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LEAGUE OF HONOR:
WOODROW WILSON
AND
THE STEVENS MISSION TO RUSSIA

by

Theodore Catton

B.A., University of Montana, 1983

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of

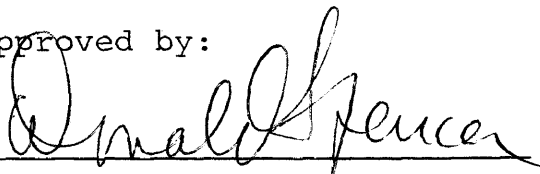
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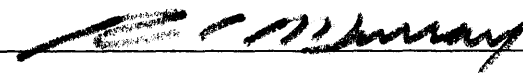
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League of Honor: Woodrow Wilson and the Stevens Mission
to Russia

Director: Donald S. Spencer 

In May 1917 President Woodrow Wilson sent a commission of five railroad experts to Russia with instructions to assist in rehabilitating the broken-down Trans-Siberian Railway, Russia's main link to the western allies. Organized just two months after the overthrow of the Tsar and one month after America's intervention in World War One, this mission represented an important aspect of Wilson's policy toward the Provisional Government during the short summer of Russian liberalism in 1917.

The Stevens Mission was foiled in its primary objective; it had little effect in staving off a collapse of Russia's railways. Its recommended locomotive shipments failed to reach Russia in decisive numbers, while the technical assistance which the commission offered, particularly the introduction of American methods of operation on the Trans-Siberian, met with resistance from the Provisional Government, since proposed changes involved a confrontation between government and the railwaymen's union. In the midst of a burgeoning labor movement during the Russian Revolution, the Provisional Government lacked the power to impose its will on the railway lines.

The Stevens Mission was more successful in its subsequent role, as a deterrent to Allied intervention. By September the British and French were pressing for foreign control of the railways. Wilson recognized that such drastic measures, violating Russia's right to self-determination, would be fatal to the Provisional Government. By obscuring the limits of American railroad assistance, he placated the Allies and shielded Russia from intervention until after the Bolshevik Revolution.

The main sources used in this study were the records of the Department of State, the War College Division and the Stevens Mission, all at the National Archives, and the private papers of Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo, Secretary of State Robert Lansing, and other participants, housed at the Library of Congress, and the published papers of Wilson. The Russian diary of George Gibbs was useful, and Jacqueline D. St. John's PhD dissertation, "John F. Stevens: American Assistance to Russian and Siberian Railroads" was an invaluable source for dispatches to and from the British Foreign Office and War Office.

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A Note on Technicalities

Through 1917 the Russians followed the Julian, or "old-style" calendar, which lagged thirteen days behind the West's Gregorian, or "new-style" calendar. Because the Americans in Russia are the main concern, all dates are given according to the new style. All Russian words are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system, with two exceptions, Kerensky and Tolstoy, whose names are rendered as they are most familiar. Petrograd, Russia's capital until 1918, was St. Petersburg before 1914, and was renamed Leningrad in 1924. Helsingfors is the Swedish rendition of Helsinki, and was employed in 1917 when Finland was still part of the Russian empire. The city of Ekaterinburg is today called Sverdlovsk, and Novo-Nikolaevsk is now Novosibersk.

INTRODUCTION

Two potent events in the spring of 1917, the March Revolution in Russia and the intervention of the United States in the First World War three weeks later, together mark one of the great divides in world history. Europe, gutted by war, was in eclipse. The United States was embarking on its crusade to make the world safe for democracy. Russia, in a revolutionary ferment, was being stirred by another vision, an even more messianic ideology. In that union of events began the great ideological rivalry of modern times.

America's relations with the new Russia were at first cordial and appreciative. The overthrow of the tsarist regime removed the main impediment to a redefinition of the European war as a world war of peoples against kings, democracy against autocracy. President Woodrow Wilson declared Russia to be "a fit partner for a League of Honor." Russia's Provisional Government, headed by liberals who were pledged to hold national elections for a constituent assembly, sought to weld Russia into a democracy. A democratic Russia was crucial to the reconstructed world order that Wilson wanted from the war. From the moment that the Russian Revolution began, however, Wilson was confronted by a dilemma. The war had exhausted and demoralized Russia; war was a poor midwife for democracy. Wilson wanted to

encourage internal political stability in Russia and assist her nascent forces of democracy. But as a war leader, he had to ensure Russia's participation in the war as a military ally of the United States. The two policies were potentially at cross-purposes, and Wilson was aware of it.

It is a commonplace to condemn the Allies, the United States included, for failing to release Russia from the war in 1917, before the Bolshevik Revolution. The governments of Britain, France and Italy, and the Wilson Administration, so the argument runs, were blind to the consequences of pushing Russia relentlessly for an offensive in 1917, of demanding her adherence to past treaty obligations, of allowing no stint in her war effort against the Central Powers. Too often, historians have readily associated Wilson with this colossal mistake. They have assumed that the President's quest for democracy in Russia reinforced his desire that Russia should make no separate peace. Writes one historian, "In Wilson and most of America, the wish inspired the thought...Russia had not only become a democratic nation, she would now also become a formidable military ally. In Wilson's mind, democracy in Russia and continuing the war were inextricably linked."¹ There is no documentary evidence that Wilson thought in these terms about Russia. Wilson left scant written record of his views on the problems of Russia staying in or getting out of the war, and his attitude must be deduced from circumstantial evidence and the drift of his

other policy decisions on Russia in 1917.

It is misleading to think of Wilson ever being confronted by a simple yes or no proposition about whether or not he could sanction a Russian separate peace. Throughout 1917 his Russian policy had to be flexible to accommodate developments in Russia. His policy had to take into account numerous contingencies, in addition to the current situation. There were internal threats from both the Right and the Left, as well as the danger of military defeat on the eastern front. Moreover, the question of Russia leaving the war involved not one but several possible scenarios. There was the possibility of military defeat and surrender. There was a possibility of a negotiated settlement between Germany and Russia: then Russia's terms would depend on such imponderables as the military situation, the disposition of the Allies, and mediation by other powers. There was some possibility of a comprehensive negotiated peace -- both the socialists' Stockholm Conference and the Pope's Peace Proposal were efforts in this direction. Only one thing was certain, Russia's exit from the war would be a process rather than an event. The "immediate" consequence for the West, the transfer of German divisions from the eastern front to the western front, would take even longer. For Wilson, the problem of releasing Russia from the war was not a question of flipping a switch, but a question of facilitating a process. The main contours

of Wilson's policy toward the Provisional Government in 1917 suggest that he was more willing to allow Russia's withdrawal from the war than he has generally been given credit for.

Wilson's Russian policy in the spring of 1917 centered around two missions which he sent simultaneously to the Provisional Government. One, the Root Mission, he sent to convey the United States' sympathy for the Russians' democratic revolution. The other, the Stevens Railroad Mission, he sent to offer technical and material assistance with the aim of improving the Russian war effort. The two missions were distinct because they reflected conflicting policy goals: it was doubtful that the new leaders in Russia could both expand their popular mandate and redouble the war effort. Awaiting developments and a clearer picture of the Russian situation, the President pursued both policy goals at once.

By late summer the Russians' need for peace had become more apparent. Their July Offensive had collapsed, and the government was weakened by a series of cabinet crises and an attempted coup from the Right. The Stevens Mission, meanwhile, had made little progress in rehabilitating the railways. To improve the supply situation, it was now clear, the United States would have to go beyond advising, and take over operation of the railways. The British and the French, anxious to hold Russia in the war, pressed for

intervention on the railways. Wilson prevented it. He jettisoned railroad assistance and concentrated on the main goal of supporting the Provisional Government against the threat of foreign intervention.

Wilson found a partial resolution to his dilemma in the promotion of Russia's right to self-determination. He acted as though his best chance for buttressing the forces of democracy in Russia were to shield the Provisional Government from coercion by the British and French. He was willing that Russia withdraw from the war if the internal political situation demanded it. The Stevens Mission, his main resource for bolstering the Russians' war effort, was limited strictly to advising the government. True to the principle of self-determination, he refused to escalate American involvement on the Russian railways.

CHAPTER ONE

"A FIT PARTNER FOR A LEAGUE OF HONOR"

For the American people March 1917 was a month of grim reckoning. The President's attempt to mediate an end to the holocaust in Europe had failed. German U-boats, after a year's reprieve, were once more prowling the Atlantic, and American merchant ships were getting torpedoed on the high seas. The President's last effort at averting war, arming the ships against submarine attacks, was failing too, for the Atlantic crossing was too dangerous and exports were fast piling up in the East Coast ports. Many Americans were persuaded that the United States had no choice but to intervene in the European war on the side of Britain, France, Italy, and a most unlikely ally, tsarist Russia.¹

It was on March 16, 1917 that Americans learned of the overthrow of the Tsar. The bread lines in Petrograd that bloomed into strikes and riots, the refusal of the Duma (the parliament) to disband, the mutiny of the Petrograd garrison -- these received little attention in the American press until the tsar abdicated, on March 15, in his railway car enroute from the front to the capital. Petrograd, Americans now learned, was in the hands of the insurgents. The Tsar's ministry, charged with corruption, incompetence, and treachery, had been swept from office. Members of the Duma had formed a national cabinet, the Provisional Government,

with Prince L'vov as President. The new leaders of Russia, mostly constitutional monarchists and liberal democrats, were pledged to hold national elections for a constituent assembly.²

For those Americans who harbored misgivings about aligning their country with tsarist Russia, the Russian Revolution could not have happened at a more auspicious moment. Russia, said one newspaper editor, had been "a deadly blight" on the Allied cause. Why should Americans, as the Springfield Republican observed, "prefer the Russian Caesar to the German Caesar?" Now, to the relief of millions, it could be said with some conviction that this terrible war was a struggle of peoples against kings. The revolution in Russia, wrote the editor of the Dallas News, "gives a political and spiritual unity to the alliance of Germany's enemies that has hitherto been lacking, for the reason that democracy was in league with autocracy." Imperial Russia, in the American mind, had long been the very symbol of despotism.³

A small but influential sector of the American public had been intransigent toward intervening in the war on the side of tsarist Russia. Jewish-Americans, many of whom were Russian-born and had fled the Tsar's pogroms, took heart when the new leaders of Russia promised to dismantle the official anti-Semitism of the old regime; abruptly, they dropped their hostility to the Allied cause. Polish- and

Scandinavian-Americans also had opposed intervention because Russia was the traditional enemy of their homelands. The revolution softened their suspicions of Russia's territorial ambitions in the war.⁴

As the American people and the press groped for an understanding of the great events transpiring in Russia, their initial attitude toward the Provisional Government was strongly influenced by Russian-American organizations such as the Friends of Russian Freedom. These groups fostered hopes that the revolution would revitalize the Russian war effort, making Russia a stronger ally. They encouraged Americans to think that Russia would progress rapidly toward democracy. The zemstvos, or provincial councils in Russia, were given special attention, described in one newspaper analysis as "a skeleton upon which popular government can easily be built up." This was a mirage. The zemstvos were overshadowed by the soviets, or revolutionary councils of workers and soldiers, which sprang up in all the municipalities and in the units of the Russian Army. The soviets represented the toilers of Russia, to the exclusion of other social classes; their rise brought into bold relief the existence of deep class divisions. But the American public, with the aid of Russian-American liberals and Russian specialists, saw what it wanted to see, a Russia that had thrown off its chains and was destined to join the world's democracies.⁵

Samuel N. Harper, a professor and pioneer of Russian studies at the University of Chicago, was contacted by the State Department to interpret what was happening in Russia. Harper received a telegram on the day of the Tsar's abdication, requesting his views of the new ministers in the Provisional Government. Having been to Russia the previous summer, the professor was acquainted with most of the personalities in the new cabinet and described each one's abilities and party affiliations. He concluded with an optimistic forecast: the "aim of [the] Revolution...is to create conditions that would make it possible for Russia to bring into force all her strength. Means therefore more effective prosecution of war and war until victory." This message was passed on for the President's perusal on March 16.⁶

President Woodrow Wilson had another source of advice in his friend Charles R. Crane, a wealthy, progressive businessman with a "romantic" interest in Russia (principally in Russian Orthodox Church music and icons) that had repeatedly taken him back to that country. Crane was Harper's patron, having funded the chair in Russian studies at the University of Chicago. His son was the secretary of state's private secretary. Crane, however, had little more than a sentimental understanding of Russian society and history, for his frequent trips had given him many contacts in the social elites of Petrograd and Moscow

but scant exposure to the new forces welling up in Russia.⁷

Wilson may or may not have been misled by the judgments of these men. There is almost no record of the President's early thoughts on this momentous event. There are a few hints, such as Wilson's off-handed joke in a cabinet meeting March 23, that the new government "ought to be good because it has a professor [Foreign Minister Paul Miliukov] at the head." Wilson also repeated Crane's opinion that the new leaders "were men of ability and had the confidence of Russia." Wilson had every reason to share the American public's relief that the autocratic regime had been toppled, and he supported the efforts of his secretary of state to extend United States recognition to the Provisional Government promptly. Indeed, the President expressed delight that the United States was the first nation to recognize the new Russian Government, a day ahead of the British and the French.⁸

Yet he questioned the ability of the Provisional Government to hold power. The immediate concern was that there would be counterrevolution. Soon, some dispatches coming to the State Department indicated that extreme radicals in Russia might menace the new government too. Russia's staying power in the war was also in doubt. It was not at all clear that the Russian people would suffer the war any more for an ideological crusade against German autocracy than they had for the imperialist ambitions of the

Tsar's council. Wilson remarked to an interviewer one month after the revolution that the position of Russia was very uncertain: now, he cautioned, the Russians might find the war incompatible with their efforts to build a democracy. They might insist on a separate peace.⁹

Wilson was a moralist. He has been accused of naivete, inflexibility, a penchant for self-delusion, and hypocrisy -- all ungratifying traits associated with excessive moralism. But in gauging the situation in Russia, Wilson's moral vision made him an astute observer. He was deeply sensitive to the war-weariness of the Russian people, because it touched his own revulsion toward the war. For two and a half years he had condemned the European war -- its causes, purposes, savagery. He had predicated American neutrality on the moral principle that the United States alone could bring sanity and "disinterestedness" to the peace table. But his efforts to mediate a "peace without victory" failed. He was fated to lead the nation into war. As a war leader, he had to suppress his abhorrence of the conflict; he could not even afford to express ambivalence. Under these wrenching circumstances, Wilson naturally empathized with the ambivalence of the Russian people. He projected his own moral reservations onto Russia's war-weariness. The new Russia, he observed, might find the war "an intolerable evil." Once the United States had entered the conflict, it was in the national interest to

hold Russia in the war, yet Wilson would remain sensitive to the Russians' longing for peace.¹⁰

At the same time that the Wilson Administration was formulating a response to the March Revolution, the President was grappling with his decision for war. These two great seminal events -- the Russian Revolution and America's intervention in World War One -- could not have crowded closer together in the President's schedule. On March 17, Wilson's close advisor, Colonel Edward M. House, urged him to recognize the Provisional Government. On March 18, Wilson received word of the sinking of three American merchant ships by German submarines. On March 19, Secretary of State Robert Lansing met with Wilson and recommended that the psychological moment for intervention was at hand, because its moral impact would strengthen the Russian liberals and perhaps even cause a revolution in Germany. Lansing wrote to House that the President had to be persuaded; would House "put his shoulder to the wheel?" On the next day, March 20, occurred the momentous cabinet meeting, when Wilson discovered that the opinion of his cabinet was unanimously for war.¹¹

The crisis over Germany's recent submarine attacks demanded that Wilson call a session of Congress, and he now wanted the cabinet's advice on what action he should propose. He went around the table, asking each member to speak his mind. Secretary of the Treasury William G.

McAdoo, who would soon figure prominently in the United States' relations with the new government in Russia, believed that war with Germany had become inevitable; to delay would only risk the appearance of being dragged into the war by the American people, instead of leading them in. The secretaries of agriculture and commerce both agreed with McAdoo, suggesting that the American Navy and financial assistance to the Allies would be enough to defeat Germany. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker thought the nation should enter the war with all its vigor; preparations should be made for sending an American army to Europe. Lansing then spoke, urging the President to convene Congress at once and request a declaration of war. He reiterated that the revolution in Russia had removed the one objection to defining the war as a struggle between democracy and absolutism, making the present time especially propitious for intervention. The President replied that he could not include Russia's revolution in his address to Congress. When Lansing pressed him for this, Wilson only answered "possibly." He went on around the cabinet, listening to the slow, measured words of his secretary of labor, and emphatic recommendations for war from his attorney general, postmaster general and secretary of the interior. Finally, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, previously the staunchest opponent of the war, told the President that he saw no other course. "I had hoped and prayed this cup would

pass," Daniels wrote in his diary afterward. The "President was solemn, very sad!!"¹²

Wilson set to work on his war speech to Congress, one of the two or three most important speeches of his presidency. His task was to define America's purpose. Could he lead a reluctant, divided people into this bloodiest of wars on the narrow basis of defending the United States' freedom of the seas? Could he justify intervention for the broader, but untraditional reason of maintaining a balance of power in Europe? Or should he make the American intervention a crusade for democracy, hailing the revolution in Russia, and condemning the autocratic government of Germany? If he chose the latter course, the spectre of counterrevolution in Russia would shadow the Allied cause, and victory would demand the overthrow of the Kaiser in Germany. Wilson decided finally to accept these risks and idealize the Russian Revolution, not because he was deceived, but because he had to inspire. He wrote:

Does not every American feel that assurance has been added to our hope for the future peace of the world by the wonderful and heartening things that have been happening within the last few weeks in Russia? Russia was known by those who knew it best to have been always in fact democratic at heart, in all the vital habits of her thought, in all the intimate relationships of her people that spoke their natural instinct, their habitual attitude towards life. The autocracy that crowned the summit of her political structure, long as it had stood and terrible as was the reality of its power, was not in fact Russian in origin, character or purpose; and now it has been shaken off and the great, generous Russian people have been added in all their naive majesty and might to

the forces fighting for freedom in the world, for justice, and for peace. Here is a fit partner for a League of Honour.¹³

Wilson inserted this homage to Russia reluctantly. He wanted to tap the excited emotions of the American people and turn their sympathy for Russia into righteous support for the war. The American intervention still faced formidable, potentially dangerous, opposition; fully fifty members of the House of Representatives voted against the declaration of war. But his inspiring message bore a cost. It implied that the United States would tutor the new Russia in democracy. It strengthened the American people's impression that Russia would be a faithful ally. These ideas would die hard.

