wired with thirteen depth charges apiece. Short circuits caused by rain temporarily delayed the effort. But eventually the two-thirds or three-quarters of the charges placed on M27 fired and, as recounted by Captain Altham, "the ship was cut completely in two just abaft the gun platform, the starboard side blown out, and a raging fire was burning fore and aft before she was finally abandoned." M25 was then blown up on Chamova bar and "completely disintegrated, only three large but quite unrecognizable sections and innumerable fragments remaining."

At dawn on 16 September the British troops began their withdrawal from the defenses at Pless. No sooner had the evacuation begun than Sadlier-Jackson, to his great irritation, received a telegram from the Russian command begging him to remain until the
Russians could arrive. In the opinion of Captain Altham, "It was obviously a political move to throw the responsibility for the first being taken over on to our shoulders. The Russian Headquarters were at Elamets marked (80 miles behind). How completely unjustified such delay would have been is shown by subsequent events." What Altham referred to was the Bolshevik ambush of the Dvina convoy at the mouth of the Vaga, which Altham blamed entirely on the Russians who were supposed to have secured the area. The lead boat carrying Sadleir-Jackson was fired on by Bolsheviki machine guns and before the rest of the convoy could be alerted a transport loaded with troops was taken by surprise and suffered fourteen casualties. Captain Altham soon returned the fire with assorted Lewis guns, rifles, and a three-inch gun that had been salvaged from M27. Finally a marina detachment launched "a most spirited and plucky attack" which scattered the Bolshevik machine gunners and enabled the convoy to proceed on its way northward. Bad weather at Beresnik coasted a delay of one day, and two more days were lost when several of the ships grounded on a sand bar, an incident that Altham blamed on Russian river pilots. Finally, on the afternoon of 19 September the convoy arrived at Archangel, leaving three monitors as a rear guard to protect the approaches to the city by rail and by river.  

To the great relief of Rawlinson and Ironside the atmosphere in Archangel itself remained relatively calm. It was obvious that it was quiet when the Allies were about to leave for good. Thus the general fears of having to conduct a military evacuation in an atmosphere of chaos never materialized and Rawlinson discarded the idea of declaring himself a military dictator. One of Rawlinson's few drastic actions, one that horrified General Miller, was to order the destruction of surplus ammunition and military equipment. Like Ironside, Rawlinson believed that the White cause was doomed and he concluded that leaving the military stores would guarantee that sooner or later they would be seized by the Bolsheviki. A final drastic measure on the part of the British was the taking of Bolsheviki hostages. Actually this policy did not originate in Ironside but with the War Office. On 5 August Ironside was instructed: To that they may be used for exchange one hundred of the most influential Bolsheviki prisoners should be brought to the United Kingdom and in the meantime held as hostages for the proper treatment of British prisoners in Russia." Subsequent negotiations with the Bolsheviki for the exchange of prisoners failed when the Bolsheviki demanded as a precondition that the British might be instructed not to repatriate exiles abroad. Since this would have constituted de facto recognition of the Bolsheviki it was rejected. As a result forty-seven hostages were shipped to Britain on the Kildonan Castle which sailed on 3 September, and another fifty-four hostages went three weeks later on the Tolstoy. Also departing during the same period were sixty-five Russian prisoners captured from the opportunity to go into exile rather than face the Bolsheviki. By 27 September the Archangel intervention ended, slightly more than a year after it had begun, as the last British troops boarded transports and the three monitors were withdrawn from their defensive positions. Last to depart was Captain Altham, who recorded: "No hostile action took place during the final stages of the evacuation which proceeded in perfect order."  

For several months the shaky North Russian government under Miller managed to stagger along while the Bolsheviki concentrated upon defeating the White Russian forces in Siberia and the South. Temporarily, the Bolsheviki refrained from launching a full-scale offensive. But the captivity of Admiral Kolchak in early 1920 meant the inevitable. By early February the remaining defenses of the North Russians collapsed as a result of mass desertions on the railroad and the Dvina. On 19 February General Miller and his government fled by icebreaker to Britain and two days later without firing a shot, the Bolsheviki 154th Infantry Regiment entered Archangel to receive the traditional peace offering of bread and salt.  

