

ORIGIN OF THE SIBERIAN INTERVENTION, 1917—1918*

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I. *Problem*

At the beginning of August 1918, both Japan and the United States declared that they would send their armed forces to Siberia in support of the eastward movement of the Czechoslovak forces. On August 12 the first Japanese troops disembarked at Vladivostok, to be followed by the American army on August 19. Thus began the Allied Intervention which intensified the Civil War within Russia and deepened the Bolshevik distrust and hatred of the capitalist countries. It seems hardly necessary to explain the effect of the Allied expedition, which ended with the evacuation of the Japanese troops in October, 1922, on the development of international politics during the inter-war period and on the political configuration of Soviet Russia.

This article is limited in scope to an analysis of the origin of the Allied expedition to Siberia, and will attempt to describe how the expedition was planned and which country had the initiative in that process. With this purpose in view, the period from November, 1917 to August, 1918, will be under review.

This approach to the problem cited above, based largely on unpublished and hitherto unknown materials, would seem to be of definite value, in view of the varying and conflicting theories on the subject, which have been held by Japanese, American, and Russian scholars. In the United States, for example, prevailing opinion finds the origin of the Intervention in Japan's desire to control Eastern Siberia, and asserts that the United States decided to participate in the expedition with the principal aim of preventing Japan from acting arbitrarily in that area.

This attitude was shared by the Soviet historians in the pre-War period. A. Kantorovich remarked that the participation of the United States was virtually a step taken against Japan,¹ and V. Avarin noted that the United States, aware of the Japanese intention to occupy Eastern Siberia, decided to send her own army into that region lest Japan should monopolize the prize.² These remarks, incidentally, are in line with the declaration made by Foreign Minister Litvinov in November, 1933, in which he said that the Soviet Union decided to renounce

* This paper was originally prepared for reading at a seminar of the Russian Institute, Columbia University, in January 1956.

¹ Канторович, А., Америка в борьбе за Китай, 1935, стр. 294.

² Аварин, В., Империализм и Манчжурия, 1931, стр. 165—166.

its counter-claim for indemnity against the United States, because it was proved that the American despatch of troops had been designed not for invading the Soviet territory, but for preventing Japanese aggression.

These attitudes on the part of the Soviet historians are in marked contrast to those of their post-War colleagues, especially after the outbreak of the "Cold War." Obviously, these historians have been trying to charge the United States with imperialistic designs. In their view, the Japanese were relegated to a subordinate role in the Siberian Intervention and the Americans took the place of the active organizer of the venture. For example, Kunina writes as follows: "As early as 1918 the imperialists in the United States instigated the Japanese to attack against Soviet Russia, with a view to establishing control over the Siberian coast by destroying the Soviet regime and weakening Japan simultaneously."³ Further, we can read the following in Kopilov's book: "Since Great Britain, France, and Japan lacked matériel for a large-scale military action, the imperialists in the United States took upon themselves the task of organizing a major campaign against the young nation of Soviet Russia."⁴ It is scarcely necessary to cite any more remarks to illustrate the Soviet switch in historical theory.

The attitude of Japanese historians has also been subject to the fluctuations induced by a changing political atmosphere. Before World War II the study of the Siberian Intervention was regarded as more or less a taboo, and Japanese scholars were inclined to avoid detailed description. They cursorily explained that the Japanese Government sent her forces in response to a proposal from the Allied Powers, particularly from the United States. In the post-War period, when the taboo disappeared, the view that the leading part in arranging the expedition had been played by Japanese imperialists has become dominant. Prof. Shinobu and Prof. Inoue analyse the historical process of the Siberian Intervention on this basis.⁵

I have been fortunate, during the course of my study, in having had access to me relevant documents of the Japanese Foreign Office and other important manuscripts, such as the diary of Miyoji Ito. I believe that, as a scholar who had the opportunity to study these valuable materials, it will be possible for me to contribute something of value in illuminating the controversial and beclouded historical problem.

³ Кунина, А. Е., Провал американских планов завоевания мирового господства в 1917—1920 гг. 1951, стр. 51.

⁴ Kopylow, O.N.J., *Die Zerschlagung der amerikanisch-englischen militärischen Intervention im sowjetischen Norden, 1918—1920*, 1954, S. 9—10.

⁵ Shinobu, S., *Taisho Seijishi* (Political History of the Taisho Era), Vol. II, 1951.
Inoue, K., *Nihon no Gunkoku Shugi* (Militarism of Japan), Vol. II, 1953.

II. *Early Plans for Intervention*

The Allied Powers opened a meeting of the Inter-Allied Council and Supreme War Council in Paris on November 29, 1917, for the purpose of surveying the Russian situation the Bolshevik Revolution created, and of conferring on the proposal for armistice made by the Bolshevik regime and on the disclosure of secret treaties. The first item for discussion was the question of a restatement of war aims. The American delegate, Colonel House, stood for a restatement, but he was strongly opposed by the French and Italian delegates; the meeting finally drafted the following instructions to be sent to the Allied Ambassadors in Petrograd; "The Great Powers which signed the London Pact on September 5, 1914, or those which have since adhered thereto, are ready to proceed to an examination of the war aims and of possible condition for a just peace concerning Russia as soon as the Russian nation has established a proper government."⁶

The next item was the question of whether the Allied Powers should approve the armistice negotiation between the Bolsheviks and the Germans. The British delegate proposed that the Russian people be informed that it was up to them whether they would continue the war or stop it. But this proposal was also rejected because of the strong opposition of the French and Italian delegates.⁷ No action was taken on this matter.