While Wilson worked on his war speech in the closing days of March, his administration made more mundane preparations for war. It was understood that raising, equipping and transporting an American expeditionary force to fight on the western front would take months, even a year, and the immediate implication of the United States intervention was that Britain, France and Russia would be given whatever material and financial support America's great industrial base could lend them. An air of excitement gripped Washington as the government was flooded with suggestions of all kinds on how best the Americans could contribute to the Allied cause. A letter from Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane to his son epitomized the mood of

those in Wilson's cabinet who had labored for weeks to get a decision from the President:

The first thing is to let Russia and France have money. And the second thing, to see that Russia has munitions, of which they are short -- depending largely, too largely, upon Japan. I shouldn't be surprised if we would operate the Russian railroads. And ships, ships! How we do need ships, and there are none in the world. Ships to feed England and to make the Russian machine work.¹⁴

The Russian railways were greatly overburdened and had fallen desperately behind in the task of moving munitions, railway supplies, and other materials purchased from the Allies inland from the ports. The war had wrought havoc on Russia's whole pattern of commerce. Blockaded in the Black and Baltic Seas, with its entire European frontier cordoned off by barbed wire and trenches, Russia's only access to the Allied sea lanes was by a rickety, narrow gauge railway to the port of Archangel on the White Sea, and by the 5,800 mile-long Trans-Siberian Railway to the Far Eastern port of Vladivostok. Consular reports from Vladivostok described the immense piles of stranded freight cramming the docks, filling warehouses, and stacked out in the weather. The French provided reports of a similar situation in Archangel.¹⁵

The idea of American assistance to the Russian railways sparked interest both in the United States and in Europe. In England, four members of the Committee of American Engineers, who claimed familiarity with the Russian

railways, offered their services to the State Department. From Sweden, Ambassador Roland Morris cabled Washington that a reliable source in Russia had suggested that the United States assist in constructing the new 600-mile Murman line to an ice-free port on Russia's Arctic Coast. In late March, the American ambassador in London, Walter Page, heard from a "private source" that the British were urging the Provisional Government to request American management of the Trans-Siberian Railway, as a means of improving supply and the military outlook on the eastern front. Page was enthusiastic, particularly since American involvement on the Trans-Siberian Railway might be an "invaluable key" for the region's industrial development after the war. Lansing received Page's communication on March 31, and shared it with Secretary of War Newton D. Baker two days later.¹⁶

By then, however, the British had already implanted the idea through an unofficial source, a young American correspondent for The Times, Stanley Washburn. Washburn was passionately pro-Allied. He had covered the eastern front, reporting on the great retreat from Poland in 1915 and the Russians' costly Brusilov offensive the next year, for which the Russians had nicknamed him "Ambassador of the Russian Truth." He possessed an exceptional knowledge of Russia's supply problems. While recovering his health in a sanatorium on the East Coast in the spring of 1917, Washburn kept in close contact with his friend and employer Lord

Northcliffe, the powerful owner of The Times. Growing restless as America's entry into the war drew near, Washburn left the sanitorium for Washington on March 28, explaining in a letter to Northcliffe that "such influence as I have should be used immediately in the situation here." In the capital, he contacted Daniel Willard, a railroad magnate and the chairman of the Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense (CND). Willard promptly got him a hearing before the Council.¹⁷

The CND dated from the President's preparedness initiatives in 1916; it comprised five members of the cabinet (the secretaries of war, the Navy, commerce, labor and interior) and an Advisory Commission of seven businessmen representing different sectors of the economy that had to be mobilized for war. Secretary of War Baker was its chairman.¹⁸

Washburn addressed the CND in Baker's office on Saturday morning, March 31. By all accounts his recommendations had a galvanizing effect on his audience. He described the Russian supply situation and the dire need of getting traffic moving on the Trans-Siberian. The Germans threatened to drive on Petrograd, he said, and if Petrograd were lost, the Germans could soon menace the line to Archangel. Then the Russians' only source of help would be from the Americans across Siberia. The Allies were too pressed to send supplies, and their technical missions had

only earned the distrust of the Russians; now almost the whole task of supplying Russia's imports would devolve on the United States.¹⁹

The Council listened closely as The Times correspondent detailed his plan for sending a railroad commission to Russia. He thought a commission of at least five railroad experts should cross the Pacific to Vladivostok and inspect the entire line, from Vladivostok to Petrograd, by daylight in a special train, assessing the needs of the railway for locomotives, cars and railroad operators, all of which the United States would supply. If the United States could take over operation of the line, Washburn concluded, "I believe myself that we can double or treble its capacity."²⁰

Baker was impressed with Washburn's grasp of the situation. It was odd, he remarked to Willard afterwards, "that this young American should have become the Counsellor of Kings and the Associate of Ministers of State in ancient monarchies, but I confess after hearing him talk that his quick intelligence justifies the reliance which has obviously been placed upon him wherever he has gone." Washburn indeed had an extraordinary gift for making contacts: he corresponded regularly with Senator Hiram Johnson; he was friendly with Secretary of the Interior Lane, as well as Daniel Willard; he knew the Russian General Staff and enjoyed a personal rapport with General Alexei Brusilov, with whom he had spoken frequently during the

Brusilov Offensive in 1916. Washburn's intimate friendship with Lord Northcliffe put him in touch with well-placed "British authorities."²¹

After the meeting, Baker went to the White House to discuss it with the President. Wilson told him to consult Lansing and inquire through the American ambassador in Petrograd, David R. Francis, whether such a commission would be welcome. Lansing was enthusiastic; he requested from Washburn a list of suggestions in the event of American intervention in the war. In the meantime, the American ambassador in Russia was told to sound out the Russians.²²

Railroad assistance required credit for the Provisional Government from the United States Treasury. In two and a half years of war the Russians had already experienced a great demand for more railroad equipment, more than their own locomotive works could keep up with, and had purchased quantities from Baldwin Locomotive and other American companies. They were borrowing so heavily, however, that American financiers would not give credit directly to the Russian government. Instead, financier J. P. Morgan's huge syndicate of sixty American banks, which handled Allied purchases in the United States, extended credit to Russia through the British, who guaranteed the terms. By this method, the Tsarist government had purchased \$22,000,000 of American railroad materials in 1915 and \$20,000,000 in 1916. Once the United States entered the war, it was thought that

the Wilson Administration could remove these impediments by taking over the role of Morgan's purchasing agency and extending credit to Russia on an equal basis with the other Allied governments.²³

Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo vigorously supported making loans to Russia. He believed that loans would help steady the Provisional Government. "We have recognized the new Government and we ought to do everything we possibly can to sustain it," he wrote Lansing on March 29, "especially as it is the result of an effort to establish democratic institutions in Russia." With the President's approval, McAdoo drafted legislation that gave him authority to make loans to the Allies, and pushed it through the congressional committees in early April.²⁴

The enthusiasm over railroad assistance in Washington was not matched in Petrograd; not until April 9 did the ambassador there get an official response, a telephone call to the embassy that the Russians would welcome an American railroad commission. His brief cable ended, "Am sending this promptly because Russia sorely needs improved transportation and no time should be lost." But another message from Francis came two days later, admitting that he had still not obtained written consent, and that he had learned confidentially that permission was granted reluctantly. Now he wrote discouragingly that a commission would require months to begin its investigation and summer

would be too far advanced. Over two weeks later another cable from Francis offered his insights as to why the Russian government hesitated to accept an American railroad commission. The British ambassador, Francis explained, had told two government ministers that the Trans-Siberian Railway ought to be turned over to American operation, and it had gone over very badly, the Russians objecting that they could not allow the Americans "virtual control of the railway." This was on April 8; the two Russian officials were reporting the conversation to Francis over two weeks later. Francis thought the Russians were complaining more bitterly about British interference in their railway problems than they were about a potential American involvement. "You see their sensitiveness," he pointed out, "especially [toward] England."²⁵

As the Russians balked at reaching formal agreement on a railroad commission, a new idea was taking shape in the President's circle on how the United States could assist the Provisional Government. Wilson would send a diplomatic mission, comprised of dignitaries and prominent representatives of American politics, business, labor and culture. This unusual procedure would demonstrate the importance of the Russian Revolution to the American people, and the desire of the United States for friendly relations with the new Russian democracy. The mission would have two objects in Russia: it would give prestige and encouragement

to the Provisional Government, and it would determine by direct observation the government's stability and Russia's prospects in the war.²⁶

Wilson found the idea of a diplomatic mission more engaging than railroad assistance, and he devoted considerable time to selecting the right members. He rejected Lansing's choice of Samuel Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labor, because he "would hardly be influential in the present ruling circles of labor at Petrograd." To represent labor, he finally settled on James Duncan, the elderly vice-president of the AFL, and Charles E. Russell, a young journalist and pro-war socialist. As representatives of business, he chose Cyrus H. McCormick, whose International Harvester Company had large investments in Russia, his friend Charles R. Crane, and Samuel R. Bertron, a New York banker. He included John R. Mott of the Young Men's Christian Association and General Hugh L. Scott, the Army's chief of staff. He asked Elihu Root, an elder statesman and former secretary of state, to head the mission.²⁷

Root was controversial. He was well-known for his conservatism and his Wall Street connections; critics predicted that he would be poorly received by the socialists in Petrograd. Russian-Americans remembered Root for extraditing some Russian revolutionaries from the United States when he was head of the State Department; they now

promised to publicize this damaging incident in Russia. Within Wilson's circle, Secretary of the Navy Daniels warned against sending Root, whom he described as "a little brother of the rich." But Lansing and McAdoo approved the President's choice. Wilson stuck with Root, because he was internationally known, and as a prominent Republican, his selection was a show of the President's bipartisanship.²⁸

When the State Department was unable to get Russian approval of a railroad commission, Wilson considered attaching a railroad expert to the Root Mission. He was prepared to scrap Washburn's plan and combine the technical and diplomatic missions. Secretary Lane recommended John F. Stevens, the man who had engineered the Panama Canal in 1906-07. In Lane's view, Stevens was the "best qualified man for the job in the United States." Stevens seemed the obvious choice, and Wilson accepted Lane's recommendation.²⁹

Had Stevens been appointed to the Root Mission, his purpose in Russia would have been limited to the two goals of assessing the situation and giving moral support to the Provisional Government; material assistance would have been left pending. But as the President was working on the composition of the Root Mission, a breakthrough occurred in the negotiations over railroad assistance. The Russians offered a formal, written agreement stipulating their terms. Significantly, this was conveyed through the Russian embassy in Washington instead of through Francis in

Petrograd. Since Francis had been selected in 1916 mainly to negotiate a new trade treaty with the Russian empire, he was regarded by many Russians as a scout for American commercial opportunities there. He freely admitted that the Russians sometimes reproached him for having "too keen a scent for commerce." The Provisional Government did not want American railroad assistance to imply any special American privileges in Siberia after the war.³⁰

The Russian terms emphasized material assistance. There was no mention of American operation of the railway. The commission would inspect the warehouses and locomotive assembly and repair shops at Vladivostok and Harbin, the two sites in the Far East where American locomotives were constructed. The commission would study the operation of the railway across Siberia and "give opinion." Finally, the American engineers would investigate the possibilities for constructing new repair shops, depots and double track; and would expedite the necessary orders in the United States. This communication was encouraging, but it did not give the commission the initiative to reorganize the Trans-Siberian Railway that the Americans desired. According to Washburn and scattered reports from Russia, the main problem was the way the Russians ran the railway.³¹

Francis reported that some Russian officials were considering giving the United States control of Vladivostok. The railroad commission would have jurisdiction over the

port facilities and train dispatching. Apparently the British had a hand in pressuring the Russians to grant some kind of formal agreement on Vladivostok. It was not without precedent, they argued; Britain had special rights of administration at the French port of Bordeaux, where many of the supplies from the United States were landed. The British thought the terms of this secret Anglo-French convention would be useful to the Russians; they tried to make them available, but the French were uncooperative. Anyway, the Russians were unimpressed, for they resented the manner in which the British had assumed authority in the port of Archangel. Francis got a verbal commitment from the minister of transport that Stevens would be "given absolute control of Vladivostok terminals," but when he pressed him for something in writing, he was unsuccessful.³²

Nevertheless, Wilson reverted to the plan of sending a commission of engineers distinct from the Root Mission. Now there would be two missions, one diplomatic and one technical. Root was outraged. The separation of the two missions, he argued, would create confusion and diminish his influence. He wrote to Lansing that his mission "must discuss the transportation subject with the Russian Government [or] we will be discredited and of no account." Lansing was sympathetic and forwarded Root's letter to the President, with a letter of his own proposing two alternative definitions of the relationship between the two

missions. The first described the railroad experts as "subsidiary" to the Root Mission; they would make their recommendations through Root. The second plan instructed Stevens to confer with Root, and authorized Stevens to negotiate with the Russian government according to Root's suggestions. Clearly, Lansing did not think Stevens possessed the diplomatic skills to negotiate directly with the Russians, independently of Root. But the President did not share these concerns. He rejected both alternatives. His reply to Lansing is revealing:

This is my understanding of the mission of the railway experts: it bears no resemblance to that of the Commission of which Mr. Root is to act as chairman. It is not going to ask what can the United States do for Russia? but only to say We have been sent to put ourselves at your disposal to do anything we can to assist in the working out of your transportation problem. They are to report nothing back to us. They are delegated to do nothing but serve Russia on the ground, if₃ she wishes to use them, as I understand she does.

In Wilson's mind the separation of the two missions was natural -- it reflected the two lines of American policy toward Russia, one to encourage democracy, the other to assist the Russian war effort. Significantly, he conceived a more narrowly circumscribed role for the Stevens Mission in Russia than either the British or their allies in the State Department who were trying to secure American control of Vladivostok had in mind. Whereas Lansing worried about Stevens' abilities to "negotiate" with the Provisional Government, Wilson envisioned the railroad experts simply

offering advice. On one level, Wilson's conception of the railroad commission appears naive, for railroad assistance had already encountered resistance from the Russians and if it were to accomplish anything, there was going to be some give and take -- negotiations. But in Wilson's view the commission had a moral purpose, to "serve Russia," and it would not be coercive. American railroad assistance would stay within the bounds of Russia's right to self-determination.

The Advisory Railroad Commission to Russia that was finally assembled in early May consisted of five engineers, two secretaries, two stenographers and a clerk. Once in Russia it would be joined by two interpreters. As far as Vladivostok, it would be accompanied by Stanley Washburn. (At Baker's request, the young correspondent was commissioned a major in the United States Cavalry; in Vladivostok he would transfer to the Root Mission.) Willard's advisory group unanimously approved the appointment of John F. Stevens as the commission's chairman, and selected the four other engineers to represent a range of technical expertise. Henry Miller was one of the nations's ablest operating engineers; William Darling was a specialist in locating and maintenance of way; George Gibbs was an expert in equipment maintenance and repair shops; and George Greiner was an eminent bridge engineer.³⁴

Stevens was perhaps the most esteemed engineer in the

John
Edwin

United States. At 64, he was vigorous and robust, with silvered hair and mustache, and a weatherbeaten face. Peculiarly self-deprecating before public audiences, Stevens was hard-headed and contentious among his fellow engineers. He attacked a job with energy and decision. He was moody -- taciturn, sometimes humorous, occasionally volcanic. His temperament suited the rugged, masculine life of an engineer, but it did not serve him well in Russia, where he would need patience, diplomacy and accountability.³⁵

Although Stevens had spent most of his career working for James J. Hill in the American and Canadian West, it was his work on the Panama Canal in 1906-07 that had made him nationally known. It was also that experience that recommended him for the task in Siberia. Appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt to rescue the beleaguered American canal effort, Stevens had found a near state of panic in Panama. Three-fourths of the Americans there -- about 500 technicians and skilled laborers -- had fled home to escape the yellow fever. The Panama Railroad was a shambles; from one overlook Stevens counted seven trains off the track. Supplies dumped at the port of Colon had been sitting idle for over a year. Stevens wrote, "I believe I faced about as discouraging a proposition as was ever presented to a construction engineer." To save the whole enterprise from collapse, he launched a complete reorganization of the canal zone. First he attacked the

yellow fever, having Panama City and Colon cleaned up, paved, given sewage systems and running water. He relaid the Panama Railroad with heavier rails, double-tracked it, and replaced the bridges. He brought in bigger locomotives and a new army of railroad workers. Not for six months did the steam shovels resume excavation. Stevens told the secretary of war, "As long as I am in charge of the work...the future will show its absolute wisdom." And it did.³⁶

But in Panama Stevens could call on the vast resources of the American government -- probably the most resources ever at the disposal of a civil engineer. In Siberia he would encounter a broken-down railway whose economic and engineering woes were overshadowed by the effects of war and social revolution. Neither Stevens nor any other member of the commission was equipped to understand the social revolution into which he was entering. Russia's deep class divisions, autocratic political tradition, and state-imposed economic development were all outside the American experience. These Americans' attitudes were rooted in the nineteenth century gospel of opportunity. Their own illustrious engineering careers confirmed the virtues of hard work and initiative. The composition of their party seemed to verify America's freedom from class barriers: Miller, a boiler maker's apprentice at the age of seventeen, Gibbs, college educated, the scion of an old and

distinguished New England merchant family, and Stevens, a country school teacher before he entered railroading, had each found his own way up the ladder of the engineering profession. As American representatives of that profession, they were all endowed with strong, steadfast opinions on the proper relations of business, labor and government.³⁷

The commission called at the White House on May 8 to confer with the President on their purpose in Russia. Wilson greeted them in the Portrait Room at exactly twelve-thirty, sat down in front of them and talked for half an hour. He spoke in high, moral tones about their "duties," which he stressed would be confined to advising and assisting the Russians on the transportation situation. They were to follow the Russians' agenda, advising "on such railway matters as they might suggest." The commission was "neither political nor diplomatic." It was only the previous day that Wilson had written his conception of the mission to Lansing; he had made up his mind that the railroad commission was "entirely distinct from the Root Commission." Stevens was still anxious to clarify this point, and pressed Wilson for his assurances that only their commission would have authority to discuss the railway situation with the Provisional Government.³⁸

Stevens came away from the meeting quite dissatisfied. He was unimpressed by the President's lofty rhetoric, he wanted definite instructions and prerogatives, and he was

anxious about the commission's reception in Vladivostok. Later, the chairman brooded over this meeting during a conversation with the British ambassador in Tokyo. The President, Stevens said, had given him "no instructions except to offer his services to the Russian Government and People and to render them every possible assistance in the war against the Common Enemy." Wilson had allowed that "money was to be no object in the work of the Commission;" he had vaguely told Stevens to order by cable "everything which seemed necessary." Stevens complained that apart from these "general orders," he had "nothing to go on." Perhaps feeling daunted as he perceived the skillful diplomacy that his mission would call for, the chairman concluded, "my business will be to do the work in Russia myself, and to make the Russians think that they are doing it."³⁹

Lansing, it is worth noting, had come around to his own distinctive view of the purpose of the railroad commission. While accepting the strict parameters that the President had placed on the mission, Lansing's mind gravitated from Wilson's abstract ideas to whatever concrete objectives it seemed the commission might accomplish, and he recalled the recommendations of Washburn. He wrote Francis:

It is believed that an examination of Russian railroads will disclose methods whereby we will be able to render immediate and valuable assistance. It is not improbable, that with slight changes, equipment now being built for American railroads may be so changed as to fit the Russian gauge and requirements, and it is with that thought now in mind that the commission is being sent.

The commission, however, would quickly determine that this was impracticable.