So far as the American participants were concerned, the North Russian expedition was by then no more than ancient history. In mid-July the 339th Infantry arrived at Detroit and was given a tumultuous welcome that included a ticker tape parade and a Chamber of Commerce reception. Within a week the soldiers were discharged to return to their homes and the routine of civilian life, occasionally to reminisce about their experiences at reunions of the Detroit-based Polar Bear Association. Like the rest of the country, most of the soldiers wanted merely to return home and be uninvolved in war as possible. Many felt a sense of chagrin and rejection for having been associated with a "mutinous" regiment that fought an unpopular and unsuccessful war. "Whether willfully or unwillingly," wrote John Cudahy, "our country had engaged in an unprovoked intensive, inglorious, little armed conflict which had ended in
disaster and disgrace." In his view the North Russian expedition "will always remain a depraved one with status of a free-booter's excursion." 22

Was there nothing at all beneficial to come out of the experience? Several of the soldiers suggested that the nine months in Russia had turned them into something resembling superpatriots and had made them appreciate many things in America they had previously taken for granted. Written to Professor Carl Russell Fish, Lieutenant John A. Commons remembered the war had "made damn good Americans out of our soldiers.... And, if you should care for a very exciting five minutes at any time, just mention Bolshevik or I.W.W. to a member of the 339th." Or, as expressed by Captain Robert P. Boyd, all those lucky enough to come back from Russia alive were certain to be "better men and better citizens, to be more contented with less envy, willing to work and to clean up the backyard." Certainly the Americans had no reason to hang their heads. It was true, of course, that the 339th Infantry was not well prepared for its assignment. But it was also true that the British commanders were utterly unrealistic in their expectations. In the opinion of General Richardson, the British seemed to think the Americans "were imbued with some quality of inherent ferocity and desire for blood which would cause them to do all the fighting willingly and eagerly, even though commanded by incompetent British officers." Based on his four months at Archangel, Richardson concluded that the American troops had ranked "well at the top of all of the troops in North Russia, both as to character and accomplishment." Transported by an historical accident from the pastoral life of Michigan and Wisconsin to the tragicomedy of the Archangel intervention, the soldiers of the 339th Infantry were deserving of the eulogistic sentiments expressed by Senator Hiram Johnson: "They served under conditions that were the most confusing and perplexing that an American army was ever asked to contend with, but they did their duty." 23

In Britain as in America there was no inclination to indulge in a lengthy and painful postmortem. A general consensus was reached in government circles that Britain had made an effort in North Russia that was beyond the call of duty and that the result of her own Britain had reached the end of the road. As expressed by General Wilson: "The position had to be faced that the British Empire in common with all the Entente nations, was weary and exhausted, depleted in men and money, and incapable of further military efforts on a grand scale." Thus the time had come to recognize that "North Russia offered no prospects of decisive results, and with Kolchak's failure any semblance of military effort in that theatre was doomed to be barren." None of the planners and supporters of the affair rushed to shoulder responsibility for the failure of the Anglo-American expedition, but conveniently placed the blame on the blundering White Russian generals and politicians. In this regard, Wilson approvingly quoted Captain Altham's statement, "The blunders of the Russian commanders, the lack of discipline, organizing ability and military leadership of the Russian officers and Higher Command after a year of the most loyal and capable British support, soon made it evident that to continue that support would be fruitless." 24

In his final report on naval operations Captain Altham expressed the hope that "the very gallant work performed by the officers and men who bore the brunt of the fighting in this distant and little known part of the world may not be forgotten." But in the West just the opposite was true as memories of the Archangel expedition were quick to fade. However, this was not so much the case in the Soviet Union where the political, as opposed to the military, side of the story of the "aggressive imperialist circles." Initially Soviet historians of the intervention treated the United States rather leniently with Britain and France being depicted as the primary villains. Not until the Cold War did the United States emerge as the main instigator. Representative of the legacy of distrust arising from the Allied involvement was Premier Nikita Khurshchev's remark made in 1959: "We remember the grim days when American soldiers went to our soil headed by their generals. Never have any of our soldiers been on American soil, but your soldiers were on Russian soil. These are the facts." 25

That the weak Anglo-American intervention was, as Bruce Lockhart wrote, "a blunder comparable with the worst mistakes of the Crimean War" is undeniable. 26 And, as in the case of the Crimean conflict, the pertinent military lessons were all but absorbed by the side that had the last laugh. Soviet generals in the Russo-Finnish Winter War of 1939-1940 and German generals during the Russian campaign of World War II were forced to relearn that in winter a well-organized and sheltered defense enjoys a significant advantage over the offense, that motorized vehicles are often inoperable
and often inferior to the Siberian pony, that weapons of all kinds are likely to freeze at subzero temperatures, that well-trained and acclimatized troops provided with the warmest equipment are absolutely essential, and that even minor injuries can be fatal unless immediate shelter and medical care are made available. Apparently the small scale of the fighting, its indecisive character, and the fairly modest loss of life explain why both sides learned little from their combat experiences under arctic conditions. Only 222 Americans and 317 Englishmen lost their lives in North Russia. Russian losses—both White and Bolshevik—are unknown, but were certainly far greater than those of the Allies. Still, the casualties seemed inconsequential when compared with the bloody campaigns on the eastern and western fronts.