The third question discussed concerned possible steps by the Allies should an armistice be reached by Russia and Germany. In the course of this discussion the idea of supporting anti-Bolshevik groups was presented, and here a plan for the Siberian Intervention came up for the first time. It is significant for the purpose of this study to observe how the idea was proposed and how subsequent discussion developed. Therefore I include below the speeches on the subject delivered by each delegate, according to the report of the contemporary Japanese Ambassador to France.

The subject was broached by the French delegate, General Foch, on December 3: "We should occupy the Trans-Siberian Railroad either at Vladivostok or at Harbin as soon as possible. Control over that railway would make it possible to supply anti-Bolshevik groups, organized in southern Russia, with military matériel, to give military assistance to those groups, and to intercept any German invasion of the Far East. Considering geographical location and military power, only the United States and Japan are in a position to undertake this job. I do hope, therefore, that the delegates of these two countries will ask their governments to put this plan into practice."

⁶ K. Matsui, Japanese Ambassador to France, to Foreign Minister Motono, Dec. 3, 1917. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives).

⁷ Lloyd George, D., *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, 1936, V, 2570-2571. Seymour, C., *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 1928, III, 283.

Lord Balfour, British Foreign Minister, was the next one to speak: "First, from the military point of view, it is not easy to occupy the Trans-Siberian Railroad or Vladivostok. Second, from the political point of view, I cannot favor this proposal which virtually means war against Russia. Certainly the Bolshevik conduct is outrageous, but moderate groups still exist in Russia, and I would rather adopt a policy calculated to bolster them and bring them forward."

Matsui, Japanese Ambassador to France, followed him: "Such an action as the occupation of the Railroad will not be looked upon as a gesture of good will by the Russian people. It will, on the contrary, encourage anti-Allied behavior on the part of the Russian and will give Germany a pretext for interference in Russia."

Colonel House, representing the United States Government, agreed with Matsui and suggested that the Stevens Railway Mission be asked to make plans to transport the military supplies. Thus, the first proposed plan for a Siberian expedition did not win the approval of the conference.⁸

The meeting of the Supreme War Council in Paris revealed that certain differences existed between the British and the French regarding their policies toward Russia. The effort to bridge over the split resulted in an agreement, entitled "Memorandum Prepared by Lord Milner and Lord Cecil on Suggested Policy in Russia, and Accepted by Clemenceau and Pichon on December 23, 1917." The memorandum, which is viewed as having provided the basis of British and French policy toward Russia for several years after the Revolution, was to the following effect: "At Petrograd we should at once get into relations with the Bolsheviks through unofficial agents, each country as seems best to it.

We should represent to the Bolsheviks that we have no desire to take part in any way in the internal politics of Russia, and that any idea that we favour a counter-revolution is a profound mistake..... If we could induce the Southern Russian armies to resume the fight, that would be very desirable, but it is probably impossible. To secure these objects the first thing is money to reorganise the Ukraine, to pay the Cossacks and Caucasian forces, and to subsidise the Persians. The sums required are not, as things go, very enormous, but the exchange presents great difficulties. If the French could undertake the finance of the Ukraine, we might find the money for the others. It is understood that the United States will assist. Besides finance, it is important to have agents and officers to advise and support the provincial Governments

⁸ Ambassador Matsui to Foreign Minister Motono, Dec. 4, 1917. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives). "Foch Plan" in written form was handed to Matsui by Foch himself on Dec. 4. About that text, vide Hosoya, C., *Shiberia Shuppei no Shiteki Kenkyu (The Origin of the Siberian Intervention)*, 1955, Appendix, I.

It is interesting to note that Soviet scholars such as Kunina and Stein wrote that the Allied Powers decided on military intervention against Soviet Russia at this meeting, and that the United States took the initiative in this decision. Kunina, *op. cit.*, pp. 44—45, 48. Stein, B. E., *Die "russische Frage" auf der Pariser Friedenskonferenz, 1919—1920*, 1953, S. 24.

and their armies. It is essential that this should be done as quietly as possible so as to avoid the imputation—as far as we can—that we are preparing to make war on the Bolsheviks.

We would suggest that the Ukraine should be again in this matter, dealt with by the French, while we would take the other south-east provinces. A general officer from each country would be appointed to take charge of our respective activities, but they would, of course, keep in the closest touch with one another through carefully selected liaison officers in order to ensure the utmost unity of action.”⁹

In this way the British and the French came to an understanding regarding the spheres of intervention in south-eastern Russia; and from that time on the British entered upon an intervention policy in cooperation with France.

On January 1, 1918, Robert Cecil, British Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, told the Japanese Ambassador Chinda, that the War Cabinet, deeply concerned about the rumor that the Bolsheviks might deliver about 635,000 tons of military supplies piled up at Vladivostok to the Germans, felt it necessary to take steps to check such action. And Cecil proposed that an international contingent, the main force of which was to be organized by the Japanese, be sent to Vladivostok. At the same time Chinda was notified of the British Government's decision to despatch a cruiser from Hong Kong to Vladivostok.¹⁰ The British proposal was, however, not favored by Ambassador Chinda who was of the opinion that the moderate groups in Russia were to secure the military stores.¹¹

While trying to persuade the Japanese to send the army, the British were approaching the Americans on the same matter. On the same day that he conferred with Chinda, Cecil sent a letter to President Wilson asking the United States to join in the international contingent to operate in Siberia.¹²

On January 28, a note was handed to the State Department by the British Embassy, in which the Americans were asked to approve the Allied Powers' readiness “to invite the Japanese as their mandatories” in occupying the Siberian Railway with a view to securing the lines of communication with anti-Bolshevik elements in southern Russia.¹³ It was a negative response that the British received from Washington.¹⁴

France, backing the British campaign, was also active in voicing the necessity to take immediate steps for the intervention. She was so anxious to intervene that she delivered a note to the United States Government on January 8, expressing her readiness to send her forces to Harbin and Irkutsk “on account of

⁹ Lloyd George, *op. cit.*, V, 2582–2585.