The Stevens Mission left Washington by train on May 9 and traveled across the country to Vancouver, British Columbia where it boarded the steamship Empress of Asia for a drizzly three-day voyage to Yokohama, Japan. The ship's odd assortment of passengers portended the confusion in Russia. Many American businessmen were on board, blustering about the great commercial opportunities that were going to open up in Russia and Siberia after the war; their companies were sending them to investigate the markets. Occupying the second class compartments, numerous Russian-American immigrants were returning to their homeland, heady with socialism and eager to join the revolution. George Gibbs characterized them as the "fluent-talking, self-seeking kind, going home to stir up trouble and to grasp what they can from the rich....A good riddance for America, but bad for the 'New Russia.'" And Count Il'ya Tolstoy, son of the famous novelist and social critic, Leo Tolstoy, was on board, returning from a speaking tour in the United States. Old, crotchety, appalled by America's materialism, he was a living fossil of the Old Russia. He sat stiffly in his deck chair, but finally "thawed out," wrote Darling, "under Miller's talk and smiled."⁴¹

CHAPTER TWO

ACROSS SIBERIA

The steamship Penza of the Russian Volunteer Fleet nosed into the deep-water harbor of the Golden Horn on the morning of May 31, nearing the end of her two-day run across the Sea of Japan. The Stevens Mission gathered on deck. A misting rain, surprisingly cold for May, was drifting like battle smoke around an island fortress at the mouth of the harbor; the unmanned guns gaped as the Penza moved quietly past. Vladivostok slid into view along the eastern shore of the Golden Horn. The city appeared through the drizzle as a pencil sketch, building facades smudged across an abrupt range of logged-off hills. The tall, white government buildings stood out from the surrounding wooden structures. Farther up on the hills a number of church domes were strung like pearls across the jumbled grey rooftops. Rows of naval barracks could be seen on the edge of the city.¹

Three lines of railroad tracks, the terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railway, occupied a bench of land along the waterfront. The main switchyards were five miles north over a range of low hills at First River. The Vladivostok train station, with its great arched doorways and many steeples, was the most imposing government building in the city.²

Like so much else in Russia, this city was conceived to answer the military needs of a far flung empire. Founded in

1860, two years after the empire acquired the Amur and Maritime Provinces, Vladivostok, or "Ruler of the East," was a naval base and a garrison city for the protection of Russian interests in the Far East. These two new provinces lay like a talon hooked around the northeastern frontier of Manchuria. The Maritime Province extended Russia's Pacific Coast a thousand miles southward, nearly to the Korean Peninsula. The Golden Horn, at the southernmost tip of the Maritime Province, gave Russia a fine harbor and an ice-free port. Soon a trans-Siberian railway had been proposed to link European Russia with these dominions five thousand miles to the east, and to open Manchuria to commercial penetration by the Russians, but the enormous cost had inhibited construction until the 1890s. Then a German-born industrialist and minister of finance, Sergei Witte, had developed a plan for building a railway with foreign capital, and the Tsar had approved it. The prince imperial was sent to Vladivostok by sea to lay the first stone of the railway terminus. "Let a railroad be built across Siberia in the shortest way possible," read the Tsar's edict. Thus, on May 12, 1891, imperial Russia had embarked on one of the great engineering projects of modern times.³

There was a large crowd awaiting the Stevens Commission. As the Penza was docking, the American engineers were joined on deck by several dozen Russian radicals returning from exile in the United States, their passage

paid by the Provisional Government. It was an ominous sign of the confusing political cross-currents in Russia that these returning radicals mistook the commission's reception for their own, and far from being welcomed ashore, were interned on the ship. Subsequently they were given the choice of enlisting immediately in the army and going to the front or working on the railway.⁴

The noisy, milling crowd that met the Stevens Commission was a jumble of three different delegations, jostling one another for position at the foot of the gangway. The first to emerge was the local executive committee of the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, or Soviet. The garrisoned troops were duly represented; most of the committee members were soldiers. Their leader, a stocky, bearded man wearing a rumpled frock coat and a red arm band, made a brief speech expressing the people's willingness to accept American assistance. He then introduced a delegation of three, the military governor, the mayor and an army general. These men of the old regime were visibly embarrassed by the ragged reception, but proceeded to make speeches of their own, before finally introducing the third delegation, headed by Professor A. N. Mitinskii, representative of the Provisional Government in Petrograd.⁵

Mitinskii was accompanied by a group of Americans: J. K. Caldwell, the consul in Vladivostok, Lieutenant E. Francis Riggs, the military attache to the embassy, and two

interpreters that the ambassador had promised Stevens. Riggs and the interpreters had come from the capital on the train with Mitinskii. The traffic manager of the government railways and the chief engineer of the Chinese Eastern Railway were also present. After the exchange of formalities Mitinskii whisked the American engineers off to their accommodations -- a special train made up of three sleepers, a diner, an observation car for Mitinskii and an office car for Stevens -- and then to a government boat for a tour of the three-mile long harbor, to inspect the mountains of freight awaiting rail shipment.⁶

The Russians had made great efforts to move the materials along the shore in either direction from the city to keep the port facilities functioning. At the south end of the Golden Horn Chinese laborers were busily constructing godowns -- Oriental warehouses made of light screens -- to protect thousands of cotton bales exposed to the weather. The baled cotton was being removed from wharves at the north end of the bay where many tons of cotton had been destroyed by fire. Thousands of drums filled with nitrate fertilizer were being moved across the harbor by barge to reduce the fire hazard so close to the city. On the central wharves where the goods pouring in were still unorganized, enormous mounds of crates, drums, rolled barbed wire and steel rails were heaped onto barges, which extended out from the shore like a great logjam. On the west side of the Golden Horn,

across the harbor from Vladivostok, the commission found sheds overflowing with explosives and artillery shells. Some munitions were covered with tarps; others stood out in the rain. Much of this too had been moved away from the city after a nitrate fire in March had swept over a wharf loaded with munitions. As they circumnavigated the harbor the Russian port authorities enumerated the stockpiled materials: 34,000 tons of munitions and shells, 18,000 tons of explosives, 12,000 tons of copper, 86,000 tons of barbed wire, 43,000 tons of phosphates, 42,000 tons of cotton, 80,000 tons of railroad material, 209,000 tons of various other materials. As appalling as it was that Vladivostok continued to receive valuable shipments which merely piled up around the harbor, the commission concluded that this state of affairs was not the fault of the local administration in the port. The port authorities were doing a creditable job contending with the stranded freight. The underlying problems were clearly inland.⁷

By the time Lieutenant Riggs briefed Stevens on the political situation in Petrograd and the status of his mission, Stevens was already growing leary of taking on responsibilities for administrating and clearing the port, for it was obvious that he could accomplish little at Vladivostok if the real bottleneck lay inland along the Trans-Siberian. Still, the chairman was curious to know where the Provisional Government wanted his commission to

concentrate its efforts. At the time Riggs had left the capital, it seemed that the Ministry of Transport intended to give Stevens complete charge of the port's facilities. Mitinskii reportedly had word from the Provisional Government to accord the Americans "the same rights the English enjoy at Bordeaux," but shortly before his departure he had admitted that the Anglo-French agreement on Bordeaux could not be obtained and consequently the precise terms were still undefined. Interpreting the Russian attitude was quite difficult. The Russians might be dragging their feet, trying to forestall an American presence in Vladivostok. Or the Russians could be trying to focus attention on Vladivostok to limit the work of the commission to the administration of that port. In Riggs' view the Provisional Government did not want the commission's advice for the Trans-Siberian Railway or the rest of Russia's railways. Officially, the Russian authorities in Petrograd were persuaded that the congestion in Vladivostok resulted from disorganization in the port itself, not from the breakdown of operations along the railway. But this interpretation accorded too well with the Russians' diplomatic efforts to station the Stevens Commission in Vladivostok where they hoped it would act as a conduit for locomotive shipments from the United States.⁸

To verify that the railway terminals in the Far East were not the source of trouble, the commission went the next

day to the switchyards at First River. The railway workers at Vladivostok loaded the boxcars in the port's cramped yards and delivered them to First River where the trains were made up. They were loading as many as 300 boxcars per day for shipment out of Vladivostok, whereas only about one hundred cars were leaving First River each day. Moreover, the tonnage leaving by rail was nearly double the tonnage now coming into port. Plainly the port and the yards around Vladivostok were not clogging the flow of supplies to Russia; the limiting factor was the shortage of locomotives and cars that arrived from the west.⁹

The crucial task of making up the trains and giving them destinations fell to the Soviet, the representatives of the local population. The Soviet's executive committee allotted what kinds of material would go west and in what quantities. The Soviet decided how far it would honor the requests of the Provisional Government, or how much food and fertilizer it would send instead of munitions and barbed wire. In the context of the revolution and the conduct of the war these were profoundly political questions. In June the Soviet apportioned only about 15% of the boxcars for war supplies.¹⁰

In their inspection tours and meetings with Mitinskii and the local railway officials the Americans found that they were dogged by a silent observer from the Soviet. Evidently the Soviet wanted to keep closely abreast of

whatever the Americans proposed. The local population did not want an influx of American workers taking away their jobs or driving down their wages. There were mounting tensions already between the Russians and the large population of Chinese, Japanese and Koreans in the city. The suspicions of the Soviet reinforced the Americans' views that getting involved in the port's administration would be unwise. Gibbs wrote in his diary, "We would be certain to antagonize someone and to cause misunderstandings and bad feelings."¹¹

The commission's main concern while in Vladivostok was to expedite the construction of a Baldwin Locomotive assembly plant at the head of the harbor. The Russians planned to build three big houses, each with room for eight locomotives. Stevens visited the proposed site on his second day in the port. They had selected the site well; it had access to deep water berths and floating cranes in the harbor, and a tunnel, now being dug with Chinese labor, would connect with the yards at First River. Stevens expressed concern that if the work on the tunnel were interrupted (there were reports that Russian workmen had begun obstructing Chinese labor around the port) the locomotive plants would be left high and dry. He also wanted assurances that the assembly shops would operate twenty-four hours per day. He informed the Russians that Baldwin Locomotive wanted to supply forty or fifty men to

supervise the work of the plants, to which the Russians agreed. Stevens promised to cable Baldwin for exact specifications on the construction of the engine houses.¹²

On their last day in Vladivostok the railroad experts went back to First River to inspect a car assembly plant that dated from the first year of the war. Most of the rolling stock around Vladivostok was imported unassembled from the United States. The American cars were twice as long as the Russian cars, and one reason the Baldwin locomotives were so desirable was that they were bigger than the Russian locomotives which, when coupled with the American boxcars, had to haul uneconomically small trains. The plant dated from the first year of the war. It had been built hastily and was poorly laid out. But labor problems explained the car plant's low productivity. The Russian workers often put down their tools to make political speeches, the officials admitted, and production frequently stopped altogether while the workers attended meetings. Stevens later described the atmosphere at First River as "tense and ominous." To make matters worse, the officials themselves showed little interest in the Americans' advice. While discussing with them plans for expansion, Darling caught the Russians winking at each other. Gibbs had an inkling of corruption. A local lumber company had contracted to build a new sawmill and supply wood for boxcar construction. Gibbs argued that the project would divert resources from the hundreds of

American cars that were already on hand awaiting assembly, but gave up when he discerned that there must "be some 'deal' on."¹³

On June 3, a Sunday, the railroad experts awoke to find Root's ship, the old, converted cruiser U.S.S. Buffalo, moored in the harbor. It had arrived before dawn, a day earlier than expected. The day was the Feast of Trinity, an important holiday, and all the Russian boats in harbor were festooned with green pine boughs. A number of Chinese fishing boats hovered around the Buffalo, seeking passengers to ferry ashore. Due to the holiday and the ship's early arrival, the Soviet's executive committee had not yet assembled to receive the second American commission, so Root and his men waited on board.¹⁴

Stanley Washburn now took leave of the railroad commission to join Root's party, as Secretary Baker had ordered. Stevens decided not to wait for Root to come ashore; there was enough confusion between the two missions already. Furthermore Professor Mitinskii was anxious to keep the railroad commission on schedule; he said it was very important that they get to Petrograd ahead of the Root Commission. Early in the morning their special train pulled out, skirted slowly around the east shore of the Golden Horn, and chugged up the first range of hills towards First River -- and the 5,800 miles of mountains, desert, taiga and steppes that lay beyond.

In 1917 the Trans-Siberian Railway was in fact a chain of five railways from Vladivostok to the Ural Mountains. At the Urals, on the eastern rim of the Russian plain, the railway forked, one line going due west to Moscow, the other heading northwest to Petrograd. Spanning fourteen time zones from Vladivostok to Petrograd, the journey normally took ten to twelve days by the weekly express, or eighteen to twenty-two days on other trains. Even this stupendous distance from east to west does not reveal Siberia's vastness, for most of the way the railway skirts along Siberia's southern edge, crossing several great rivers that flow northward for thousands of miles to the Arctic Ocean. In 1917 the population of Siberia was limited almost entirely to a belt of arable land bordering the railway, and even here the marshy ground remains frozen into July. Northern latitudes that are habitable in Europe as far east as Petrograd turn to frozen wastes as they extend into Siberia. Vladivostok is on a latitude a thousand miles south of Petrograd. Thus the whole Trans-Siberian Railway, while wending north as well as west, contends with a severe winter climate from one edge of the Eurasian continent to the other.¹⁵

The first leg of the journey was not through Siberia at all, but crossed Chinese territory through northern Manchuria. This was the Russian-owned Chinese Eastern Railway. An alternative route, the Ussuri Railway, followed

the tortuous valleys of the Amur and Ussuri Rivers around the northern frontier of Manchuria, but Russia's possession of the Chinese Eastern rendered it unnecessary. This short cut through Chinese territory was vital not only to the Trans-Siberian Railway but also to Russia's international position in the Far East.

China's startling defeat at the hands of the Japanese in 1895 had left Vladivostok vulnerable, even after the completion of the Trans-Siberian that same year, and the Russians had looked for ways to build a direct railway line across Manchuria and make it their sphere of influence. In 1896 the Russians pressured the weak Chinese government to accept an agreement with the Russo-Chinese Bank, which gave the bank rights to construct a railway, in return for a defensive treaty. Gradually the Russians established complete control within the railway zone through their domination of the Russo-Chinese Bank and the Chinese Eastern Railway Company, both headquartered in the Manchurian city of Harbin. In early 1898 a second agreement arranged for the construction of a branch line from Harbin south to Port Arthur. This enlarged Russia's sphere of influence in Manchuria, and Port Arthur replaced Vladivostok as the home port of the Russian Pacific Fleet. Here at Port Arthur the Japanese launched their surprise attack on Russia's Far Eastern position in 1904. In the peace settlement of 1905 (mediated by President Theodore Roosevelt at Portsmouth, New

Hampshire -- a signal of America's growing economic interest in the region) Russia relinquished its hold over Port Arthur and the branch line south from Harbin, but maintained control of the Chinese Eastern. Vladivostok once again became Russia's main naval base in the Far East.

While observing the rich cultivation of the land as their train proceeded into Manchuria, George Gibbs pondered the latent struggle between Russia and Japan over the region and thought it was "explicable." He described in his diary the rich, black soil and the crops of soy beans and sorghum adjacent to the railway. He saw nomadic Mongolian tribesmen, the Buriats, driving their herds of cattle north for summer grazing.¹⁶

The train pulled into Harbin at midday. The commission received a hearty welcome from the Russian military governor, General Dmitri Horvat, an enormous man with a cannonball head and a flowing, white beard. He was accompanied by some dignitaries from the Chinese government, impressively westernized in their long waistcoats and stovepipe hats, and a delegation of Buriat princes dressed in their colorful native garb. The commission inspected the large shops where most of the locomotives and cars imported from the United States were assembled. (Sadly, the American equipment had to be unloaded in Vladivostok, hauled by rail to Harbin, assembled, and driven back to Vladivostok to pick up its first load of westbound materials.) After treating

the Americans to a sumptuous luncheon at the Chinese Eastern Railway Club, Horvat accompanied them on a sidewheel steamboat down the Sungari River for an examination of the long, girder railway bridge. This took them into the Chinese quarter of the city, separate from the large Russian colony, which inhabited land leased from the Chinese government. The Chinese sector was old, dusty and ramshackle. Along the banks of the river immense stocks of beans were piled in bags awaiting shipment downriver to the Amur.¹⁷

Before the commission got under way again Root's train pulled in behind their own and they could not escape another banquet and round of formalities. There were many Russian generals at the Railway Club and Stevens delivered a "fine speech," praising the operations of the Chinese Eastern. Thus far the commission had seen nothing to deter such a judgment. The engineers finally reboarded their train and in fading light rattled out across the arid reaches of central Manchuria.¹⁸

Early the next morning they crossed a low range of mountains. At the summit the track went through a two-mile tunnel guarded at each end by stone stockades, garrisoned against bandits. Around 1900 Chinese rebels and roving bandits had destroyed much of the Chinese Eastern despite the presence of thousands of Russian troops, which had been sent into Manchuria after the Boxer Rebellion. More recently

the Chinese had had border clashes with the Mongolians, whose forces were trained and equipped by the Japanese. The commission's train descended onto a dry, grassy plain dotted with alkali patches, and rimmed in the distance by blue hills. They saw caravans of camels, horses, cattle and sheep, and the conical tents of nomads.¹⁹

At dusk they encountered the first congestion along the railway. Manchuria Station was a bleak little settlement on the Russian border, built around the customs house, a coal pit and the empty engine terminal for the Trans-Baikal Railway. Here, about 500 loaded boxcars stood abandoned on the sidings. Many were the American-type cars apparently loaded for the first time and stranded eight months earlier. The congestion was due to the junction of the two railways; the Trans-Baikal was not keeping up with the Chinese Eastern.²⁰

On their third day they traveled through the mountainous region to the east of Lake Baikal, following a maze of steep, narrow river valleys in thick pine forest. The region was sparsely settled; small farms were hewn out of the woods and the occasional villages along the railway were clusters of log houses. The farming population depended largely on the various tributaries of the Amur to get its produce out; rail transport was too costly. Throughout all of eastern Siberia the only industry whose product bore the cost of transport to the markets of

European Russia was Pacific fishing, although mining development held promise for the future. Unlike in the steppe and taiga regions of Siberia that still lay to the west, the railway through this region had little commercial use and had not stimulated much immigration. Its construction had been heavily subsidized.²¹

The grand scheme of building a railway from ocean to ocean, advanced by the finance minister, Witte, had been based on more than the military incentive of securing Russia's hold in the Far East. This enormous undertaking in the 1890s was one of the underpinnings of Russia's state-directed program of rapid industrialization, by which Russia sought to catch up with the West in the crucial indices of coal and pig iron production and steel manufacturing. The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway was financed largely by French loans, which Russia repaid through its favorable trade balance, exporting grain, timber and other raw materials. Witte believed that Russia's trade surplus would be augmented by the growth of crops and the exploitation of mineral resources in Siberia as the railway went forward; hence it would help to pay for itself. The finance minister envisioned a vast scheme for the development of Siberia: Russia's industries would profit from the raw materials opened up by the railway, and Russia's surplus rural population could be induced through subsidies to resettle there, in turn creating a new market

for Russian industry.²²

Because the Trans-Siberian Railway was driven across a virtual wilderness, overreaching its commercial usefulness for the immediate future, it was built with low technical standards. The few large bridges, such as the one that the commission inspected at Sungari, were an exception. These permanent steel bridges, which impressed the Americans, were built on huge wedge-shaped abutments that pointed upstream to deflect the ice flows in the spring. (On the Ob and Yenisei Rivers in central Siberia ferries in the summer and rails laid across the ice in the winter had sufficed until after the turn of the century.) Most of the bridges were wooden, some barely capable of supporting the heavier American-type locomotives. Besides the primitive bridges, the commission found the ballasting to be poor in places; water and coaling stations were crude, and gradients were excessively steep, especially on the hilly terrain along the Trans-Baikal Railway. Here they noted some steep 1.7% grades that limited the freight trains to ten American-type boxcars for three small 0-4-0 Russian locomotives, two ahead and one pushing.²³

At Chita, the capital of the province, a rough city of 80,000 mostly oriental inhabitants, the engineers encountered the crudest facilities they had yet seen. The repair shops were old and poorly laid out, equipped only with light tools, a wheel and axle lathe and a small brass

foundry. The roundhouse lacked cranes or a drop pit and boiler washing was done with cold water. The facilities could only perform light repairs. The engine house had all the broken-down locomotives it could accommodate, while more disabled locomotives stood out in the weather.²⁴

Just outside Chita the railroad experts inspected a coal pit. The primitive method of loading coal that they observed here turned out to be the pattern for the whole railway. The coal was simply piled on the ground and dumped into the tender from small buckets that were lifted by a hand-operated beam see-saw. The locomotives had to be uncoupled from the train and run some distance off the line into a coaling yard. The procedure used up two hours. Darling also noted the poor quality of the brown lignite coal both at Chita and at the open pit by Manchuria Station.²⁵