In the opinion of General Henry Wilson, one lesson stood out above all others: "It is that, once a military force is involved in operations on land it is almost impossible to limit the magnitude of its commitments." From the landing of 150 British marines at Murmansk in April 1918, the force swelled by bits and pieces until more than 13,000 British troops were involved. A year later, in view of the unhappy British experience in North Russia, the chief of the Imperial General Staff urged that future requests for "even a company or two" of troops should not be agreed to "without the fullest and most careful consideration of the larger obligations which such compliance may ultimately involve." Surely the British would have saved themselves much embarrassment had they listened to the advice of Felix Cole: "Intervention will begin on a small scale but with each step forward will grow in its demands for ships, men, money, and materials. . . . If we intervene, going farther into Russia as we succeed, we shall be swallowed up." By ignoring Cole's counsel the Allies, as Cole himself suggested, may well have sold their birthright in Russia for a mess of pottage.

Notes

Works frequently cited have been identified by the following abbreviations:

DSNA General Records of the Department of State, National Archives
FRUS Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918: Russia
MHC Michigan Historical Collections
PRO Public Record Office
PWW The Papers of Woodrow Wilson
SHSW State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Chapter 1.

1. Malcolm K. Whyte, a member of the 310th Engineers, wrote to his wife, "You will not hear from me for a long time perhaps months due to a long trip that we are about to start on. I will not be able to mention the place in my letter. . . . The gaps in mail this winter will likewise be long. Don't worry if you do not hear from me for months." Malcolm K. Whyte to his wife, 24 August 1918, William F. Whyte Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, hereafter cited as SHSW. Henry Dennis to his father, Madison Democrat, 22 December 1918, Wisconsin War History Commission, Clipping File, 1916-1919, SHSW; Robert F. Boyd to his parents, Eau Claire Leader, 7 January 1919, Wisconsin War History Commission, Clipping File, 1916-1919, SHSW.


Allied intervention, as John M. Thompson points out in "Allied and American Intervention in Russia, 1918-1921," in Rewriting Russian History: Soviet Interpretations of Russia's Past, ed. Cyril E. Black (New York, 1956), pp. 334-400; is badly marred by ideological bias, lack of objectivity, and uncritical assumptions concerning the sinister designs of "world imperialism." George F. Kennan, "Soviet Historiography and America's Role in the Intervention," American Historical Review 65 (January 1960):302-22, finds recent Soviet historiography concerning the Allied intervention to be seriously defective due to its systematic misuse of evidence and its reliance on such cliches as "American imperialists," "American reactionaries," "American capitalists," "imperialist circles of the U.S.A.," "American bourgeois politicians," "the interventionists," "aggressive imperialist circles," "American millionaires," and "American leading circles." Anatole Mazour, The Writing of History in the Soviet Union (Palo Alto, 1971), pp. 249-52; also stresses the amateurish quality of Soviet history. Soviet historians N. V. Sivachev and N. N. Yakovlev, Russian History in the United States (Chicago, 1979), pp. 42-62; emphasize the "counterrevolutionary essence" of the American intervention. The most recent scholarship on the subject is contained in Eugene Trani, "Woodrow Wilson and the Decision to Intervene in Russia: A Reconsideration," Journal of Modern History 49 (September, 1977):440-61; and John W. Long, "American Intervention in Russia: The North Russian Expedition, 1918-1919," Diplomatic History 6 (Winter, 1982):45-67. Trani plausibly suggests that President Wilson succumbed to Allied pressure for intervention. The primary consideration influencing the president was a feeling that America as a member of a war coalition must cooperate with its allies. But at the same time, the president was so harassed by the demands of domestic politics, mobilization, war strategy, and peacemaking, that he was unable to give much serious thought to the Russian situation. The latter essay by Long demonstrates that "there is simply no evidence to support the contention that President Wilson was motivated by an ideological desire to crush Bolshevism and convert the Russians to his own political convictions" (67). Long's essay contains an excellent survey of current Soviet historiography concerning the Allied intervention in North Russia.


Kennan, Decision to Intervene, pp. 44-57;


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