¹⁰ Ambassador Chinda to Foreign Minister Motono, Jan. 1, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Dugdale, B.E.C., *Arthur James Balfour*, 1936, II, 254–255.

¹² Baker, R.S., *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters*, 1929, VII, 442–443.

¹³ United States, Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918, Russia*, 1932, II, 35–36.

¹⁴ Reply of the State Department to the British Embassy, Feb. 8, 1918, *ibid.*, II, 41–42.

the growth of anarchy in Siberia," and asked the Americans to take part in this venture.¹⁵ On February 12, the French asked the Japanese to send their army to Siberia, allowing them to have a free-hand in action.¹⁶

III. *Japanese Ambition*

The political vacuum in Siberia which was created by the World War as well as by the Revolution stimulated the long-cherished ambition of Japan to have political and economic control over the Continent, and the British and French proposals helped it to be strengthened. However, the economic structure of Japan was too weak to endure a prolonged warfare, and it was too risky to engage in the intervention without the commitment of financial and material assistance from the Allied Powers, especially from the United States. The appearance of good opportunity for political and economic expansion in Eastern Siberia, and the acute awareness of inability to wage a large-scale warfare without economic assistance from the United States, were the two basic factors which the Japanese had to weigh before making decision on the question of the Siberian Intervention.

The question of relative emphasis on these two factors split the Japanese leadership. The Army General Staff played down the need for economic aid from abroad and strongly favored an early expedition on a large scale. Soon after the Bolshevik Revolution the General Staff drafted a "Plan for Sending Troops to the Russian Far East to Protect Foreign Residents." The plan envisaged the despatch of Japanese troops for the purpose of (1) protecting "Japanese nationals living in strategic places in Northern Manchuria and the Maritime province," and (2) watching "over the railway and telegraph lines for military operations which may be undertaken later."¹⁷ The plan was revised in December, 1917 and January, 1918 to be elaborated.¹⁸ Then, in February, 1918, the Joint Committee on Military Matters, which was made up of representatives of the Army and Navy, started its work, with Giichi Tanaka, Vice-Chief of the Army General Staff Headquarters, presiding it. On February 28, the Joint Committee listed the following procedures as prerequisites to the expedition.

1. A definite decision on the troops to be used and the preparation of materials needed by them.
2. The negotiation of a joint military agreement with China to secure the cooperation of the latter's troops and her assistance in supply.
3. The completion of preparatory arrangements in Vladivostok and Harbin.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 20-21.

¹⁶ Note of the French Embassy to the Japanese Foreign Office, Feb. 12, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives).

¹⁷ Morley, James W., *Samurai in Siberia; The Origins of Japan's Siberian Expedition, 1918-1922*, a dissertation at Columbia University, 1954, pp. 162-164. (This was published under the title of "The Japanese Thrust into Siberia, 1918," in 1957.)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

4. The completion of the equipping and training of the Semenov detachment under Japanese direction.
5. A change in the annual mobilization plans.
6. The completion of emergency preparations for sending troops to Vladivostok to support a preliminary naval landing.
7. A revision in the organization and equipping of the Japanese Army.¹⁹

In March, 1918, the Joint Committee adopted a plan to organize two Armies. The First Army was to occupy Vladivostok, Nikol'sk, Ussurisk, and Khabarovsk, and then to fan out to secure the Amur Railroad and Amur River; the Second Army was to advance to Chita and to secure the Zabaikal Territory. The First Army was to consist of two divisions and the Second Army, of five.²⁰

Foreign Minister Motono was not less eager for an early expedition than the Army. In the Bolshevik Revolution Motono envisaged a serious danger to Japan's defense as well as a good chance to accomplish her desire to expand in Eastern Asia. The idea of establishing a buffer state in Eastern Siberia seemed to meet the requirements of the situation. The necessity for the strengthening of Japan's position in Eastern Siberia and Northern Manchuria, taking advantage of this opportunity, in preparation for the post-War struggle for China among the Powers, pushed him toward the intervention. On this basis, Motono took the leadership in the Cabinet for carrying out the interventionist's plan.

Prime Minister Terauchi and the most powerful elder statesman, Yamagata, were also desirous of realizing Japan's long-cherished ambition, but they were more concerned about the American attitude. It was in the Advisory Council on Foreign Relations that the interventionists met the greatest difficulty in the way of carrying out their program. The Advisory Council, organized by the most influential statesmen and key ministers, was established in 1917 for the purpose of forming bipartisan policy on crucial foreign issues. Kei Hara, leader of the Seiyukai, the majority party, took a firm stand against the intervention policy in the Advisory Council. He and Shinken Makino, another member of the Council, were deeply concerned that such a policy might lead Japan to the danger of losing the friendship of the United States and of entangling Japan in prolonged warfare with Soviet Russia. While their attitude embarrassed the interventionists, the discussions in the Council made it clear that American approval of intervention would make it next to impossible for Hara and Makino to persist in their opposition.

At an interview with American Ambassador Morris on February 5, 1918, Foreign Minister Motono, in an attempt to sound out an American attitude, took up the matter of supporting the moderate elements in Russia and of occupying the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Motono expressed his inclination to the view that a plan of action ought to be agreed upon by the Allied Powers to prevent the spread of German influence in Asia by Siberia. He doubted

¹⁹ Morley, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-226.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-228.

"whether it was wise to leave the moderate element in Russia without some support from the Allies, which would hearten them in their effort to keep Russia true to the declaration of no separate peace." And he gave his opinion: "The control up to the junction of the Trans-Siberian and Amur Railways would effectively prevent the spread of German influence in the Far East."²¹

This was Japan's first official effort to get American approval of intervention. Since American approval would weaken the opposition's stand in Japan and make it possible to carry out the intervention, it can almost be said that the Americans held the key to the intervention.