The rough condition of the railway was in part a consequence of the adverse terrain and the extreme winter temperatures. The water towers at each station along the Trans-Baikal were built on stilts with coal fire ovens beneath them, while the chutes were enclosed in wooden tunnels that could be warmed with hot air. The permafrost in this section reached a depth of one to six feet. To minimize the damage from frost heave the railway bed was constructed of a thick layer of porous sand, and flanked by deep drainage ditches. On the soft bed the rails would

frequently spring off the ties and have to be respiked. In the summer the sandy roadbed made for a rough and dusty ride.²⁶

From Chita the Trans-Baikal Railway climbed through more thickly wooded mountains, followed the Ingoda River for 150 miles, crossed another range and descended into a broad valley of the Khilok River surrounded by forested hills. They were close to the divide between the Pacific and Arctic Oceans. There were many small farms and herds of cattle but few settlements. Gibbs was quite taken by the scenery and spent most of the day on the rear platform. Darling was reminded of the Pacific Northwest from his days with the Northern Pacific. After another night they woke up along the precipitous shoreline of Lake Baikal, a 400-mile long, mile-deep lake. The last seventy miles of the Trans-Baikal Railway went around the southern end of the lake. Built along a shelf blasted out of the mountainside about twenty-five feet above the lake level, it represented a real feat of engineering, which had cost -- so the American engineers were told -- about \$200,000 per mile. From Lake Baikal it was a short distance to the city of Irkutsk, the administrative center and so-called "Paris" of Siberia.²⁷

As the train pulled into the station platform it was mobbed by an awesome crowd of undisciplined soldiers, ex-convicts, political exiles and traders -- "the roughest looking men and women I ever saw," wrote Darling. They were

only prevented from boarding by the armed guard of ten soldiers on Stevens' train. The Americans quickly learned that the soldiers all over Russia were boarding trains at will, crowding into the compartments, sleeping in the aisles or sitting on the roofs. As Darling observed disquietly, "The people all along the line believe themselves free and that means license." Freedom meant free services, and the railways had ceased asking for fares from the armed soldiers.²⁸

Irkutsk lay across the river from the railway station, accessible only by a pontoon bridge. Many gaily colored church domes dominated the old city's skyline. For the first time since Vladivostok the architecture and people were predominantly Russian. The local inhabitants wore long coats, knee boots and sheepskin caps. As in Chita, the American engineers observed a number of Austrian prisoners working on the railway. These Austrian soldiers were not under guard but mingled freely with the local people.²⁹

While their train was recoaling the Root Commission arrived. The crowd gathered around the rear platform of Root's train where Duncan and Russell, the labor representative and the socialist, made speeches proclaiming America's enthusiasm for the democratic principles of the Russian Revolution. Their speeches received repeated applause. Stevens, meanwhile, called on Root. He was riding on the ex-Tsar's imperial train, and he showed Stevens the

desk at which the Tsar had signed his abdication.³⁰

Leaving Irkutsk, the train followed the Angara River for another forty miles and then climbed out of the valley onto rolling tablelands. They were entering the taiga -- the vast forest of small white birch and pines that blanketed central Siberia. This region was spanned by the Tomsk Railway, another privately owned line that had received massive government subsidies for construction. The hummocks and gullies of the taiga had posed special challenges for the locating engineers, and Darling's discerning eye found that their results were often poor. As on the Trans-Baikal Railway, the steep ruling gradient limited the length of trains to about twelve or fifteen cars. One forty-two mile section crossed eighty-five bridges and culverts. Cuttings and embankments were needed over the whole distance from the Angara River to the Russian steppe. In June the ground was only beginning to thaw; in three months it would be marshy to a depth of two or three feet. The freezing and thawing played havoc on the rails, and at the speed that Mitinskii insisted they go, their train rocked violently over the bad joints.³¹

About one hundred miles west of Irkutsk they came to the Cheremkova coal mines. These mines contained the first high-grade coal they had seen. The Russians were loading and shipping it out at the rate of about three hundred cars per day. This coal was westbound for European Russia. Here

was a major source of the trouble on the whole Trans-Siberian: most of the cars and motive power eastbound from European Russia only got as far as Cheremkova; the Tomsk Railway only allowed a trickle of cars and locomotives through to the Trans-Baikal Railway. It was far more profitable to load them with coal and turn them around. The implications of this situation began to unfold when the commission learned that a much bigger coal mine at Taiga, at the west end of the Tomsk line, was shut down by a labor strike. Evidently the Taiga mine ordinarily shipped coal west to European Russia while the Cheremkova mines were the main supplier of coal to points east. Now the Cheremkova mines were having to fill the place of the Taiga mine and ship coal in the other direction, across the length of the Tomsk Railway.³²

The strike at Taiga was generating supply problems that pulsed along the entire length of the Trans-Siberian and even beyond the railway situation. For one thing, the coal-consuming industries of European Russia had to reach nearly a thousand miles deeper into Siberia to obtain their fuel. They could ill-afford the increased costs for transportation and the resulting shortages. The entire pattern of Russian coal production and distribution was already severely disrupted by the war. The northern cities (Minsk, Riga, Petrograd) had depended upon coal from Poland and Britain before August 1914. The German blockade and the

retreat from Poland cut off these sources, leaving Russia with just two principal sources of coal, the Donets Basin in the Ukraine and the Taiga and Cheremkova mines in Siberia. Increasingly, Russian industries were resorting to coal shipped all the way from central Siberia.³³

The westbound coal traffic from central Siberia exacerbated another problem. Before the war there were about ten to fifteen cars daily running between Vladivostok and European Russia. This represented a balanced exchange of westbound raw materials for eastbound finished products. In 1917 the cars operating on the Trans-Siberian Railway numbered in the hundreds, and the imported westbound materials could not be counterbalanced by eastbound exports because the high freight rates over the long route made it impossible. Consequently empty cars had to be hauled east. As long as the Taiga and Cheremkova mines were shipping coal east they were not holding up the flow of traffic, but when they began to ship west to European Russia the coal began competing for freight space with the stockpiled materials at Vladivostok.³⁴

Finally, the shutdown at Taiga disrupted local operations on the Tomsk Railway. Ordinarily the Tomsk Railway delivered coal from Cheremkova a short distance to the Trans-Baikal Railway, and at the other end of the line from Taiga to the next line west, the Omsk Railway. Now it had the burden of transporting heavy loads of coal across

almost the whole length of its rolling terrain, about ten cars to a locomotive. Thus the Tomsk Railway was not only hoarding engines and cars that were coming east from European Russia, but the heavy coal trains called for a concentration of locomotives, making the Tomsk sector a bottleneck for the motive power distributed across Siberia.³⁵

Once in Petrograd Stevens would object strenuously to the situation on the Tomsk Railway, arguing that it was imperative for the Taiga mine to resume operation. He would find the government fully aware of the problems associated with coal traffic over the Tomsk Railway, but unwilling nevertheless to act. The Provisional Government simply lacked the political strength to break the strike, or the revenue to settle it peacefully. The problem just festered. The commission did not get a firsthand look at the shutdown mine operation at Taiga. Possibly by design, their train passed Taiga during the night.³⁶

In the morning the commission reached Novo-Nikolaevsk, an old city built around several big flour mills on the Ob River, which carried barges of grain from the rich farmland along the river to the south. This was the beginning of the steppe and the Omsk Railway. For the next two days, the seventh and eighth days of their journey, their train raced across the flat steppe. The black earth was riddled by navigable streams. Occasionally their train went through

marshes where the sky would reel with great flocks of waterfowl cartwheeling into the air. There were herds of horses and cattle. This region had received most of the three million peasants who migrated to Siberia after the turn of the century. The land's abundance was evident at all the small station platforms, where the peasants were selling butter, eggs, bread and cheese. Western Siberia had become one of the biggest grain-producing areas in Russia. The land-owning peasants here had actually increased their crop yield during three years of war, while the great landed estates in the Ukraine, lacking cheap labor, had languished. The producers in western Siberia were relatively insulated from the effects of the blockade, which had disrupted the Ukraine's normal pattern of exporting its grain surpluses by way of the Black Sea. In the long run the army absorbed the food surpluses that Russia had exported before the war, and the peasants in June 1917 were generally prospering. Like the production of coal, however, the movement of grain within Russia was altered by the blockade. This too increased the strategic importance of the railway lines reaching into western Siberia, particularly the Omsk line.³⁷

The Omsk Railway terminated at Ekaterinburg, a city of 70,000 near the eastern slope of the Ural Mountains. Ekaterinburg appeared more European, but the crowd at the station was a bizarre mixture of nationalities, from the

Tartars dressed in their great coats and Astrakhan fur caps, to the Russian peasants wearing woven grass shoes and puttees made from gunny sacking, to the many Austrian prisoners, who looked incongruously prosperous.³⁸

Abandoned mining concerns dotting the Ural Mountains were a prime example of the way railways had transformed the economic geography of Russia. Once an important region for iron ore production, mining had declined in the Urals since the mid-nineteenth century, as the growth of railway lines had tied Russia's industrial centers to alternative sources of iron ore and coal in the Ukraine and Poland. The maze of slow waterways that had borne ore from the Urals to Moscow could not compete with the railways.³⁹

Russia's dependence on railway transportation had evolved in connection with its growth of exports and imports in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and this too had momentous consequences when the war began in 1914. As the railway lines grew so did the proportion of Russia's foreign trade across land frontiers, at the expense largely of Russia's overseas trade with Britain. Germany displaced Britain as Russia's biggest trading partner, taking a third of Russia's exports and supplying nearly half of its imports in 1913. The railways in Russia were oriented to support this trade pattern. Thus the railways were especially vulnerable to Germany's economic war on Russia after August 1914.⁴⁰

There were still two more railway lines angling northwest across the flat Russian plain from the Urals to the capital, the Perm and the Northern. It took another three days of fast running, first over open farm country and then through two days of monotonous pine forest on the approach to Petrograd. The engines on the Northern Railway burned wood. Huge piles of chopped wood stood beside the stations. There were frequent stretches of blackened trees where sparks from the locomotives had ignited the forest. At last they reached Petrograd, on the evening of June 13, eleven days after leaving Vladivostok.⁴¹

The scene that greeted the American engineers at Nikolai Station was a stark contrast to the abundance that they had observed in western Siberia. The platform was choked with refugees trying to get out of the city. Whole families were gathered with all their possessions -- chairs, rugs, baskets of food and clothing, and their tea kettles -- waiting days to get a train. Petrograd was starving for trains. It needed coal for the factories and food for the hungry population. Twenty percent of the factories here had closed down for lack of fuel. Bread lines had grown a block long. Since the revolution the capital had been granted a meager allowance of forty-six cars per day, mostly for freight cars with food. In practice the number of cars arriving each day averaged from thirty-two to thirty-six. This was barely half of what the city needed to feed

itself.⁴²

Soldiers were conspicuous among the throng of people at the station. They strutted around wearing their rifles and cartridge belts, heeding no one. Having played a vital part in the March Revolution, the troops garrisoned in Petrograd had received a pledge from the Provisional Government that they would not be sent out of the capital; they were the guardians of the revolution. Refusing to drill, the soldiers milled throughout the city switching companies and regiments as they pleased, riding here and there on the street cars without paying fares, attending political meetings. The only drilling that one saw was that of the Workers' Volunteer Association, a militia of factory workers.⁴³

Ambassador Francis came the short distance from the embassy to the Nikolai Station with his whole staff to greet the Stevens Commission. He was a short, stocky man with a clipped moustache, small black framed spectacles, and wisps of white hair crowning his round head. He and his entourage were accompanied by the corpulent minister of transport, N. V. Nekrasov, and a delegation of railway officials. Stevens read a prepared statement announcing the commission's intent to assist the Russian government in railway matters by placing at its disposal America's technical skill and industrial resources. The Americans were greeted by no popular demonstration, however, and they later learned that

their arrival had not been advertised. Gibbs for one felt disappointed, believing that the Russians had thrown away an opportunity to boost morale.⁴⁴

Following this tepid reception the commission was taken to its accommodations in the crowded capital, an embarrassingly shabby hotel near the station called, ironically, the "Select." Francis apologized for its character, explaining that the Russians had intended to lodge them in the Winter Palace, but it was now reserved for the Root Mission, while the Hotel de l'Europe was overcrowded.⁴⁵

The railroad experts found Francis congenial and deeply interested in their mission when they talked with him the next day at the embassy. The ambassador, it seemed, occupied a rather peculiar position in the diplomatic life of Petrograd. Having left his family at home when he took the post in early 1916, Francis led a rather secluded life, preferring to invite people to the embassy instead of calling on the government officials himself at the Tauride Palace. Nor did he confer often with the Allied legations. In fact before the revolution and the American intervention, Francis had been snubbed by the Russian social elite and the French and British ambassadors. His liking for late night poker games and fine cigars, together with the gilded cuspidor which he had brought from the United States and toted from room to room at the embassy, made him a real

oddity in the refined circle of diplomats and ministers of state. But since March, his aggressive role in granting American recognition of the new government and his pivotal role in negotiating loans for the Russians had given him greater access to the new leaders in Russia. His poor personal relations with Sir George Buchanan and Maurice Paléologue, his counterparts at the British and French embassies, now turned to his advantage, for the wily ambassador cultivated a special relationship between his embassy and the Provisional Government, while keeping his distance from the Allied embassies, which were conspicuously less approving of the March Revolution than were the Americans.⁴⁶

The ambassador's folksy demeanor shined that evening when he packed the five railroad commissioners into his Ford touring car and took them on a drive along the Neva River. For Stevens, it was a chance to observe two Petrograds. One was the graceful city of canals, bridges and Italianate architecture, buildings painted in soft pastels of yellow and red and blue, like the colors of the evening in this season of the "white nights." This was Russia's "Venice of the North," the imperial capital designed in detail by Peter the Great two centuries earlier. The other Petrograd was the city in revolution, with red banners festooning the public buildings, the ubiquitous soldiers, the overcrowding, and the shortages of food and fuel. Its population was

swollen with refugees, army units, and peasants brought in to work in the new war industries. On the outskirts of this teeming city, where the Neva River approached the Gulf of Finland, Francis took the commissioners past rows of palatial summer homes, boarded up since the revolution. The day was June 14; by the Russians' Julian calendar it was June 1. By either calendar the short summer of Russian liberalism was well advanced, and the Stevens Mission had little time to effect changes on the Trans-Siberian Railway.⁴⁷

CHAPTER 3

NEGOTIATIONS

The breakdown of transportation in Russia was a montage of problems produced by the war and revolution, Russia's backwardness and the clumsy bureaucracy of the old regime. The most fundamental difficulty was simply the inadequacy of the Russian rail network. The density of Russia's railway lines and the number of locomotives and cars relative to the country's expanse were far below that of Germany or France or even Austro-Hungary. The enormous strain of supplying an army of millions on a thousand-mile front for year after year was too much for the Russian railways to bear. From 1913 to 1917 the volume of material transported by rail increased by over 50 percent. The volume of ordinary goods fell, while war materiel accounted for about 70 percent of rail traffic by 1917. Not only did industry and the urban population suffer from the military's domination of rail traffic, but the railways themselves were deprived of fuel, spare parts, and tools for their maintenance, while factory production of new locomotives and rolling stock declined after 1915.¹

The needs of the military were the most immediate, if not the most decisive, source of trouble. When the war began, jurisdiction of the railways was divided between the Ministry of Transport in Petrograd and the military command

at General Headquarters. The army took control of the railways from Petrograd to the front, requisitioning locomotives and rolling stock and passenger trains to carry out the vast mobilization of troops along the front. General Headquarters, or Stavka, lacked the technical organization to run the railways efficiently and it made up for its deficiencies by hoarding the cars and locomotives that crossed into the military zone. Within months the front became littered with boxcars converted into bathhouses, laundries, shops and pharmacies. Entire trains were turned into barracks. These abuses by the army heightened the critical car shortage facing the Ministry of Transport and the railways in the interior.²

In 1915 the Russians conducted a strategic retreat from Poland. Stavka's plan was to repeat the scorched-earth "great retreat of 1812" and lure the Germans, like Napoleon, to their nemesis. Given the massive front, however, the historical analogy was absurd: the logistics of retreat were more exhausting for Russia than they were to the enemy. The railways had to evacuate whole factories and warehouses and thousands of refugees in addition to providing troop trains. This was even more burdensome than had been the mobilization in 1914. The ensuing shortages in the interior caused disruptions in the economy from which imperial Russia never recovered. Surpluses of unshipped coal in the Donets Basin, for example, drove numerous mines to shut down at the

very time that Russia was giving up its important coal fields in Poland. Similarly, the railways could not ship the grain out of the Ukraine. The retreat from Poland took place in the summer and fall of 1915, during the harvest. In peace time the surplus grain in the Ukraine could be carried by river transport to the Black Sea and exported, but due to the blockade, this grain had to be shipped by rail to other parts of Russia. When the railways failed, commercial crop production in the Ukraine declined.³

In addition to the burden on transportation associated with the supply of the army, the war disrupted the railways in another way. The blockade wiped out Russia's trade with Germany and Austria, and denied Russia its usual trade routes through the Baltic and Black Seas. Even the material it could acquire through neutral Sweden was sharply curtailed, ironically, by the British blockade of Germany. This left Russia with only two trade routes to the Allies: Vladivostok and Archangel. Isolation was a vital factor in the breakdown of transport, for the railways now had to retrieve Russia's imports from the extremities of the empire. Not only were the railways carrying more, they were hauling their loads far greater distances as a result of the blockade. Adding further to the strain on the railways, Russia's imports doubled during the war.⁴

Even Russia's pattern of internal trade was disrupted by the blockade. Often the railways had to move goods which

were formerly carried by sea or river transport. Petrograd's need for coal is a prime example. Before the war Petrograd consumed about 2,000,000 tons of coal each year, mostly from Britain by way of the Baltic Sea. After 1915 all of Petrograd's coal had to come from the Donets Basin in the south. In 1915 it was estimated that 11,625 coal cars were required to transport the coal from the Donets mines, but only 5,185 were supplied. The city was allotted 250 car loads each month, but in September 1915 only forty-one car loads arrived; in October, eight; in November, none; and in December, fifty.⁵

If Russia's backwardness, and the extraordinary strain produced by the war, were the root causes of the breakdown, the whole crisis was sharpened by a legacy of mismanagement under the imperial regime in the last half decade before the war. It was the scrimping government expenditures on locomotives and rolling stock that left Russia with such acute shortages by 1917. In 1908 it had come to light that the government-owned railways were operating at a loss while those under private management were turning a profit. Facing mounting criticism, and unwilling to raise passenger fares and freight rates, the government had cut back purchases of new locomotives and rolling stock. Expenditures were cut nearly in half between 1908 and 1910 and by another third between 1910 and 1912. This had unforeseen consequences. While the government-owned

locomotive works continued to receive orders, many privately owned factories were so hard hit by the cutbacks that they retooled and turned to other kinds of manufacturing. Meanwhile the government went ahead with an ambitious program of railway construction, increasing its expenditures in this area by about twenty percent in the same five year period. The volume of traffic grew at an even faster rate, from 78,850,000 tons in 1903 to 131,800,000 tons in 1913. In short, fewer locomotives and cars were hauling more goods over longer distances. The Ministry of Transport's economizing measures were illusory: the government railways were simply wearing out the equipment. Meanwhile, the ability of Russian industry to replace the locomotives and rolling stock was diminishing. When the government woke up to the situation in 1913 and reversed its policies, it was too late.⁶

After the March Revolution the railway situation was complicated by still another factor. When the tsarist government collapsed, the Ministry of Transport's centralized control perished with it, and nothing that the Provisional Government could do would restore the ministry's authority over the railways. On the first day of the revolution two railway engineers seized control of the Ministry of Transport and sent "Telegram 114" over the wires, calling on all railwaymen to form "line committees." Only orders made through the line committees were to be

carried out. The intent was to protect the revolution by politicizing the railwaymen and forcing the new government to abide these revolutionary committees. But the line committees quickly took the form of labor unions, usurping the powers of the local company or government railway officials. Instead of representing the interests of the revolution, the committees represented the railwaymen's economic interests. They assumed an antagonistic stance toward the Provisional Government, denying the Ministry of Transport control over rail traffic.⁷

The anarchy that spread along the Russian railways after the revolution was crucial because it impeded efforts at reorganization. The Stevens Mission could only work through the Ministry of Transport. Insofar as the revolution broke down the centralized administration of the railways, it frustrated the Stevens Mission too. Russia's transportation problems in 1917 were dire and fundamental, but the deterioration of the railways did not seem irreversible. The Russians had shown their fortitude in constructing over 5,500 miles of new lines during three years of war. If the same vigor could be brought to bear on the problems of organization and equipment shortages, some thought, the situation could be saved. But the collapse of centralized control prevented it. That was the significance of the line committees: they blocked action by the government.

The railwaymen's unions quickly emerged as a powerful and independent force. The railway workers were both numerous and strategically located. Within weeks of the sending of Telegram 114, the line committees began organizing one big union, an All-Russian Congress of Railway Unions. At its first meeting in April 201 union delegates elected an executive committee of fifteen. This group became known by its acronym, Vikzhel. Sitting in permanent session in Moscow, Vikzhel was able to wield more influence over all the Russian railways than its rival, the Ministry of Transport in Petrograd.⁸

Even Vikzhel's authority was limited, however. The union's sources of strength -- the sheer number of railwaymen and the ability of a single line to create havoc by interrupting traffic for a few days -- tended to magnify the autonomy of local units at every level of its sprawling hierarchy. At its base, the union was organized around the knots of workers at terminals, repair shops, telegraph stations and junctions. Each one formed a local committee which acted on immediate issues such as hours and shifts and safety standards. The local committees sent delegates to the line committees, which exercised control over traffic operations. They in turn sent representatives to the All-Russian Congress of Railwaymen's Unions in Moscow. In practice, this large body in Moscow deferred to its executive committee, Vikzhel, but Vikzhel had to allow its

constituent organizations wide freedom of action.⁹

Two days after the creation of Vikzhel, the Provisional Government had tried to check the process of decentralization and reestablish some authority over the railways. By decree of the government, the Minister of Transport was authorized to call for "provisional supervisory committees" on each line. In matters directly affecting the workers, such as wage disputes, the provisional committees were to arbitrate between the defunct private or government management and the line committees. On all questions of traffic operation the provisional committees were to have full authority. Essentially the government wanted to repeat the process started by Telegram 114, this time with the workers' committees looking to Petrograd for direction, instead of to Vikzhel in Moscow. The government attempted to appease both the line committees and the private railway companies, admitting on one side that the workers were in control of the railways, while trying on the other side to resuscitate some company input. The provisional committees took hold only on some railway lines and with negligible results. The whole scheme revealed the timidity of the Provisional Government. In June the Ministry of Transport tried to mitigate its defeat with another circular; now it officially sanctioned the authority of Vikzhel and the line committees to control traffic operations. The provisional committees were quietly

abandoned. When the private railway companies objected, the minister of transport responded by making a meaningless distinction between operation and administration, which he assured them was still in the hands of private management.¹⁰

Consistent with its reluctance to antagonize the railwaymen's union, the Provisional Government downplayed the disorganization of the railways and stressed instead the need for locomotives and rolling stock. Reorganization entailed an exertion of centralized authority which the Ministry of Transport simply did not possess, whereas more locomotives and cars would improve the capacity of the railways without involving any confrontation with labor. In presenting their case to the United States, the new leaders in the Ministry of Transport blamed the crisis on the short-sighted policies of the tsarist regime before the war. Their interpretation of the transportation crisis offered a simple and appealing solution: if American industry could supply Russia's deficit of locomotives and rolling stock, Russia's railways could be revived. Their chief spokesman was George V. Lomonosov, a distinguished engineer who headed a Russian Railway Mission to the United States. The mission was sent to expedite the Russians' locomotive orders, and Lomonosov energetically publicized the Provisional Government's position. Russia needed "locomotives, locomotives and still more locomotives," he told his audiences. "Quite frankly, I say to you, our

American friends, give us locomotives and we shall give you military success." Lomonosov's appealing formula was endorsed by the American press, for it not only promised victory, it held out the alluring prospect of an enormous market for American manufacturers.¹¹

The Wilson Administration was not so easily persuaded. Aware that Russia's railway problems were complex, Wilson sent the Stevens Mission to get firsthand knowledge of the situation. Similarly, Lansing emphasized the fact-finding purpose of the Root Mission. The Provisional Government could not long conceal its weakness from the two American missions. As the Stevens Mission began forming a different view of the railway situation, the administration naturally grew skeptical of the Russians' incessant call for locomotives, and it soon recognized the inability of the Provisional Government to shape railway policy.¹²

It would be misleading to characterize the weakness of the Provisional Government primarily as a failure to discipline the burgeoning union movement. Indeed, the railway unions were unique among the many unions that formed suddenly in 1917; all other trade unions were overshadowed by the rise of worker committees organized at the factory level, and even more by the formation of soviets in each community. The soviets represented the toilers of Russia, and though they brought together a spectrum of political parties, they were nevertheless imbued with a socialist

vision at odds with the liberal vision of the Provisional Government's ministers. Ostensibly the soviets were represented collectively by the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, but the Petrograd Soviet quickly emerged as the leader of soviet Russia.¹³

In the early months of the revolution the Petrograd Soviet was dominated by moderate socialists. The doctrinaire Marxists among them argued that Russia could not progress immediately from its "feudal" state under the Tsar to socialism, that Russia must be governed for a time by a liberal capitalist regime; hence the Petrograd Soviet decided on the rather anomalous course of supporting the rule of its class enemies in the Provisional Government. This was the origin of the so-called "dual power" in Russia in 1917. The Provisional Government's authority was increasingly held in check by the Petrograd Soviet, for the latter really held the support of the masses. The most dramatic demonstration of this fact followed the Soviet's Order Number One, which instructed all units of the Russian Army to form revolutionary committees and obey the Soviet's orders ahead of those of the Provisional Government. Like Telegram 114 to the railwaymen, it was aimed at swiftly breaking up the old order to secure the revolution. By politicizing the soldiers and undermining discipline, it acted as a solvent on the army. As one member of the Soviet later explained it, the revolution had to destroy the old

army, or the latter would have destroyed the revolution. Order Number One succeeded in winning the allegiance of the soldiers to the Soviet, thus swinging the balance of political power behind the Petrograd Soviet instead of the Provisional Government.¹⁴

While the Petrograd Soviet was reluctant to undertake the enormous tasks of governing Russia and waging the war, it soon became embroiled in a contest with the Provisional Government over direction of Russia's foreign policy, specifically the aims of the war. The war aims question became a vital international issue of the year 1917, forcing itself again and again into the relations between the Allies, disrupting the politics of Russia and threatening the internal stability of Britain and France. Although the war aims question did not affect directly the program of American railroad assistance to Russia, it was so crucial to Wilson's diplomacy with Russia and the other Allies, as well as to the course of the Russian Revolution, that it is necessary to sketch its development to provide some context.¹⁵

In late March the Soviet took a bold step in announcing to the world "that the time has come to start a decisive struggle against the grasping ambitions of the Governments of all countries; the time has come for the people to take into their own hands the decision of the question of war or peace." This was not only a challenge to the belligerent

governments and their peoples, but more directly, an answer to the Russian foreign minister's pledge one week earlier that Russia would "sacredly observe the alliance" and "unswervingly carry out the agreements."¹⁶

The question of war aims was already simmering, in part because of Wilson's attempt to mediate an end to the war in January by appealing to both the Allies and the Central Powers to state their terms. The war was a bloody stalemate, a holocaust, with seven million dead already and no end in sight. The war aims of the belligerents, many now thought, would determine how long this nightmare would go on; they must be made public. Therefore when the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government began to vie with one another in formulating Russia's war aims -- and, by implication, its terms for peace with Germany -- the world listened with rapt attention. Initially two main positions developed. One side called for full support of the Allied cause, believing that the revolution could only succeed if Russia sided with the democracies against German autocracy. The other side argued that the imperialist causes and aims of the war were incompatible with Russia's democratic revolution, and furthermore Russia's exhaustion from the war was a worse threat to the success of the revolution; Russia must seek a negotiated peace through a revision of war aims. Their formula was a renunciation of imperialism: "no annexations and no indemnities." Not until V. I. Lenin

returned from exile in the famous sealed train and announced his "April Theses" did the Bolsheviks inject another discordant note into the national debate. Lenin argued that the imperialist war must be turned into class war throughout Europe. The Bolsheviks must take power in Russia, publish the secret treaties, and incite the proletariat against its imperialist governments. In order to seize power, Lenin said, the Bolsheviks must first obtain a majority in the Petrograd Soviet. Henceforth the Bolsheviks steadily increased their representation in the Soviet by promising peace and chopping away at the popular support of the moderates, or "revolutionary defensists," who wanted a negotiated settlement.¹⁷

The contest between the Provisional Government and the Soviet over the direction of foreign policy came to a head in early May when Foreign Minister Paul Miliukov published a note to the Allies assuring them that Russia would abide by all previous agreements. It was widely construed that Miliukov still coveted Russian control of the Turkish straits, an open breach of the Soviet's formula of "no annexations, no indemnities." Demonstrations erupted in the streets of the capital and the crisis was not ended until Miliukov had resigned and the Socialists were persuaded to form a coalition government with the liberals' Cadet party. The dominant member of the new government was Alexander Kerensky, a nominal socialist but a leading advocate of the

Allied cause. As the new Minister of War, Kerensky thought he could rally the disspirited soldiers at the front with his patriotic oratory and revive the war effort. The new foreign minister was M. I. Tereshchenko, the former finance minister who had negotiated the first \$100,000,000 loan with Francis in April. Together with Minister of Transport Nekrasov the three young men, all in their early thirties, formed an unofficial triumverate. While the coalition government reflected a limited achievement of national unity, the Bolsheviks, protesting that only six ministries had been given to the socialists, immediately raised the divisive cry, "Down with the ten capitalist ministers."¹⁸

This was the government that the Stevens Mission encountered in June. Nekrasov was absorbed in coalition politics and had little time for the Americans. He had played a key role in defusing the Miliukov crisis, negotiating a compromise rebuttal of Miliukov's foreign policy statement with a leader in the Soviet. The engineers would frequently find their conferences with him cut short when the minister rushed off to attend cabinet meetings. It was rumored that the commission had arrived just in time to save Nekrasov his job (explaining Mitinskii's haste in getting the Americans to Petrograd ahead of the Root Mission) yet Nekrasov seemed to regard the Americans mainly as a nuisance. Despite his initial charm and consideration for their work, they found him "long on promises and short

on performance." An American journalist in Petrograd who knew the work of the commission was less charitable, describing Nekrasov as a "big, fat rosy-cheeked man" whose "skill in wire-pulling was his sole qualification to become a Minister. He didn't know his work, and his unreliability was a scandal." Nekrasov had been a civil engineer and a professor at Tomsk University prior to his involvement in the Duma.¹⁹

Nekrasov introduced the commission to the large staff at the Railway Department, which occupied a row of government buildings along the Fontanka Canal. Here the American railroad experts came each morning to meet with the officials, to gather data and to compile their specialized reports. Their meetings with the Russians throughout June involved awkward, technical discussions through interpreters. Their work was slowed by the necessity of translating all the data -- versts into miles, poods into tons, Russian into English. They experienced frustrating delays from having to telegraph outlying areas for information. The Americans found that their Russian colleagues, all graduates of polytechnic colleges, were overly sensitive to criticism; to get results they were obliged to mix praise with criticism.²⁰

Shortly after his arrival, Stevens became seriously ill from blood poisoning and had to enter the hospital. From his hospital bed he kept abreast of the commission's

progress, while Miller took over as acting chairman. Miller described to Stevens the long, hot meetings in which the Russian officials continually steered them onto the most minute details. When Francis visited Stevens, he found the engineer very impatient to leave the hospital and assume direction of the meetings. Stevens told the ambassador that Miller was allowing their mission to drift; moreover he sensed that Miller's abrupt manner was antagonizing the Russians.²¹

Stevens was right. Even in its meetings with Nekrasov the commission was getting nowhere. Tension was running high. Gibbs wrote angrily in his diary, "The Russian is the greatest talker on earth and prefers to conduct even the simplest inquiry in Committee [where] most matters get talked to death, rather than acted upon." Gibbs later decided that valuable time in June had been squandered because the commission failed to apply itself forcefully to the few major problems that needed urgent attention. Instead, expecting more cooperation from the Russians, it dissipated its energy on an array of recommendations large and small.²²

In late June after a week of consultations, the engineers' recommendations began to fly like sparks from a welding torch. Gibbs made recommendations for the maintenance of locomotives and rolling stock. He proposed curtailing the production of passenger cars and converting

the assembly lines into repair shops for the existing freight cars. Repair shops had to be equipped for heavy repairs, stocked with spare parts and bar iron and steel and operated twenty-four hours a day. Ash pits should be dug for the replacement of axles wherever the facilities lacked cranes. Excessive tire wear on the engines had to be remedied before winter. Gibbs estimated that the United States needed to supply two thousand locomotives just to replace the motive power that was on its way out of service.²³

Miller sought to introduce American methods of operation. On American railroads an engine crew turned over the train to the next crew at the end of its shift and the train continued. But on the Russian railways a crew stayed with its own locomotive. An engine made short runs and frequent turn arounds to conform to the working hours of its crew. The loaded boxcars were unhitched from the engine and picked up, it was hoped, by the next engine. The only advantage of this system was that each crew took a keen interest in the maintenance of its own engine. But the turnarounds wasted time, whole trains of cars could be abandoned, and engine crews occasionally could find no cars, not even empties, for the return run. When the engine was in the repair shops the crew was idle, and if the crew was sick the engine was taken out of service.²⁴

Despite the telegraph wires running the whole length of

the line, there were no dispatchers or telephone operators; in fact Miller discovered there was virtually no operating department on the Trans-Siberian. An engine crew merely set out on its own, and though it had to try to conform to a time schedule, the train's rights on the railway were governed by the conductors and engineers. Miller proposed a complete reorganization of the methods of operation. Each railway line would be segmented into new divisions and each division would be furnished with all the personnel required for the American method of train dispatching: a division superintendent, a dispatcher, train masters, travelling engineers, master mechanics and a telephone expert. Locomotives and crews would be pooled so that engine runs could be increased, in fact doubled, to the 300-mile length of a division. Miller estimated that the longer engine runs alone would increase the capacity of the railway by fifty percent.²⁵

The commission believed that the capacity of the Trans-Siberian Railway could also be increased by upgrading the coaling and water stations. Wherever the mechanized coaling stations were missing their trolleys or pulleys, or the water tanks had broken pipes or lacked water cranes, these parts could be supplied by the United States. In addition the United States could send one mobile crane for each division for the removal of derailed cars. Stevens thought of the derelict cranes and locomotives along the

Panama Canal and cabled Willard that they should be donated to the Russians to dispell suspicions that the Americans were "trying to work off [a] lot [of] second rate material at high prices. Our Government can afford to do this."²⁶

Stevens thought of himself as a kind of purchasing agent for the Russian government. He knew that his recommendations would take precedence over the inflated locomotive orders that the Provisional Government had placed through its agent in New York. Stevens thought he could use his huge, impending equipment order as a carrot to get the Ministry of Transport to make organizational changes on the railway. He worried that the Root Mission, if it touched on the railway situation at all, would undercut his authority and hamper his mission. He was perturbed, therefore, when Root inquired about speeding up Russian orders by shipping locomotives already in stock. Stevens replied that it was "wholly impracticable," because converting them to the Russian gauge was too difficult. He told Root that the Wilson Administration would not be placing any locomotive orders until his commission had made its recommendations. Nekrasov had asked them to inspect the railways in the Ukraine, and the commission would not be making its recommendations until it had completed this tour. Meanwhile, he did not want Root interfering.²⁷

Stevens' carrot and stick approach did not work. The Russian officials responded to the commission's

recommendations in an eight-page report on June 30. Its contents were disappointing. On all questions of material improvements the railway officials consented from the standpoint of "technical realization only;" they left pending the crucial matter of funding the purchases, and Stevens was unable to place the orders. When pressed by the Americans, they explained that the financial question was beyond their scope, but they would submit the proposals to Nekrasov for his consideration, and report in a week. On the important matter of lengthening the engine runs, the commission was completely stymied. Only the day before, Nekrasov had indicated that the plan would be put into effect at once, and the number of engine terminals would be reduced from seventy to thirty-eight. Now the Russians claimed that the short engine runs were necessary due to the poor condition of the locomotives. They proposed that the new divisions should be instituted after the arrival of the American engines. This seemed like a smoke screen; the Railway Department was afraid that the engine crews did not want to be separated from their engines.²⁸

Deeply disappointed by this report, Stevens concluded that their failure was a result of meddling by members of the Root Mission: evidently the Russians thought they could get the locomotives and cars without adopting any of the commission's recommendations. The next day, Stevens wrote an angry letter to Root, accusing him of interfering in

transportation matters and undermining the railroad commission's abilities to make improvements on the Trans-Siberian. Non-interference was "the one and only thing I asked assurance of from President Wilson," Stevens wrote bitterly. "These are matters which must be handled with a great deal of diplomacy and so far, I can say with a great deal of confidence, the Commission has been handling them very successfully." He warned, "Any attempted interference by any other commission or member of any other commission would be a serious handicap" to the railroad commission.²⁹

The next day Stevens left the hospital to consult with the others on what was to be done. Valuable time had been lost, and they had only stirred up resistance from the officials at the Railway Department. The commission needed to galvanize the Russian officials and get some commitment from Washington. They decided not to wait for their inspection of the railways in the Ukraine to make recommendations for equipment purchases. Stevens drafted a message to Willard: "This whole nation [is] imbued with the one idea that additional engines and cars are necessary. [It is] expedient for moral effect [that] action be taken...." The next day he cabled Washington urging the government to order 40,000 freight cars and 2,000 locomotives for Russia. In addition, he wanted 500 locomotives sent specifically for the removal of the stockpiles from Vladivostok to Omsk. On July 4 Stevens

announced these recommendations in a speech to the public. He cabled Willard through the State Department, "A prompt confirmation of this program by our government is vital to the Allied cause and the aims of the Commission. Answer. Stevens."³⁰

It is not clear what member of the Root Mission, if any, infringed on the responsibilities of the railroad commission. Stanley Washburn was deeply concerned about the deterioration of rail transport. When one Russian minister asked him what he thought was the biggest danger to Russian democracy, Washburn reportedly gestured out the window at a bread line and said that the people, if they were still going hungry in the winter, would ruin the democracy. Russia had to get food to the cities. In July, Washburn wrote letters to Baker, Willard, Lansing and Senator Hiram Johnson, suggesting that the United States prepare a big relief effort, sending food trucks into the Russian cities with "American Relief for Russia" painted on their sides.³¹

Propaganda was the chief concern of the Root Mission. All members of the Root Mission were struck by the depth of the Russian people's disillusionment with the war and the demoralizing effect of German propaganda, which portrayed the Russian soldier as cannon fodder for the British. They were alarmed also by the ineffectiveness of their own efforts to publicize America's friendship and Wilson's liberal aims in the war. Root was making three and four

speeches each day but they were not getting into the newspapers; the mission was not reaching the Russian people. Ironically, the most press coverage that Root received was reportedly funded by German propaganda; American political cartoons depicting him as the friend of Wall Street were reprinted in numerous leftist newspapers.³²