IV. *Key to the Intervention*

When it was reported that the Bolsheviks had seized the governmental power in Russia, the emotional reaction in the United States was strongly against the Revolution. To the Americans, a government by such an ignorant, incompetent mass was simply beyond comprehension, and the idea resembled "a nightmare in a lunatic asylum."²² In the eyes of conservatives in the United States nothing could have been more repugnant.

This impression, however, did not necessarily lead the Americans to an early intervention in Russia, because the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks was deemed a mere passing phase; it was generally expected that "the usurpers were such violent extremists that they would soon kill themselves off with crazy ideas, and thus make room for a genuinely democratic growth."²³

Secretary of State Lansing, who represented the view of the conservatives, wanted nothing to do with the "dangerous idealists," and on December 2, 1917, recommended a "wait and see" policy to President Wilson: "The situation is to me an unanswered and unanswerable riddle..... The correct policy for a government which believes in political institutions as they now exist, and based on nationality and private property is to leave these dangerous idealists alone and have no direct dealings with them."²⁴

A view contrary to Lansing's policy was advocated by Colonel House and Raymond Robins who was the representative of the American Red Cross in Russia. House viewed the Revolution as a course made inevitable by the demands of Russian farmers whose simple desire was a proper distribution of land.²⁵ Robins believed that the only way to deal with a dead body, that is to say the Kerensky regime, is to bury it and to forget it.²⁶ Looking forward to a large Russian market in the future he advised the maintenance of good relations with the Bolshevik

²¹ Ambassador Morris to Secretary of State Lansing, Feb. 8, 1918, *U.S. Foreign Relations*, II, 42-43.

²² New York Times, Bailey, T. A., *America Faces Russia*, 1950, p. 235.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

²⁴ Lansing, R., *War Memoirs of Robert Lansing*, 1935, pp. 339-342.

²⁵ Seymour, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

regime, and even suggested that the United States give economic assistance to the new regime. His ideas were supported by Senator Borah, by Hugh Cooper, a magnate of the machine industry, and by many others, and constituted an important factor in influencing the course of United States policy toward Russia.²⁷ President Wilson was under pressure both from the State Department which represented the conservative view, and from the House-Robins group. He vacillated between these two groups.

As February drew to a close, a new situation, brought on by the Bolshevik Party's decision to accept Germany's conditions for peace, developed, and it naturally made the British and French desire for intervention more urgent than ever. On February 26, the British Ambassador to Washington, Earl of Reading, handed a secret memorandum to Wilson asking the Americans to join in inviting Japan to occupy the Siberian Railway. In that memorandum the British Government made the following proposal: (1) That the United States should join Great Britain, France, and Italy in inviting Japan immediately to occupy the Siberian Railroad; (2) That this occupation should be extended, if possible, to Cheliabinsk and, in any case, as far as Omsk; and (3) That a declaration should accompany the occupation.²⁸

The French Government joined the campaign. On February 26, Premier Clemenceau urged the necessity of a Siberian intervention on American Ambassador Sharp.²⁹ Foreign Minister Pichon also explained the danger of the situation to Sharp, comparing it to a fire next-door, and on February 26, he pressed the Americans for a decision, pointing out the danger that "Japan would act independently of the Allied Powers unless their consent and approval were soon forthcoming."³⁰ Furthermore, General Foch appealed to the Americans through a journalist writing in *Life* magazine.³¹

When Lansing was informed of Motono's intention to "declare publicly the disinterestedness of Japan, and to pledge to carry on military activities as far as the Ural mountains," he weighed the question of "whether it was better to make Japan the mandatory of the other powers or to permit her to act independently." He decided and wrote to Wilson, as follows: "So far as this government is concerned, I think all that would be required would be a practical assurance that we would not make protest to Japan in taking this step."³²

Lansing's note to the effect that the United States would neither join in inviting a Japanese expedition nor would object to it, obviously showed a change in United States policy toward Russia. Lansing's attitude seemed to have an

²⁶ Schuman, F. R., *American Policy toward Russia since 1917*, 1929, p. 65.

²⁷ Williams, W. A., *American Russian Relations, 1781-1947*, 1952, p. 128.

²⁸ Baker, *op. cit.*, VII, 569.

²⁹ Ambassador Sharp to Lansing, Feb. 27, 1918, *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, II, 59-60.

³⁰ Sharp to Lansing, Feb. 19 & 27, 1918, *ibid.*, pp. 50-52, 59-60.

³¹ Ambassador Chinda to Foreign Minister Motono, Feb. 28, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives).

³² *U.S. Foreign Relations, Lansing Papers*, 1940, II, 354-355.

effect on Wilson's judgment, and the following day, March 1, the latter drew up a note to be delivered to the Japanese Government, which read as follows: "The Government of the United States is made constantly aware at every turn of events that it is the desire of the people of the United States that, while cooperating with all its energy with its associates in the war in every direct enterprise of the war in which it is possible for it to take part, it should leave itself diplomatically free wherever it can do so without injustice to its associates. It is for this reason that the Government of the United States has not thought it wise to join the governments of the Entente in asking the Japanese government to act in Siberia. It has no objection to that request being made, and it wishes to assure the Japanese government that it has entire confidence that in putting an armed force into Siberia it is doing so as an ally of Russia with no purpose but to save Siberia from the invasion of the armies and intrigues of Germany and with entire willingness to leave the determination of all questions that may affect the permanent fortunes of Siberia to the Council of Peace."³³

This document is of great importance, for it obviously marks a new policy—the United States will not join in concerted action, but will acquiesce in Japan's intervention. If this answer had been sent to Japan at once, and if the Allied Powers had carried out the intervention at this juncture, what would have been the effect on the newly born Bolshevik regime? It seems to me that the period from March to August of 1918 was of great significance as a breathing spell for the new Soviet leaders.