Washburn and Root agreed that an American propaganda offensive was the best means of improving the situation in Russia, more vital, perhaps, than railroad assistance. When they visited Stavka, Washburn explained his plan to General Brusilov, the commander-in-chief. The Americans would circulate eight or ten motion picture crews behind the front, accompanied by lectures and handbills describing the United States' great industrial resources. Brusilov was receptive. Upon returning to Petrograd, Root dispatched his plan to Lansing, warning him that the soldiers in the trenches, not the government, would decide finally whether Russia would stay in the war. He thought the motion picture campaign would cost \$5,000,000.³³

Both Stevens and Root were frustrated not to receive prompt endorsements of their requests from Washington. Nor were they informed why. To Root, Lansing said only that the State Department was studying the matter. Disappointed that he could not appoint a head of "publicity" in Russia and set his plan in motion, Root left Petrograd with his commission on July 8, intending to take his urgent case for propaganda

directly to the President. Stevens was not told of the status of his locomotive orders until July 14, when Willard informed him that 500 locomotives and 10,000 cars had been ordered. This was the amount that the Russians had requested in May, and constituted only a quarter of the amount Stevens had recommended. The other 1,500 locomotives and 30,000 cars were "under consideration." Willard did not even acknowledge the additional request for 500 locomotives for the Trans-Siberian Railway. Moreover, Baldwin Locomotive's new engine shops that Stevens had inspected in Vladivostok might be unnecessary if the rest of the order was not filled.³⁴

Before receiving word of this disappointing setback, however, the commission set out on its inspection of the railways in the Ukraine. Stevens had not yet shaken his illness and reentered the hospital. The other four commissioners departed on July 5. Their route took them first to Moscow, the hub of Russia's rail net in the north, then on south to the coal producing region of the Donets Basin, and north again by way of Kiev and Mogilev for a visit to Stavka, which Washburn had arranged for them. At the time of their tour Russia was launching its much heralded offensive. In the Ukraine the engineers saw train loads of soldiers bound for the front. Their morale was high. They rode in boxcars strung with decorative pine boughs, and stood in the open doorways cheering the

commission's train as it passed. At one station they met a train of Ukrainian soldiers, who got off to gather around the rear platform of the commission's train and cheer the Americans. These soldiers carried banners that proclaimed "Forward for Freedom of the Land!" and "Forward in the Name of Peace and the Union of People for the Destruction of Militarism!" This revolutionary ardor and patriotism was not limited to the fresh recruits going to the front; at one stop the commission was welcomed by a delegation of railwaymen who offered the engineers flour and sugar as a token of their gratitude for American assistance.³⁵

The commissioners found other reasons to feel encouraged during their tour of the Ukrainian railways. Traveling on government-owned railways, the engineers were impressed by the condition of the facilities and the equipment. These lines were divided into divisions and were well-provided with repair shops and coaling stations. In Moscow an ambitiously conceived belt line around the city eliminated all congestion. Gibbs described one complex of repair shops on the North Donets Railway, built in 1916, as the "finest railway shops in Russia." Between Kiev and Mogilev they took a newly constructed line that paralleled the front. Though some of it was double-tracked, the second line was incomplete for lack of rails. Between Kursk and Kiev they traveled through one of the richest wheat producing areas in the world, the black earth region of

southern Ukraine. This sea of grain was ready for harvest and it seemed to Gibbs that Russia had "plenty of food in prospect."³⁶

The coal mines were another matter. The Donets mines produced a high grade of coal, but the mining techniques were far less mechanized than in the United States. Production was limited by shortages of metal carts and timbers for reinforcing the coal pits. The miners were frequently striking for higher wages. Other mines were closed by management because production costs had doubled since the beginning of the war. Still, there were mountains of coal awaiting shipment to the north. Less than a third of the coal mined in the Donets Basin was being shipped.³⁷

Approaching Kiev, the commission passed several Red Cross trains bearing sick and wounded back from the front. Though it was not yet publicized, the July Offensive had already been stopped, ominously, after an advance of just twenty miles. All the hopes for the offensive were pinned on a change of spirit in the army as it took the initiative; this had failed to happen. The encroaching military catastrophe would have grave repercussions both for the Provisional Government and the railways, and it was a strange coincidence that the Americans were forming their rather hopeful impression on the very eve of this debacle; their estimation of the situation here would be quickly overtaken by events.³⁸

The initial attack on July 1 had gone forward only after a colossal artillery barrage (with big guns supplied by the Allies that spring) had driven the enemy out of its fixed positions. Even then regular units had to be led by hand-picked "shock battalions" of patriotic volunteers who had been culled from the ranks in June. The shock battalions were wiped out in the first two days of fighting while the mass of soldiers following behind, finding the enemy trenches too smashed up to hold securely against a counterattack, turned back in whole regiments. The small gains were achieved only because Brusilov had amassed an overwhelming numerical superiority of troops. When the commission arrived in Mogilev on July 11, they found the General Staff in a state of nervous excitement, wondering how long before German reinforcements would be brought up to counterattack. The offensive had killed off the only reliable men in the army. Holding the new positions were a mass of undisciplined soldiers, most of them without unit designations or officers.³⁹

The small city of Mogilev occupied some bluffs overlooking the Dnieper River. A delegation of officers met the commissioners at the station and took them by motorcade to Brusilov's headquarters, which occupied a castle at the center of the city. Stevens had recovered, and had arrived from Petrograd ahead of them. Brusilov, though busy conducting the offensive, received them courteously. The

general had entertained little hope for the success of the offensive and approached his work with quiet fatalism. But to the Americans he spoke bravely of the Russian army's advance and suggested that the reconstruction of the railways in the recovered territory would be an urgent task for the military. He asked the commission to discuss with his staff the means of improving transportation in the military zone.⁴⁰

In the railway car of the adjutant general the Russian officers plied the engineers with maps showing the railway lines behind enemy lines which they expected to recapture. They handed over lists of equipment and railway supplies that the army needed. One repair shop that they wanted to build would occupy a site that still lay one hundred miles behind the Austrian lines! The commissioners were flabbergasted by these generals' detachment from the supply problems in the interior. Stevens recalled that they asked for "some wholly impossible things," including an immediate shipment of American locomotives. Gibbs found their requests "staggering" and likened the generals to children "waiting to be fed." They pressed lists of necessary supplies on Stevens for him to convey to the Provisional Government -- everything from medical supplies to artillery pieces. When Stevens suggested that Darling stay behind to supervise railway construction in the wake of the offensive, the generals politely refused. As one Russian explained to

them the next day, "Things were happening there that they did not care to have advertised, especially the action of the soldiers."⁴¹

An unfortunate incident occurred on their return trip to Petrograd. At Vitebsk, Stevens was speaking to the crowd of soldiers at the station when two men boarded the forward car with the conductor. Stevens sent his interpreter to investigate and learned that it was Paul Miliukov, the discredited Cadet foreign minister, with an assistant, trying to get back to the capital. As the train was leaving the station, Miliukov's assistant made a speech from the car's platform in favor of the Cadet party. Stevens did not want to give the impression in Petrograd that the railroad commission supported the Cadet party, much less the imperialist war aims associated with Miliukov's name. The prudent thing to do, he thought, was to ask Miliukov to ride in the forward car under the auspices of the conductor and the train's crew. But the crew would have none of it; they stopped the train in a small town at midnight and put the former foreign minister off the train. It was a sign of the deepening of the revolution that this man had become a dangerous liability.⁴²

In Petrograd the atmosphere had grown tense as word filtered back from the front that Brusilov's offensive had failed to kindle patriotism in the ranks of the army. The Left Socialists in the Soviet were now demanding a socialist

majority in the cabinet, while the Cadet ministers were threatening to resign. Returning to work at the Railway Department, the American engineers found the Russian railway officials deeply disturbed by the impending political crisis. Two Russian engineers who were appointed to oversee changes on the Trans-Siberian Railway suddenly resigned, and a third attempted suicide.⁴³

The city had grown leaner too. Bread lines were longer and restaurants were boarded up. Even the American engineers were becoming preoccupied with finding enough to eat. They had all lost weight. Most meat they could find was tainted, the vegetables were old, the staple, black bread was "one of the horrors of the war." Gibbs kept a prized bag of oatmeal in his hotel room. On their second morning back in Petrograd they woke up to find the hotel staff on strike. While foraging in the hotel kitchen Gibbs and the commission's disbursing officer got into a scuffle with three striking hotel porters. The quiet city seemed about to explode, and the tension was wearing on everyone.⁴⁴

On July 16 the political crisis erupted. All the Cadet ministers resigned, and Kerensky refused to organize a new cabinet unless he was given a free hand to choose men from all parties. The next day rioting began. After a brief foray to the Railway Department the commissioners returned to their hotel. From their upstairs windows they observed armored cars and trucks with machine guns mounted on them

driving up and down the street. Groups of soldiers passed under the windows but it was unclear whether they were Bolshevik or loyal to the government. During the night there was an exchange of rifle fire outside the hotel, while in the distance, blaring car horns answered the sputter of machine guns. In the morning the streets were quiet, but in the early afternoon the shooting started again. The American engineers were largely confined to their hotel. On the third day of fighting they had to forego a much anticipated meal at the embassy. There was a fierce skirmish between the rioters and Cossacks near the American embassy that evening, and in the morning, as Gibbs walked to the embassy, he saw twenty-six dead horses dragged from a street intersection. Finally, Kerensky resorted to loyal troops from outside the capital. The troops recaptured the insurgents' stronghold at the Peter and Paul Fortress, and after some last, desultory gunfire around the Winter Palace that evening, the rebellion had ended.⁴⁵

The commission's work was suspended through the rebellion, and when it was over they learned that A. Liverovskii had replaced Nekrasov as minister of transport in Kerensky's new cabinet. He was a stout, middle-aged man with a waxed moustache. Stevens found him cordial, and hoped that he would be more cooperative than his predecessor. The commission submitted a comprehensive list of proposals for the lines in the Ukraine and across

Siberia. While focusing on the two crucial matters of redirecting coal traffic in Siberia and lengthening engine runs, the report included all the commission's minor recommendations as well. Liverovskii requested a few days to look them over.⁴⁶

When the commission met with the Railway Department five days later on July 24, it quickly became apparent that the new minister was using the same dilatory tactics as Nekrasov. The Americans realized too late their mistake in submitting the whole report instead of the two items that most mattered. For three days the commission found itself engaged in wearisome discussions over water stations, clinker pits, coal and wood chutes. The time for discussing these details had long since passed. At the front, the army had begun to break up; soon whole regiments of deserters commandeered trains, jamming the railways. In Siberia, the capacity of the railway, according to one report, had dropped in half since the commission's inspection in June. In the cities, food and fuel shortages were becoming acute. Rampant inflation deterred peasants from selling their grain. Yet Stevens endured these fruitless meetings, probably because he was trying still another tack in his "diplomacy" with the new minister.⁴⁷

Invited to a dinner at the Ministry on the night of July 24, Stevens delivered an ebullient speech praising the abilities of the Russian engineers. The Americans had not

come to Russia to teach them anything, the chairman said, only to help in any way they could with the war effort. The Russian engineers were, if anything, superior in technical training to their American colleagues. Darling was amused by this spectacle. He reported "uproarious cheering," and recalled that for half an hour after the speech Stevens and the Russians took turns in lavishing praise on each other.⁴⁸

Gibbs, however, felt discouraged. He had begun thinking that their mission was "about finished;" it was useless and undignified to carry the work any further. After the third day of grueling discussions at the Railway Department, Gibbs submitted an angry letter to the chairman, asserting that the commission had become sidetracked by all these long-term improvements. Upgrading the facilities along the Trans-Siberian Railway would not influence the Russian war effort, Gibbs maintained, so it was not their concern. The President, Gibbs reminded Stevens, had not intended the commission to demand action on its recommendations. As for the reorganization of the Trans-Siberian Railway with American personnel, Gibbs did not think it would happen. "After the present protracted talking match between the engineers and ourselves is over, matters must go higher up," he wrote, where all the recommendations bearing on labor conditions would be rejected for one technicality or another. Gibbs believed the commission had done all it could and ought to go home.⁴⁹

As if to drive home the point of Gibbs' letter, the Russians gave Stevens an 18-page report the next day enumerating forty items that the commission and the Railway Department had hashed out over the past three days. With only slight modifications the Russians consented to all the points except items number three and nineteen. These two items, tucked discreetly away among all the other items of general accord, concerned the two crucial matters of coal traffic on the Tomsk Railway and longer engine runs!⁵⁰

Meanwhile, aftershocks from the political upheaval in mid-July were still rumbling through the cabinet. Liverovskii stepped down from the Ministry of Transport and K. N. Vanifantiev took his place. Darling brooded in his diary, "We no sooner get in with one minister than he is out and another comes in; we cannot seem to get them started on the Vladivostok stuff; we have shown them how but they don't start."⁵¹

Gibbs was fed up with Stevens as well as with the Railway Department. Since their arrival in Petrograd he had found the chairman rather imperious. Gibbs discovered an ally in Francis, who was increasingly jealous of Stevens' assignment in Russia. Francis questioned Stevens' tact with the Russians, and once complained to Gibbs about Stevens' several hot-tempered messages to Washington sent in code over Francis' signature.⁵²

Throughout this crisis Stevens would not concede

defeat. On July 27 he obtained written consent from the minister of transport to send for American railroad specialists for the Trans-Siberian, even though the Russians were still objecting to the longer engine runs. Stevens cabled Willard, requesting the organization of a military unit of 129 railroadmen to make up the new traffic divisions, "these men merely to educate the Russians in American operation." Rather than disband the commission, Stevens proposed that Gibbs and Greiner return to Washington to clear up the situation there, get the locomotive orders moving and confirm that the railroad personnel were being assembled. Stevens, Francis observed, was "impatient, perhaps defiant."⁵³

On August 3 Stevens wrote a harsh letter to the new minister of transport, Vanifantiev. He attributed the "almost total collapse of the Siberian Railway" to the "absolutely inexcusable manner in which coal is handled in western Siberia." "The remedy we know consists in opening up the mines near Tiaga [sic], and this should be done at once without any long drawn out conferences even if the strong arm of the military has to be employed." Stevens had been promised a hearing on this issue the next day at the Ministry of Trade and Commerce, but he bluntly informed Vanifantiev that his commission would only discuss the coal situation in central Siberia, and he did not foresee any need for long discussions.⁵⁴

The meeting did not take place, for on that day Kerensky resigned, plunging the government into another crisis. Kerensky claimed that he could not govern as long as the Cadets, the bourgeois element in his coalition government, had to submit to the will of the Soviet. Nekrasov called a meeting of the parties' central committees on the night of August 3-4 and the following day persuaded Kerensky to form a new cabinet. The government included four Cadets to satisfy Kerensky's demand for national unity, but the new coalition was not strong.⁵⁵

Stevens next turned his ire on the problem of engine runs. In another terse letter to Vanifantiev, he rejected the Railway Department's agenda and stated that the commission would only discuss the length of engine runs, "a favorable decision upon which it regards as vital to the success of all its efforts." If the commission did not have its way, he implied, its work would be through. The Russians could not afford to wait for the American locomotives and railroadmen, Stevens wrote, because they would not arrive in time "to avert a crisis which now threatens owing to the persistent delays of your railway administration in adopting better methods." The longer engine runs, Stevens insisted, "should begin at once with the staff as it now exists."⁵⁶

The next day Vanifantiev was subdued. For the first time his deputy, L. A. Ustrugov, opened the meeting.

Ustrugov claimed that the longer engine runs were ruining their locomotives. Wherever the Americans' recommendations had been introduced, he insisted, the number of engines pulled out of service for repair had increased proportionally. On the Tomsk line, where the operating methods were unchanged, the number of engines out of repair had stayed the same. The time gained in longer hauls and fewer turnarounds, Ustrugov said, was wiped out by the increased need of repairs. In his estimation, the Russians needed more locomotives before the American operating methods would be practical.⁵⁷

Stevens retorted that the repair shops were not running to capacity. Keep them operating two or three shifts per day, he said, and the harder wear and tear on the engines could be sustained. If it were a question of repairs, he added, the commission could send for American mechanics to instruct the Russian railwaymen in this area too.⁵⁸

Ustrugov objected that American mechanics would only make the situation worse. Bolshevik agitators had demoralized much of the labor on the Tomsk line, Ustrugov told the commission, and the presence of American railroadmen would only add to the labor unrest.⁵⁹

Yet something had to be done, Stevens insisted, or the breakdown of this vital railway would be irreversible. The consequences of letting the situation drift were staggering. For Russia, Stevens said, the next five or six

months would be decisive.⁶⁰

At last their negotiations had brought them to the root of the problem: the Provisional Government lacked the power, the will, the courage to confront labor on the Tomsk Railway line. Rehabilitating the Trans-Siberian Railway involved a showdown between the Ministry of Transport and the railwaymen's unions. Both action and inaction carried risks, and the American commission and the Ministry were weighing the risks on different scales. The commission's purpose, in Stevens' words, was "to improve railway transportation in Russia in time to enable her to successfully prosecute the war." For the Ministry of Transport, self-preservation, and the aim of steering the revolution between the shoals of counterrevolution and the extreme Left, took precedence. As if to punctuate the impasse, Miller observed that for two months now nothing had been done.⁶¹

Ustrugov tried to be conciliatory. The American recommendations would be implemented on all lines except the Tomsk Railway, he assured them. He announced that he was to be appointed commissar of the whole Trans-Siberian system, and he would accompany the Americans to Vladivostok to see that the new operating methods were adopted. As for the troublesome Tomsk Railway, he had some ideas of his own for improving its capacity. He promised to increase the production of the Taiga mine and reverse the flow of coal

traffic between Taiga and Cheremkova.⁶²

After this meeting Stevens was still not satisfied. He believed that orders for the reorganization of the railway had to come from higher up or the Ministry of Transport would continue to hedge on its promises. He asked Francis to intercede for the commission, and the ambassador arranged a meeting with Kerensky. On August 10 the five commissioners, accompanied by Francis (who told Gibbs that he was unwilling to let Stevens speak for the commission on this occasion) called on Kerensky at the Winter Palace. Kerensky had taken up residence in the Tsar's former apartment in the northwest wing of the palace. Kerensky met them in the Tsar's library, appearing, according to Gibbs, nervous and fatigued.⁶³

Francis stated the purpose of their visit and Kerensky showed some familiarity with the commission's recommendations. But Stevens, determined to get action, soon seized the initiative. He reminded Kerensky that the commission had been invited by the Russian government, and if its recommendations continued to be ignored such a situation "might be regarded as an insult to Russia's ally." According to Stevens' account, his "plain words, if not diplomatic, woke him up." It is hard to credit this reaction by Kerensky, however, for the premier was used to this kind of goading from his allies and resented it. ("Why did the French and British Governments seize every

opportunity to sabotage the Provisional Government?" he later asked in his memoirs.) Later that day the Americans were informed by Foreign Minister Tereshchenko that Kerensky had decided to place the railway under military control and adopt all the commission's recommendations. Ustrugov had been confirmed as Commissar of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Yet in practice, Ustrugov would not be able to effect much change on the Tomsk Railway. Kerensky's promises were not matched by deeds, and his reaction to Stevens' "plain words" was probably less than candid.⁶⁴

Stevens and Francis were heartily encouraged, however. After two months of agonizing negotiations the commission had finally achieved a breakthrough. Francis thought the Provisional Government was showing new resolve; it was evident not only in Kerensky's determination to attack the railway problems, but in his dismissal of General Brusilov and his promotion of the "firmer" General Kornilov. "There has been a great change in [the] official spirit here," he wrote Lansing. The Russians were "now apparently enthusiastic for American methods which we must make successful."⁶⁵