Wilson's note was shown first to the British and French Ambassadors on March 1, and then to the Italian Ambassador the following day by Counselor Polk, before it was formally communicated to the Japanese Embassy.³⁴ Although March 3 was Sunday, Wilson discussed the Siberian situation with Polk and urged him to hand the note to the Japanese Ambassador the next morning.³⁵ Wilson, however, changed his mind and instructed Polk to hold up transmission of the note the next morning, and on the 5th Polk was given a substitute note to be sent to Tokyo. The second one was obviously different from the first. It read as follows: "If it were undertaken the Government of the United States assumes that the most explicit assurances would be given that it was undertaken by Japan as an ally of Russia, against Germany and at the sole view of holding it safe against Germany and at the absolute disposal of the final peace conference. Otherwise the Central powers could and would make it appear that Japan was doing in the East exactly what Germany is doing in the West and so seek to counter the condemnation which all the world must pronounce against Germany's invasion of Russia, which she attempts to justify on

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

³⁴ Polk to Lansing, March 5, 1918, *U.S. Foreign Relations, Lansing Papers*, II, 356.
Polk to Lansing, March, 15, 1918, *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, II, 68.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

the pretext of restoring order. And it is the judgment of the Government of the United States, uttered with the utmost respect, that, even with such assurances given, they could in the same way be discredited by those whose interest it was to discredit them; that a hot resentment would be generated in Russia itself, and that the whole action might play into the hands of the enemies of Russia, and particularly of the enemies of the Russian Revolution, for which the Government of the United States entertains the greatest sympathy, in spite of all the unhappiness and misfortune which has for the time being sprung out of it."³⁶ In the new note, notwithstanding its polite roundabout phrases, the American objection to the Japanese expedition to Siberia was doubtlessly expressed.³⁷

It seems to me that the second draft was written by Wilson under the influence of Colonel House and William Bullitt, which took the form of letters, stressing that the United States would debase the moral aim of the war unless she took a stand against the planned Japanese invasion of Siberia.³⁸ Wilson's reversal to the old position disappointed Lansing who was taking a vacation trip. Lansing tried once again in vain to persuade Wilson to admit Japanese intervention, by sending a letter dated March 24, in which he referred to the dangerous situation the actions of German prisoners of war in Siberia might bring on.³⁹

What was the Japanese reaction to the American decision? Foreign Minister

³⁶ *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, II, 67-68.*

³⁷ There is a diversity of interpretations as to the relationship of the earlier note with the later one.

a) P. Tompkins underestimates the earlier one and emphasizes Wilson's consistent opposition to Japan's intervention. (Tompkins, P., *American-Russian Relations in the Far East, 1949, p. 55.*)

b) Prof. Morley interprets the later note as follows: "The note...took another step toward intervention.....but limited its attention to outlining, however reluctantly, the conditions under which a solely Japanese expedition should be undertaken if one were to be accepted... While not approving a Japanese expedition, the American government was not absolutely opposing one, and was in fact stating under what conditions one should be tolerated." (Morley, *op. cit.*, pp. 289-290).

c) A.V. Gulyga lays the emphasis upon the earlier note, in which he finds Wilson's frankly expressed intention and assumes the later one is not different from the earlier one in substance. In Gulyga's opinion the reason why Wilson changed the phrasing must be found in his receiving a telegram on the evening of March 4, which reported the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Gulyga maintains that Wilson, anxious to bring the Russian people back to the war, felt it advisable to pretend himself as their friend and changed the phrasing. Gulyga further says that Wilson expected that his real intention not to oppose a Japanese intervention, as expressed in the earlier note, would be communicated to Tokyo through the British Government, and that Japan would not misunderstand it. (Гулыга, А. В., "Роль США в подготовке японского вторжения на советский Дальний Восток в начале 1918 г." «Исторические записки», No. 33, стр. 38-40).

Gulyga missed the mark on some points in his effort to brand Wilson's policy as an imperialistic one. First, it must be pointed out that it was on the morning of March 4, before the arrival of the report on the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, that Wilson suspended the transmission of the earlier note. (*Lansing Papers, II, 356.*) Secondly, the Japanese Government was never informed of the earlier note through the British Government. (Ambassador Chinda's reports to Motono on March 5, and on March 6 prove the Japanese ignorance of the earlier note. And there is no indication to prove that British Ambassador Greene let the Japanese Foreign Office know about the note.) Instead of realizing Wilson's "real intention," the Japanese Government took the note as a protest and submitted to it.

³⁸ Seymour, *op. cit.*, III, 393-394. About the text of Bullitt's letter, vide Tompkins, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

³⁹ *Lansing Papers, II, 357-358.*

Motono did not flinch from his course in the face of the American objection and asserted that Japan had to send the forces immediately into Siberia. Behind him stood the Army General Staff and a majority of the newspapers.⁴⁰ He was further backed by nine outstanding professors who ardently advocated the necessity for Japanese activity in Siberia.⁴¹

On March 11, British Ambassador Greene, representing the British, French and Italian Governments, handed a memorandum to Motono, which recommended that the Japanese Government occupy the Trans-Siberian Railroad.⁴² The following day Greene had a talk with Shidehara, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, and suggested that Japan take action in Siberia, regardless of the American attitude.⁴³

While the voice for intervention was getting louder both at home and abroad, there still remained internal obstacles for the Japanese Government to overcome before venturing on intervention. Besides the strong opposition persistently voiced by Hara and Makino in the Advisory Council, there was the reluctance of Premier Terauchi and elder statesman Yamagata to take a risky course. Both Terauchi and Yamagata realized that Japan was not in a position to start an expedition at this moment. Yamagata wrote the following memorandum on March 15: "The present time is not opportune for sending our armed forces to Siberia. If we dare to send them to the Russian territory without any request on the part of the Russian people, it will cause suspicion among the British, and especially among the American people, and we will not be able to get their help. Our armed forces are strong enough to combat the enemy single-handed, but I regret to say that we should count greatly upon assistance from the United States and Great Britain so far as military matériel and financial backing are concerned."⁴⁴

The cautious approach prevailed, and on March 19, the Japanese Government communicated to the United States its decision not to take action in Siberia before coming to an understanding with the United States Government.⁴⁵ Motono's resignation from his post followed this decision by one month.⁴⁶

V. *Intervention by Invitation*

When the British Government failed in bringing on a Japanese expedition, it adopted a new strategy for the reestablishment of the Eastern Front. Lockhart,

⁴⁰ Major Japanese newspapers, excepting Osaka Asahi, Tokyo Maiyu and Japan Advertiser, were of one accord in advocating the intervention.

⁴¹ Otani, M., *Shuppeiron* (Some articles on Intervention), 1918.

⁴² About the text of the "Allied Memorandum," vide Hosoya, *op. cit.*, Appendix, V.

⁴³ The summary of the meeting between Greene and Shidehara is found in the Japanese Foreign Office Archives.

⁴⁴ Tokutomi, I. (ed.), *Yamagata Aritomo Den* (Biography of Aritomo Yamagata), 1933, II, 987-989.

⁴⁵ *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, II, 81-82.

⁴⁶ Motono was replaced by Shimpei Goto on April 23, 1918.

British unofficial representative in Russia, was the exponent of this new strategy. Assuming that the Bolsheviks were not German agents, he found it possible for the Allied Powers to cooperate with the Bolsheviks in waging the war against Germany. He, therefore, opposed the British policy of support for the anti-Bolshevik elements and of invasion of the Russian territory. He was most eager to organize the Red Army under the technical assistance of the Allied Powers, and to send Allied forces to Russia with the consent of the Bolsheviks.

His idea seems to have gained Trotsky's interest, as well as a support from Robins and J. Sadoul, member of the French Military Mission.⁴⁷ At the beginning of April, Balfour agreed to Lockhart's plan⁴⁸ and decided to suspend the material assistance being given to the anti-Bolshevik elements.⁴⁹ He hoped, in this way, to have a good effect on the progress of Lockhart's negotiation. The latter made his effort to implement the idea of "intervention by invitation", from the end of March till the middle of May when Lenin's speech testified to its failure.⁵⁰

VI. *Dual Policy*

While the British adopted the "intervention by invitation" policy, the Japanese interventionists were trying to make preparation for an expedition, avoiding a conflict with the United States. The first step was to conclude a military agreement with China. The army, eager to secure a military base in Northern Manchuria, forced China to accept the agreement. On March 25, official notes were exchanged between the two governments⁵¹, and on May 16, the military agreement was concluded.⁵²

The second step was to despatch a small detachment of marines at Vladivostok. The Japanese Naval Ministry, informed that a British cruiser had sailed for that port, sent two cruisers there in January under the pretext of protecting Japanese residents. Since that time on Rear Admiral K. Kato, Commander-in-chief of the Japanese fleet at Vladivostok, waited for an opportunity to land his marines. On April 4 an incident occurred in the city, in which three Japanese were killed or injured by several armed Russians, and provided a good reason for landing.⁵³ On the following day several hundred Japanese marines disembarked for the avowed purpose of protecting the lives and property of Japanese and Allied residents.

The third step was to engineer the anti-Bolshevik movement in Eastern

⁴⁷ Sadoul, J., *Notes sur la révolution bolchevique*, 1919, p. 295.

⁴⁸ Ambassador Chinda to Motono, April 3, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives).

⁴⁹ Note of Ambassador Greene to Vice-Minister Shidehara, April 12, 1918, *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, II, 109.

⁵⁰ Cf. Fischer, L., *The Soviets in World Affairs*, 1930, I, 93-99; Carr, E. H., *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, 1953, II, 80.

⁵¹ *Lansing Papers*, II, 359.

⁵² Tsurumi, Y., *Goto Shimpei Den* (Biography of Shimpei Goto), III, 832-836.

⁵³ *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, II, 99-100.

Siberia and in Northern Manchuria behind the scenes. For this purpose three leaders of the movements, that is, G. Semenov, D.L. Horvat and P.Y. Derber were bolstered by the Japanese. The Japanese Army tried to contact Semenov soon after the Revolution, and the policy of giving him material and moral aid was officially decided by the Japanese Government in February of 1918.⁵⁴ This promise of support led Semenov, anxious to establish an anti-Bolshevik regime in Zabaikal, to his starting a military operation toward Chita at the end of March.

The Japanese Army had a desire also to have Horvat, managing director of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, develop a strong movement against the Bolsheviks. Though eager to work for the restoration of Czar regime, Horvat was more prudent and more critical of Japanese aims than Semenov was. He sought a full commitment from Japan before he embarked on the enterprise, and at the same time, he secretly planned to play off the Americans against the Japanese.⁵⁵ He commissioned V. Grave, first secretary of the Russian Legation in Peking, to sound out Japan's intention and the extent to which the Japanese were ready to give their assistance in case Horvat started his action. In April Grave went to Tokyo for this task and had his talks with Tanaka and Shidehara. The conferences disclosed the split of opinion within the Japanese Government. While Tanaka, on behalf of the Army, assured Grave that the Japanese Government would render military assistance to Horvat, Shidehara, on behalf of the Foreign Office, told him that the Japanese Government had no intention to act independently of the Allied Powers.⁵⁶ The division within the Japanese Government made Horvat hesitate to venture on the establishment of a new regime. His hesitation, in turn, caused the Japanese to increase their coolness toward himself.