Stevens made arrangements for Gibbs and Greiner to leave Russia, while he, Darling and Miller planned to stay and see that the American methods and personnel were introduced smoothly onto the Trans-Siberian Railway. Stevens had several reasons to dispatch Gibbs. The latter's July 27

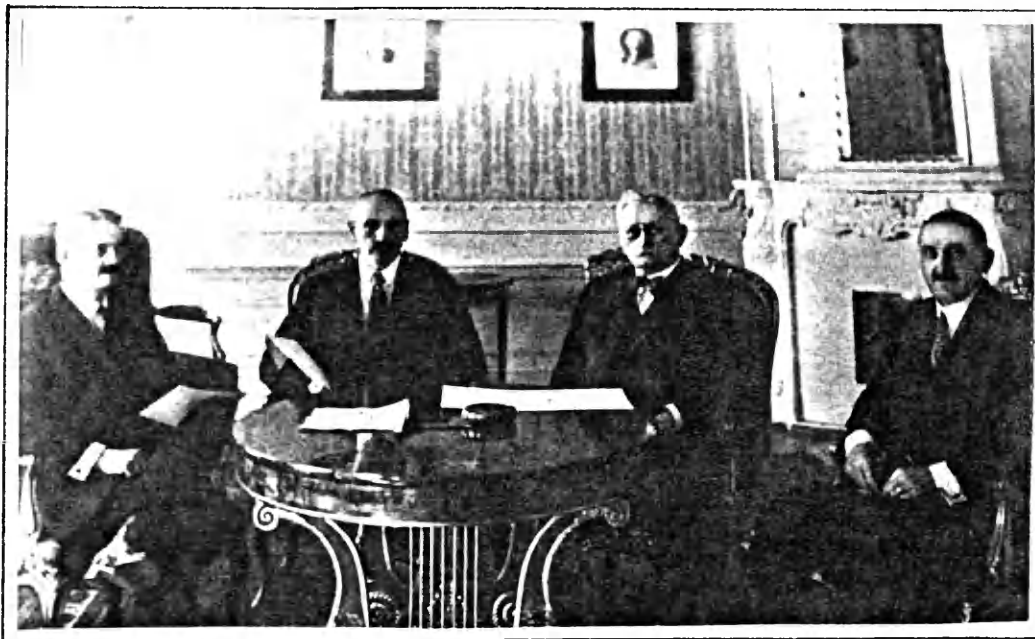
letter to the commission had been divisive and a blow to their morale. Gibbs had been in poor health for some weeks; in fact he had lost forty pounds while in Russia. And Stevens needed a spokesman for the mission in Washington. Now that the Russians were acting, he was doubly anxious about the pace of locomotive deliveries from the United States. He discussed this with Gibbs in early August. Gibbs wrote in his diary, "The whole scheme of our recommendations is in a muddle and apparently nothing has been done toward carrying out our promises." On August 14 Gibbs and Greiner left in a special car attached to the Trans-Siberian express.⁶⁶

The next day Stevens finally received word from the State Department, but the message did anything but answer his questions about the fate of his railroad orders. It was a statement from the President, through the secretary of state, and it carried a startling reprimand:

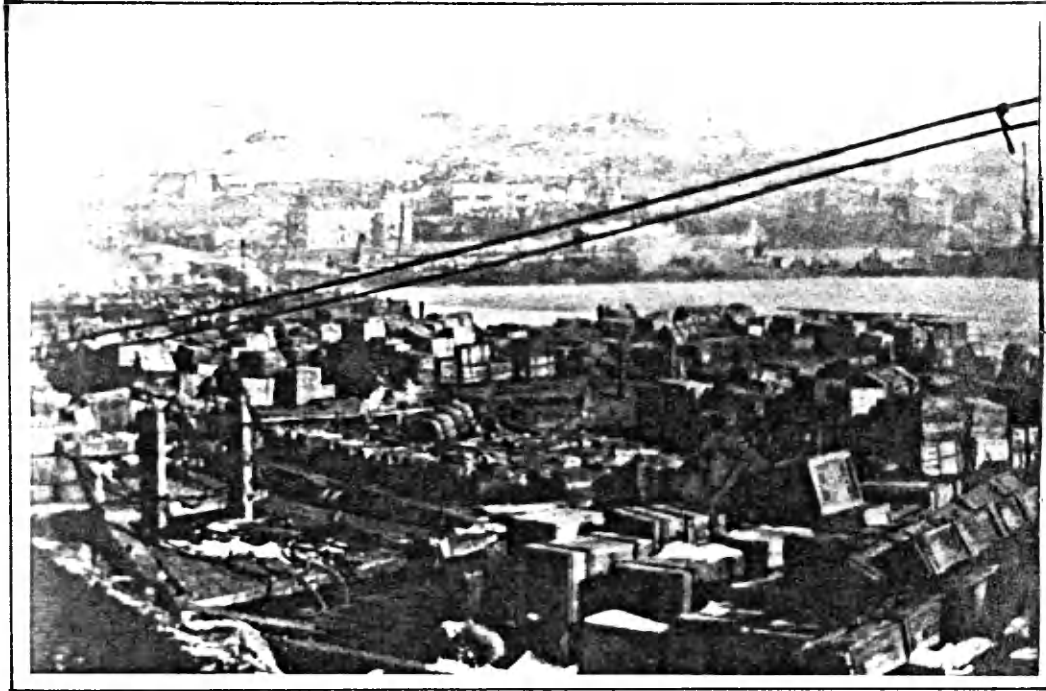
The President appreciates very highly what Mr. Stevens and his associates are doing in Russia but thinks it wise to remind Mr. Stevens that it is important that the impression should not be created that he and his associates represent or speak for the Government of the United States. As the President explained to the Commission before they started, they were sent abroad merely to put themselves at the service of the Russian Government. Any assurances conveyed to the Russian people, therefore, as if authoritatively by the Commission would be a very grave mistake. The President does not wish in this way to discredit assurances already given but merely ⁶⁷to convey a very friendly caution for the future.

A different wind was blowing in Washington.

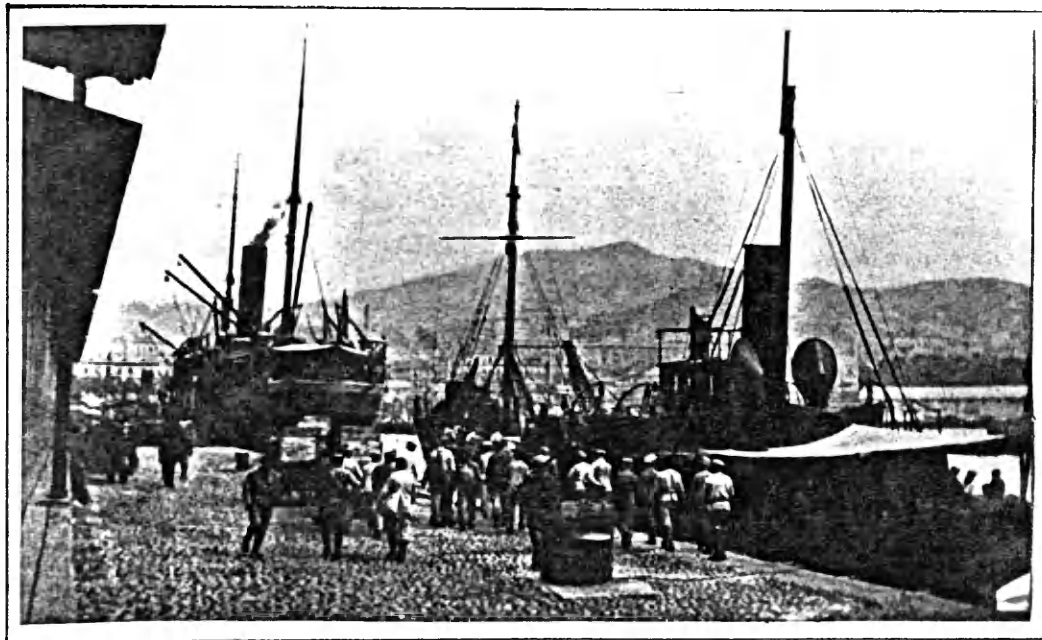
John F. Stevens



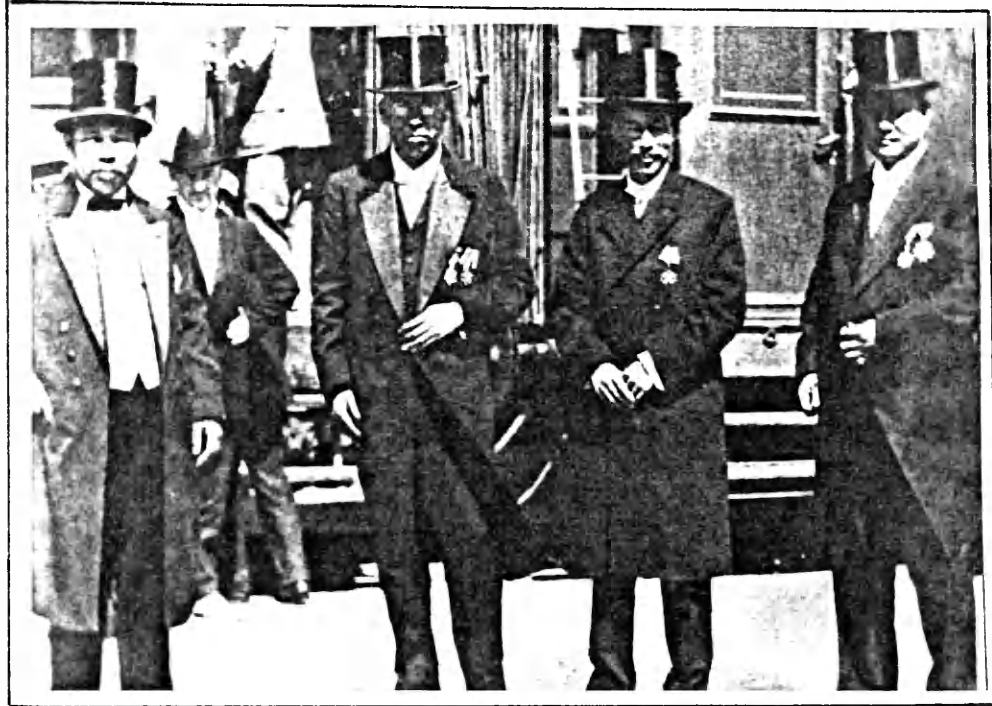
The Stevens Mission meeting with Francis at the American embassy: (left to right) Henry Miller
John Stevens, David Francis, William Darling



Stranded materials in Vladivostok's harbor



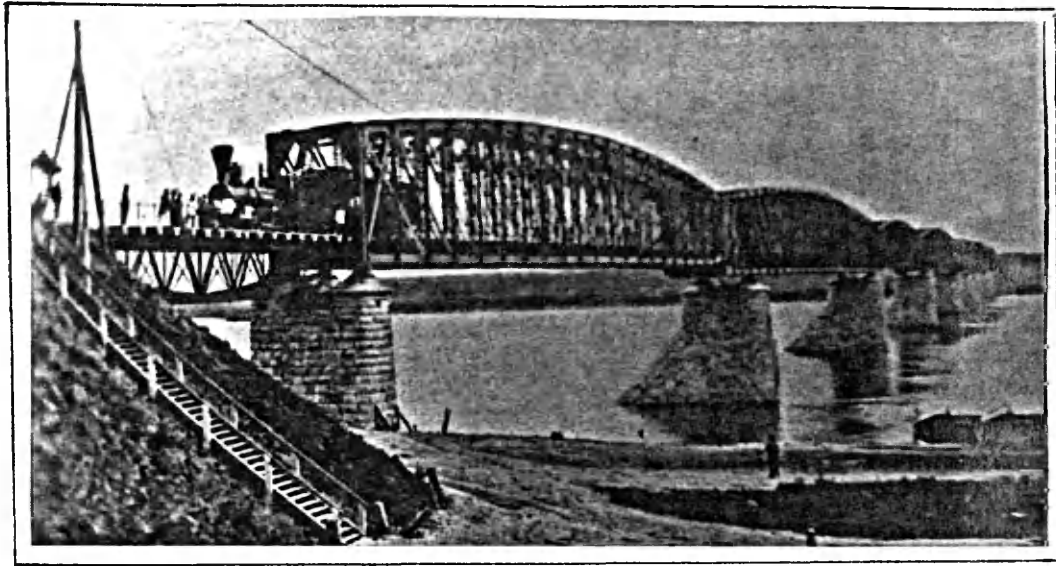
The harbor at Vladivostok



A delegation of Chinese officials welcoming
the Stevens Mission to Harbin, Manchuria



German prisoners working on
the Trans-Siberian Railway



The Ob Bridge, Omsk Railway



A Trans-Siberian Railway guard



The Advisory Commission of Railroad Experts to Russia:
(left to right) George Greiner, Henry Miller,
John F. Stevens, William L. Darling, George Gibbs



Elihu Root (left) and Stanley Washburn (center)
meeting General Brusilov at Mogilev



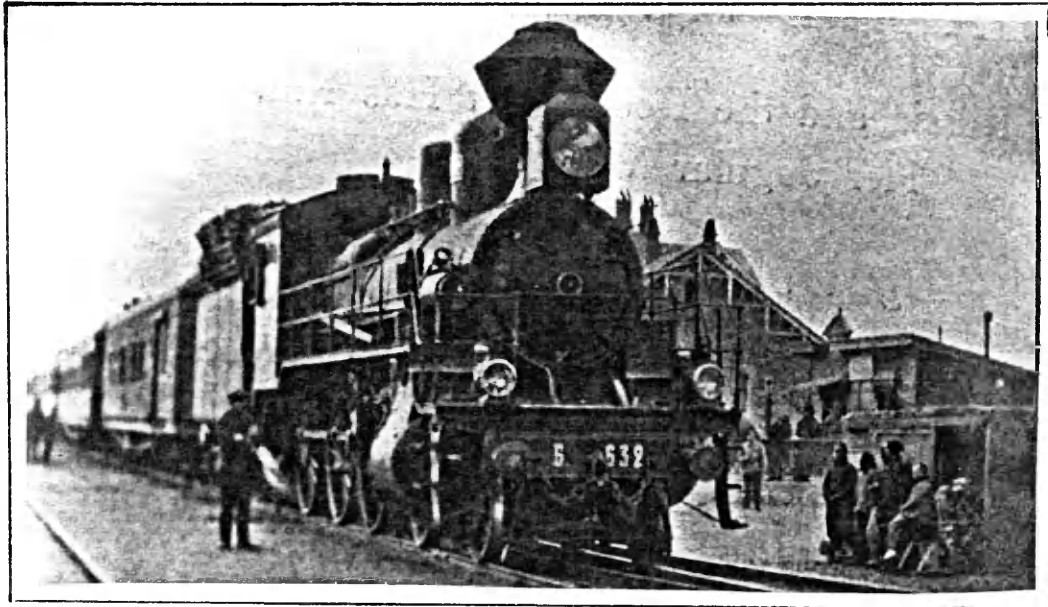
Alexander Kerensky



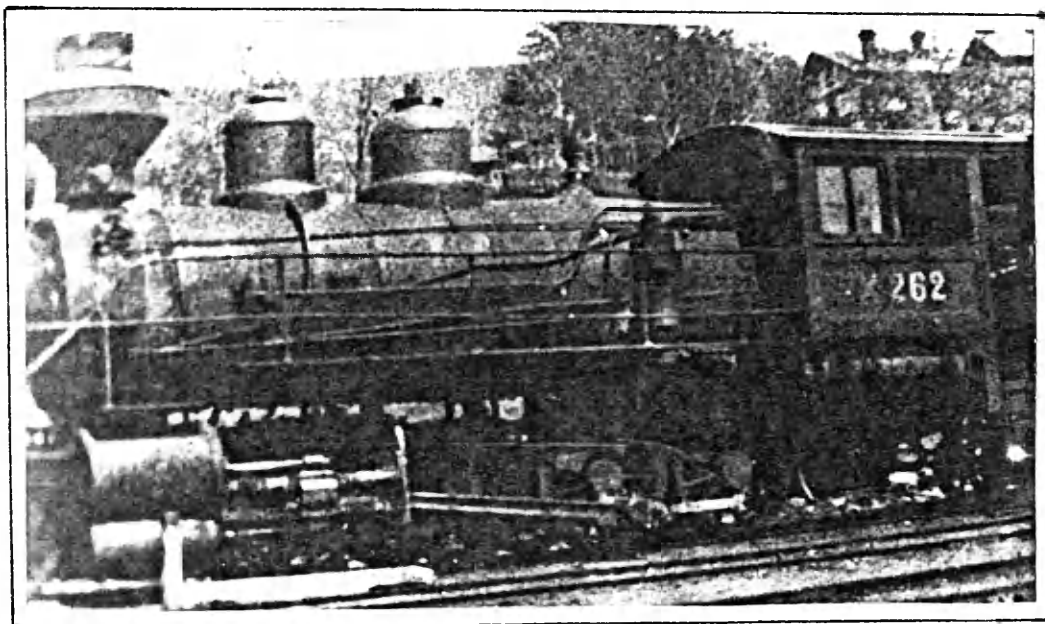
N. V. Nekrasov



David R. Francis



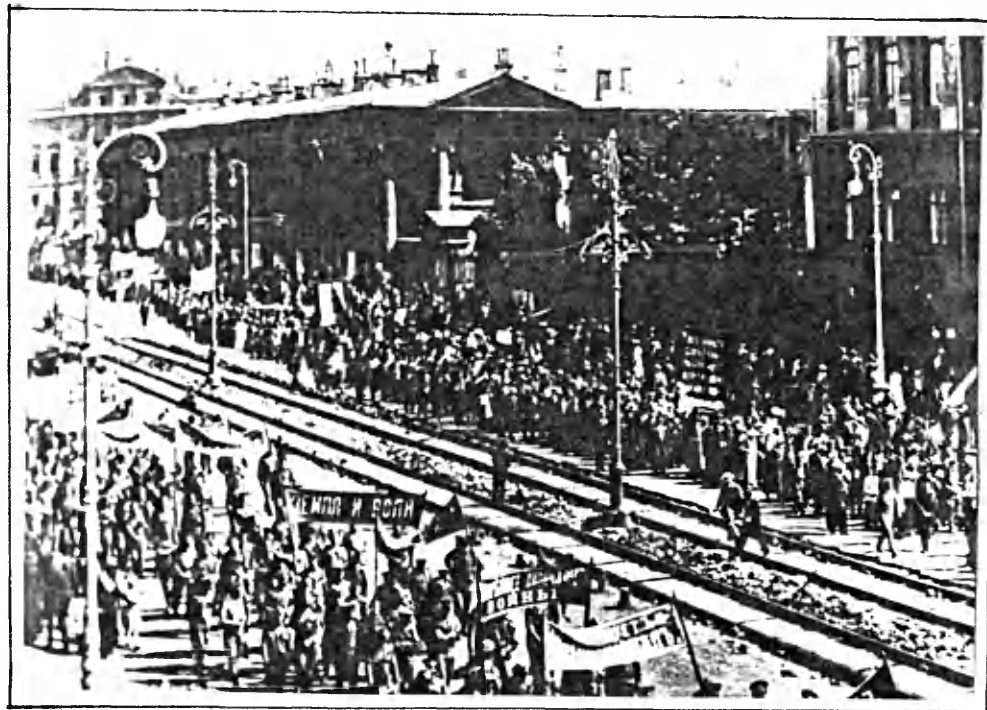
Russian log-burning locomotive in Siberia