The third figure on whom the Japanese pinned their hope was P.Y. Derber. He belonged to the Socialist Revolutionary Party and was a member of the Tomsk Government from December, 1917, to February, 1918. Derber's action toward setting up a new regime in Vladivostok was backed by Admiral Kato and Y. Kikuchi, Consul General at Vladivostok, in expectation of his forming a center of the anti-Bolshevik movement in Eastern Siberia. As a matter of fact, there was no concerted action on the part of these leaders. Derber was no more than "the head of an opera bouffe government" in Horvat's view.⁵⁷ Besides, the Japanese authorities in Harbin were dissatisfied with the action in Vladivostok. Consul General in Harbin, N. Sato, strongly advised his government that Japan should not help Derber, since Derber was a socialist and was not far from the

⁵⁴ Foreign Minister Motono to Sato, Consul General at Harbin, Feb. 16, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives).

⁵⁵ *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, II, 93.

⁵⁶ Records of the meeting between Grave and Tanaka, April 13, 1918, and of the meeting between Grave and Shidehara, on the same day, are found in the Japanese Foreign Office Archives.

⁵⁷ Manning, C.A., *The Siberian Fiasco*, 1952, p. 49.

Bolsheviks in his doctrine.⁵⁸ Sato charged his colleagues in Vladivostok, especially Admiral Kato, of their extremely biased opinion.⁵⁹ The government, receiving conflicting reports on Derber's action, from Harbin and Vladivostok, failed to take any decisive action.

VII. *Wilson's Decision to Intervene*

It was in these circumstances that the Czechoslovak Army came into collision with the Bolsheviks in May. The Czech clash with the Bolsheviks exerted a significant influence on the developments leading to the Allied Intervention.

The British and French Government, seeing powerful argument in the plight of the Czech legion, reopened their campaign for the Siberian Intervention. The Supreme War Council met from June 1 to June 3 at Versailles. After considering the situation brought about by the Czech occupation of Cheliabinsk and other points along the Trans-Siberian Railroad, the Council agreed to ask the Japanese once again for an expedition into Siberia.⁶⁰ The Japanese Foreign Office this time showed a readiness to join the Allied Powers in proposing the expedition to the United States Government, but the Advisory Council strongly objected to such a move on the part of the Foreign Office. Consequently, a draft reply prepared by the Foreign Office was rewritten into the form of a rejection of the Allied proposal, and the Japanese Government sent their reply to the British Government on June 21 as follows: "The Imperial Government has declared again and again that it attaches great significance to the moral and material support of the United States in case of proceeding to the military operation in Siberia. We are not in a position to declare our intention before a definite understanding between the Allied Powers and the United States is reached."⁶¹

The Japanese answer once again revealed how plans were conditioned by the American attitude. Meanwhile, the French Government had sent a special mission, headed by Henri Bergson, to the United States for the purpose of persuading House and Wilson for the intervention. This mission was followed by many persons who pleaded with the Americans to help the Czechs, in June. Masaryk was one of those visitors.⁶²

The Czech incident seems to be the factor which contributed most to Wilson's decision to intervene. Wilson was apparently affected by a report from P.S. Reinsch, American Minister to China, of June 13, which said: "It is the general opinion of Allied representatives here in which I concur that it would be a serious

⁵⁸ Consul General Sato to Motono, March 22, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives).

⁵⁹ Sato to Motono, July, 16, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives).

⁶⁰ Memorandum of Balfour handed to Ambassador Chinda, June 7, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives). Cf. Tsurumi, *op. cit.*, III, 889-890.

⁶¹ Reply of the Imperial Government to the British Government, June 21, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives). cf. Tsurumi, *op. cit.*, III, 890-891.

⁶² Seymour, *op. cit.*, III, 407-412.

mistake to remove the Czechoslovak troops from Siberia. With only slight countenance and support they could control all of Siberia against the Germans."⁶³ In response to the report, Wilson remarked: "There seems to me to emerge from this suggestion the shadow of a plan that might be worked, with Japanese and other assistance. These people are the cousins of the Russians."⁶⁴ It seems to me that it was the Masaryk's visit with Wilson on June 19 that had a decisive effect on the consolidation of Wilson's mind.⁶⁵ On June 23 Lansing, on his part, asked Wilson: "Is it not possible that in this body of capable and loyal troops may be found a nucleus for military occupation of the Siberian Railway?"⁶⁶

When, on July 3, the Supreme War Council at Versailles reached the conclusion that the Allied Powers should send armed forces with a view of rescuing the Czech army, and that both the United States and Japan should be asked to join this venture, Wilson was no longer in a position to oppose it definitely. On July 6 Wilson called a meeting of the Supreme Council at the White House and expressed his willingness to send armed forces consisting of the Americans and the Japanese to Vladivostok, provided that:

1. The armed forces should be sent exclusively to Vladivostok.
2. The only aim for sending the army should be to safeguard the rear of the Czechoslovaks.
3. The number of soldiers sent from both the United States and Japan should be the same 7,000 each.⁶⁷

On this basis the American Government decided on sending a note to the Japanese Government asking for their consent.

VIII. *Advisory Council on Foreign Relations and Miyoji Ito*

Since the United States Government agreed to send the armed forces to, Vladivostok, the greatest obstacle to an Allied intervention in Siberia was removed. However, it must be noted that the American approval had a limited character. The United States wanted neither an expedition on a large scale, nor free action by any single country in Siberia. The expedition was obviously limited in its aim, area, and number of forces. This was not the kind of military operations which the Japanese interventionists were expecting to carry out.

When it was reported that the Americans had decided on the new course of action for a restricted expedition, opinion became strong to the effect that Japan should take advantage of the occasion by mounting a full-fledged campaign. This opinion was advocated not only by active interventionists, but also was

⁶³ *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, II, 206-207.

⁶⁴ *Lansing Papers*, II, 363.

⁶⁵ Cf. Hentgès, P., "T. G. Masaryk et la grande conspiration contre l'Union Soviétique," *La Pensée*, No. 50, Sept.-Oct., 1953, p. 70.

⁶⁶ *Lansing Papers*, II, 364.

⁶⁷ Japanese Ambassador Ishii to Foreign Minister Goto, July 8, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives); Tsurumi, *op. cit.*, III, 916-917.

supported by both Premier Terauchi and elder statesman Yamagata. At an extraordinary cabinet meeting which was held on July 12, a draft reply to be sent to Washington was adopted following this opinion. However, there were two difficulties for interventionists to materialize their plan. One was to get the approval of the Advisory Council for the plan, and another was to get the Americans to accept the idea.

It was Miyoji Ito who took upon himself the difficult task of persuading Hara and Makino, strong opponents to the intervention in the Advisory Council. Ito had close connections with the Government and was a resourceful politician, gifted in persuasive speech. When the Advisory Council met on July 16 after the failure of the government to gain Hara's approval even with pressure from elder statesmen,⁶⁸ Ito began to employ his own tactics. At first he tried to distort the original meaning of the American proposal, and then to impress Hara and Makino with the idea that there was substantially very little difference between the American proposal and the Japanese draft reply. He sought to do this by playing down the vital part of the American proposal, namely, the requirement for a limited expedition. While trying to persuade Hara and Makino in this way, he made further efforts to cut provocative phrases from the draft reply and to give a conciliatory tone to it. Ito, an expert in drawing up legal instruments, was skillful in revising the draft in such a way that it looked like an agreeable answer to the American proposal. He also worded it in such a manner as to give a latitude of interpretation. Ito continued maneuvering by explaining that this reply meant only a counter-proposal which was a customary diplomatic device and that it would, therefore, not irritate the Americans. At last Hara seemed to concede, and the government got the approval of the Advisory Council for the draft which contained the following two phrases:

- 1) The Japanese Government considers it improper to limit the number of the armed forces beforehand, judging from the nature of the expedition.
- 2) The situation may arise which will require the sending of troops to Siberia, that is, to places in Siberia other than Vladivostok.⁶⁹

The counter-proposal was obviously unsatisfactory to the Americans at several points. While they were ready to consent to Japan's sending 10,000 or 12,000 troops and to Japan's holding the supreme command, they could not accept the idea of an entirely unrestricted number. Thus the United States sent the following note to Japan: "Any indefiniteness as to the number of troops would create the impression of a large expedition for the purpose of interfering with Russian internal affairs, which would be most unfortunate."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ On July 15, the meeting of elder statesmen, organized by Yamagata, K. Saionji, M. Matsukata and Premier Terauchi, was held. Miyoji Ito, *Suiso Nikki* (Diary of Green Rain Villa), July 15.

⁶⁹ Ito, *op. cit.*, July 16, 1918.

Keiichiro Hara; (ed.), *Hara Kei Nikki* (Diary of Kei Hara), 1951, VII, 445-449.

⁷⁰ Ambassador Ishii to Foreign Minister Goto, July 25, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives); Baker, *op. cit.*, VIII, 297-298; *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, II, 306-307.

There was no doubt that there still remained a split of views between Japan and the United States on fundamental issues. At this juncture, there arose a strong attitude within the Japanese Government demanding an independent course, irrespective of American consent. Premier Terauchi and Foreign Minister Goto were inclined for the new course.⁷¹ Here, Ito appeared on the stage once more. He argued for "concerted action" with the United States and maintained that the United States note did not mean any rejection of the Japanese proposal. His argument in the Advisory Council was as follows: "In appearance, the United States did not approve our proposal, but in reality, she did approve. She did not reject, in principle, the sending of our troops all over Siberia. Therefore, we must express our willingness to accept the American proposal, and take into account United States intentions which do not appear in so many words." The note drawn up by Ito included the following phrase: "The Japanese Government is willing to accept your proposal, taking into consideration that the situation may require to send our troops to areas other than Vladivostok, and that we may reinforce our troops depending on the development of the situation."⁷² The reply to be forwarded to Ambassador Ishii was decided on this line.

When the note was handed to the State Department, the portion cited above naturally attracted Polk's attention. In response to Polk's question Ambassador Ishii explained that, "it might be necessary for the troops to move out of Vladivostok in order to prevent the slaughter of the Czechs, or it might be necessary to send reinforcements for this same purpose." His further explanation that if the need arose for more men or for a movement westward, the Japanese Government would consult with the United States and Allied Governments before taking the appropriate action, reassured Polk.⁷³

On August 2, the Japanese Government officially announced the intention to send their army to Vladivostok, and the next day the United States followed suit.⁷⁴ Thus started the Allied Intervention into Siberia, on the basis of the superficial agreement reached between Japan and the United States. And as was expected, Ito's phrase was capitalized sometime later as an excuse for reinforcing the Japanese army on a grand scale, and it was here that another seed of trouble and hostility, which grew up into the Pacific War, was sown.

⁷¹ Hara, *op. cit.*, VII, 461-463; Ito, *op. cit.*, July 29, 1918.

⁷² Ito, *op. cit.*, July 28, 30 and August 1, 1918; Hara, *op. cit.*, VII, 466-467.

⁷³ Ambassador Ishii to Goto, August 3, 1918. (The Japanese Foreign Office Archives); *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia*, II, 324-326.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 328-329.