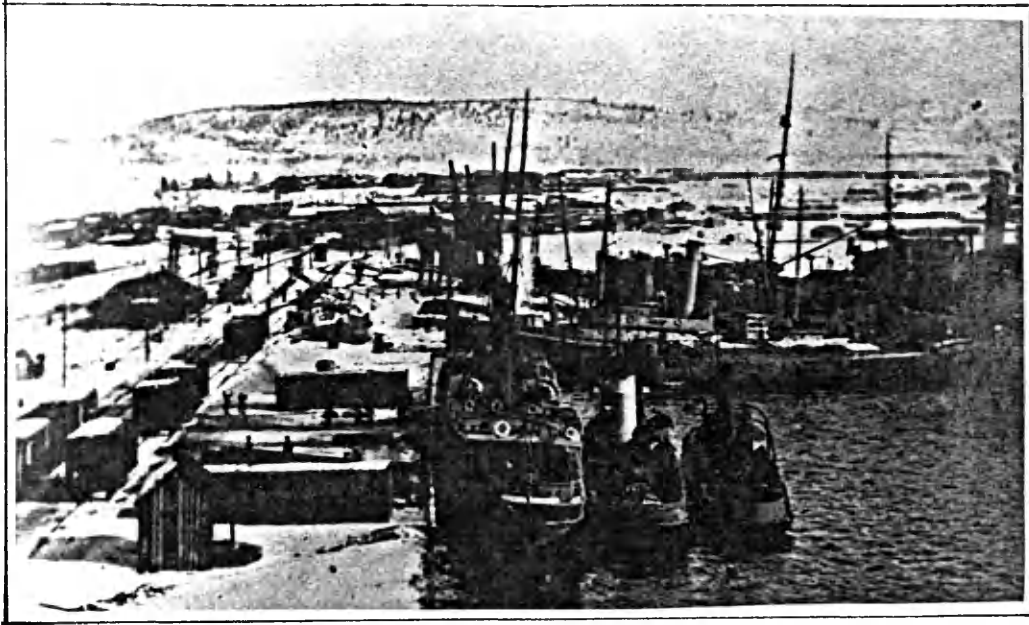
Baldwin locomotive on the Chinese Eastern Railway



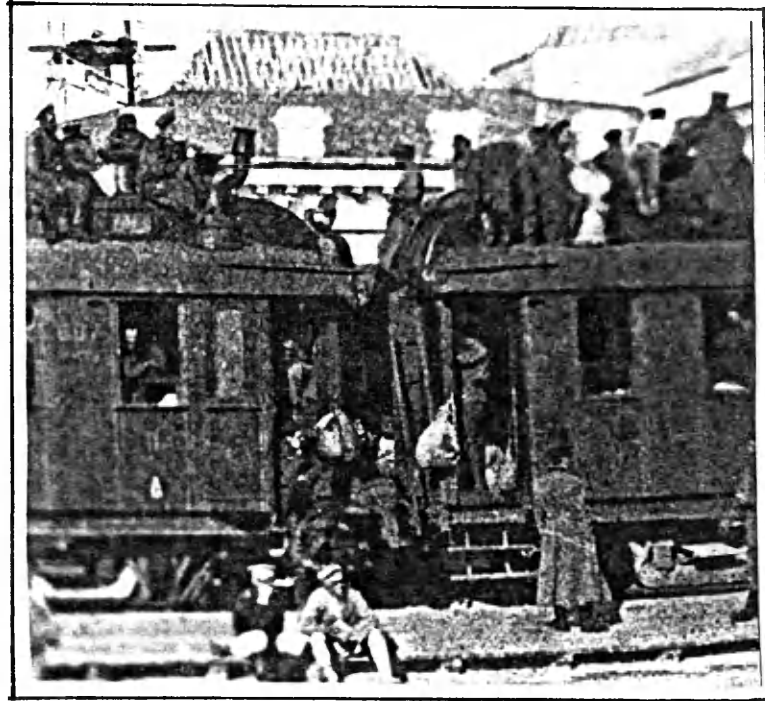
Soldiers parading before the Winter Palace, Petrograd



Soldiers and workers demonstrating, Petrograd



Murmansk from the harbor



Government troops leaving Petrograd
to meet the advance of Kornilov

CHAPTER FOUR

WILSON AND THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Unlike Stevens in Russia, no single individual in the United States was charged with overseeing the program of railroad assistance for the Provisional Government. While Stevens was trying to clear the port of Vladivostok and get more traffic moving across Siberia, the whole project of railroad assistance was encountering colossal problems of production and supply in the United States. Ships had to be found for transporting the materials from the West Coast to Vladivostok; the American railroads had to carry the unassembled locomotives and cars west from the factories in the Northeast; credit for Russian purchases had to be negotiated and syphoned into special orders that would compete effectively with domestic demand for locomotives and rolling stock; and raw materials had to be procured to keep the locomotive factories producing at full capacity. Despite the bold predictions of The New York Times in April that Russian car and locomotive purchases could tally \$2,000,000,000, the most limiting factor in the entire scheme was the capacity of American industry.¹

In 1917 the American economy was already geared up for war production, but it was heavily oriented toward the Atlantic trade with France and Britain. American shipping was concentrated in the Atlantic, while the relatively small

volume of material sent to Vladivostok had been carried by Japanese shipping lines. Assistance to Russia called for a reapportionment of American tonnage from the Atlantic to the Pacific just when Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare in the Atlantic, coupled with the American military build-up in France, made the transfer least affordable. The need for shipping in the Pacific was so desperate that twenty German merchant ships, confiscated in the Philippines after their crews had managed to wreck their engines, were towed to San Francisco in May to help in the removal of 350,000 tons of material ordered by the Russian government and stranded in ports on the West Coast.²

Railroad assistance to Russia had to be imposed on a business community that was growing increasingly skeptical of the Russian market. While American exports to Russia had burgeoned since the outbreak of the war, sparking a great deal of speculation about the postwar economic relations between the two countries, American businessmen remained cautious. Even the railroad interests, who stood the most to gain from the loans to Russia, were exporting much greater quantities of equipment to France, where the United States railroad manufacturers were gaining, by one account, "a hold on a hitherto almost untouched territory." In Russia, by contrast, the amount of railroad material purchased in 1917 declined slightly from 1916 totals. American businessmen worried that Russia would face such an

enormous debt after the war that to meet its interest payments it would have to increase exports and slash imports.³

Prior to April 1917, American war production was shaped by profit incentive. One consequence was a predilection of American manufacturers to sell to the British and French governments, while shunning the contracts sought by the Russian government. In three years of war the Allies had purchased billions of dollars worth of food, materials and munitions from the United States. The British and French had paid for it initially by selling their capital investments in American companies -- a strong inducement for those industries to give the British and French government contracts precedence. When they had sold off all their securities, the Allies exported their gold to the United States and borrowed against it, eventually generating a credit structure that was eight times the value of the gold. This huge movement of capital was handled in the United States by a syndicate of sixty banks headed by J. P. Morgan's National City Bank. The House of Morgan on Wall Street functioned as a clearing house for Allied contracts in American industries, an arrangement that prevented competition among the Allies while minimizing strains on the American economy. American loans of \$96,000,000 to Russia were a paltry sum compared to those advanced to Britain and France. American financiers worried about the instability of

the tsarist regime, the mounting Russian debt and the depreciation of the ruble, and negotiated their loans to Russia on highly speculative terms. By 1917, American banks would not make any loans to Russia unless they were underwritten by the British government.⁴

Morgan's own bank had supplied about \$86,000,000 to Russia through the British; Morgan had a keen interest, therefore, in promoting other American investments in Russia. His representatives dominated the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce, founded in January 1916. The Chamber acclaimed the growth of exports and tried to silence concerns about Russia's debt by heralding the trickle of raw materials from Siberia to the United States as a "sound nucleus" for the development of "a large reciprocal trade after the war." Other organizations joined in the campaign. The American International Corporation, established in 1915, sought to channel excess American capital into Russia, most notably through the New York Life Insurance Company, which had investments in twenty-three railway companies in Russia totaling \$24,000,000. Some business periodicals sprang up to promote the Russian market; the Russian Review compared Russia's post-war prospects to the United States economy after the Civil War, when massive infusions of foreign capital had helped produce rapid industrial growth.⁵

Despite all the fanfare, American business generally

lacked confidence in the Russian economy, particularly after the March Revolution. More telling was the business community's skepticism surrounding the large rail and munitions orders that Bethlehem Steel Corporation undertook for the Russian government in February 1917. To generate funds with which to buy raw materials and labor for the huge production orders, Bethlehem Steel advertised its sale of \$50,000,000 in bonds, offering as collateral \$25,000,000 of the corporation's own bonds and \$37,000,000 in British treasury notes. The bonds would not sell. Six months later in the late summer of 1917, having refinanced the project, Bethlehem Steel suffered more difficulties when rumors surfaced that the contract with Russia allowed for payment in rubles, without a guarantee in British securities. The corporation's president quickly denied the reports to head off a panic among Bethlehem Steel's stockholders.⁶

The business community's reluctance to invest in Russia was reinforced by frustrations with the business culture there. Russia's vaunted program of wartime railway construction was yielding a series of disappointments for American firms by the end of 1916. Baldwin Locomotive Works, Allied Contracting Company, American Steel Export Company, United States Steel Products Company, American Locomotive Works and American Car and Foundry Company all filled orders for the Russian government, yet their hopes of actually building and supplying new railway lines in Russia eluded

them. Many projects were considered, but the Russian capitalists, accustomed to steady economic expansion backed by the state, usually balked at the American investors' speculative terms. Negotiations for an American-financed line from Moscow to the Donets Basin fell through in May 1916; the following January reports that American International Corporation was obtaining a \$250,000,000 contract option also came to nothing. When the Stevens Mission visited Japan in May 1917, it met with many American businessmen returning from Russia, including a representative of American Car and Foundry Company. Darling reported that the businessmen were "all sore and [could not] say a good word for conditions there."⁷

By August American business had grown so wary of the Russian economy that J. P. Morgan, worried about losing his investments there, offered a deal to the State Department for boosting the Russian economy. If it would call for American subscriptions to the Russian liberty loan, then Morgan's bank would be the first to buy the Russian bonds. At the same time, the State Department was receiving letters from other American capitalists trying to withdraw their assets from Russian companies. The Provisional Government had frozen their assets and they were asking the State Department to intercede for them.⁸

Clearly the climate of American business was not conducive for Stevens' requests of large car and locomotive

orders for Russia. Business was apathetic toward the Russian market, and the prospect of big Treasury loans to finance the Russian purchases only heightened their skepticism about Russia's postwar market. If the United States were to support the Russian war effort with railroad assistance, it would have to secure the cooperation of American industry through the Council of National Defense and its Advisory Commission, or failing that, establish a new agency that would be empowered to make industry produce whatever the government needed for the war.

The man in Wilson's administration who pressed hardest for financial and material support for Russia was Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo. The United States intervention made McAdoo one of the most powerful men in government. Having steered the Bonds Bill through Congress in April, he became the arbiter of three billion dollars appropriated for foreign loans, with another four billion dollars promised in August. His control over loans brought him directly into contact with affairs of state. His decisions on loans to Russia, and his efforts to coordinate American war production with Allied purchasing, had a large impact on railroad assistance. He was sympathetic to the Russian Revolution, sharing Lansing's view that its ideological import might be decisive in bringing down the imperial regime in Germany. McAdoo also looked more favorably than most businessmen on American economic

interests in Russia after the war. But in pushing the new government agencies that would facilitate railroad assistance to Russia, these thoughts were merely incidental for McAdoo. His motives were complex.⁹

McAdoo was the most ambitious man in Wilson's entourage. He wanted to make his tenure at the Treasury Department a springboard for a presidential bid in 1920. When the United States entered the war, McAdoo sought to put himself squarely in the midst of decision-making for the war effort. He tried to build up the power of the Treasury at the expense of other executive departments. He urged the President in late April to put all matters of shipping under the control of the Shipping Board and have it "act in the closest possible cooperation with the Treasury Department." Two weeks later he was writing to the President that his proposed purchasing commission would not involve the Commerce Department "sufficiently to warrant joint operation;" instead, he would keep the Commerce Department informed. Two days later he sent a "confidential" letter to the President insisting that he must be better informed of the deliberations of the Council of National Defense. "In every country in Europe the Minister of Finance is one of the War Council," he pointed out. He thought he should be consulted "before we enter upon policies requiring enormous expenditures of money." McAdoo was willing to absorb some of the President's power too: the Bonds Act stipulated that

the secretary confer with the President on loans to the Allies, but in practice McAdoo took to informing Wilson after the fact. In building up his power McAdoo stayed aloof from consultative bodies, preferring to make it necessary for Lansing, Baker and the other cabinet members to confer with the Treasury Department on all matters of money and war production.¹⁰

McAdoo's plan was to organize the nation's resources, both financial and industrial, under the auspices of one agency attached to the Treasury Department and under his direction. The plan had merit. The economy demanded some coordination. There was wasteful competition between the Allies' needs and the American military build-up. There were shortages of raw materials for the factories. And the available shipping was not allocated efficiently. Morgan resigned his position as Britain's purchasing agent at the beginning of May, and for the next two months the administration explored options on how it would take hold of the economy. Secretary of War Baker, the head of the Food Administration, Herbert Hoover, and others joined McAdoo in discussing alternatives with the President. McAdoo's proposal went furthest in extending government control over war production, while Baker called for the least amount of interference in the economy. Government control was essential to an ambitious program of railroad assistance for Russia, and the obstacles that McAdoo faced in putting

forward his plan were the same obstacles encountered by Stevens' large locomotive orders.¹¹

Before McAdoo had extended his first credit to Russia he was already running into resistance from the House of Morgan. On May 1, McAdoo announced the first loan to Russia, and he used the occasion to explain the intent of the Bonds Act to the public. "We are fighting a war against a common enemy," he declared. "We use money, whereas our Allies use men and munitions. We shall take the chances in fighting our part of the war with money, just as we should take our chances if we sent an army or our navy over there." He did not want anyone to think that the United States was gauging the ability of any government to repay what it borrowed. But the forthcoming loan to Russia was immediately criticized in a public statement by the Morgan-dominated American-Russian Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber warned that Russia already faced a crushing burden of debt after the war and would not be able to pay the interest on the foreign loans. The first solution to Russia's financial problem, said the Chamber, was to greatly increase its exports of raw materials in order to provide a favorable balance of trade. The United States' economic interests in Russia, the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce implied, would be ill-served by supplying government loans to Russia; instead American investors should be seeking development of mining and timber industries in Russia. Morgan obviously did

not want the government competing with his own bank for Russia's interest payments after the war. These dire warnings, coming from the normally sanguine American-Russian Chamber of Commerce, were a sign of growing resistance by businessmen to exports for Russia.¹²

Meanwhile, McAdoo directed Ambassador Francis to negotiate terms for a loan. Tereshchenko, then the Russian finance minister, requested a staggering half billion dollars, on similar terms to the billion dollar loans that France and Britain had obtained through the House of Morgan. This sum equalled the entire monthly allowance appropriated by Congress for all the Allies, far more than the Treasury could bear. While trying to reach agreement on the size of the loan, their negotiations foundered on two other problems. Francis kept stressing that American assistance was contingent on Russia's commitment to the war. At one point Francis told Tereshchenko that he would not recommend loans without assurances that there would be no separate peace. The finance minister replied that there was "no possibility," and shortly afterwards Russian officials reported to Francis that discipline in the army was improving. For his part, Tereshchenko worried that their purchase orders would be held up behind British and French orders, as they had been in the past. Knowing that there was a backlog of orders in the American car and locomotive industries, he cabled Russia's purchasing agent in New York

to "order immediately" 10,000 cars and 500 locomotives -- "terms of credit [would] be arranged later." This was precisely the kind of competitive bidding that threatened to make a shambles of American war production, but Tereshchenko was anxious that the Russian orders receive due priority. McAdoo, though sympathetic, did not want his hands tied with specific promises when the administration was only beginning to design the bureaucratic machinery for coordinating Allied purchases. Through Francis, McAdoo indicated vaguely that orders would be handled through a commission of the Treasury Department. In mid-May, McAdoo recommended an initial credit of \$100,000,000 for Russia. In view of the \$500,000,000 monthly allotment for foreign loans, this was a promising start, assuming that similar credits would follow.¹³

McAdoo's plans soon brought him up against the London Inter-Allied Supply Committee, which allocated transports among the Allies and the theaters of war. Not only were the British underwriting American loans to the other Allies, but they provided most of the transatlantic shipping. The committee in London, composed of representatives from all the Allied governments, ostensibly coordinated the supply of American war materials with the different Allies' needs. In practice, though, the British looked to the needs of the western front first, and the Russians had to accept whatever they could get. By 1917, J. P. Morgan's Allied purchasing agency was working almost exclusively through this

organization. Morgan negotiated the contracts, determining which American industries would produce for the Allies, while the British, through the London Inter-Allied Supply Committee, decided the destination of the war supplies. Thus the Wilson Administration faced a supply structure that employed American industrial resources in the interests of British, rather than American strategy. Wherever these diverged, McAdoo observed, the administration would have to assert control over the distribution of war materials. Though the British had pushed for American railroad assistance to Russia in March and April, they were reluctant to see the necessary shipping redeployed from the Atlantic to the Pacific.¹⁴

While pushing his plans for a purchasing commission attached to the Treasury, McAdoo was looking for ways to overturn British domination of Allied shipping. He conferred with the Russian mission to the United States, headed by the Provisional Government's new ambassador, Boris Bakhmatev, and the military missions that had arrived in May from Britain, France and Italy, and he talked with Lansing. He concluded that the United States had to send a representative to the London Inter-Allied Supply Committee. This organization was the only one that assimilated all the Allies' needs on all fronts and assessed their relative importance. It controlled the payments to the United States and coordinated shipping. McAdoo wanted to replace the

London Inter-Allied Supply Committee altogether, but if the United States formed its own commission to coordinate credits, purchasing and shipping, there would be confusion. So he urged American representation on the committee as a first step toward eventually dominating it.¹⁵

The desire to assist Russia provided a major impetus for sending an American representative to London. E. Francis Riggs, the military attache in Petrograd, pressed early for American involvement in London, and General Scott of the Root Mission, after returning from Russia, also expressed concern that the British were not allotting enough ships for American supplies to Russia. McAdoo saw an opportunity for undermining Britain's hold on the Inter-Allied Supply Committee. He wrote Wilson on May 16, recommending "a separate commission for Russia, whose headquarters [would] be in Petrograd, composed of Russian and American representatives alone, [to] deal solely with Russian needs." The Russians, McAdoo explained, had contracted for large quantities of material without any way of securing ships, and now they had over a million tons of material stranded in American warehouses awaiting transportation. Wilson, however, was weighing an alternative plan advanced by Secretary of War Baker, and did not act immediately on McAdoo's proposal.¹⁶

Baker believed that McAdoo's plan to concentrate everything in one agency was overly ambitious. It was too

much for one man, he argued, and the American people would not accept an "economic tsar." Moreover, as chairman of the Council of National Defense, Baker had more control over war production than did any other cabinet member, and he saw McAdoo trying to wrest power from the CND. Baker outlined for Wilson a proposed War Industries Board, which would be subordinate to the CND. To coordinate demand, the WIB would include representatives of the Army, the Navy, and an agent from the London Inter-Allied Supply Committee; to coordinate supply it would have a chief of raw materials, a chief of finished products and a chief of priorities. Baker sought to preserve as far as possible a cooperative arrangement between the CND and business.¹⁷

McAdoo argued that the CND had no teeth, no legal means of organizing the war industries. Nor was it structured to coordinate foreign and domestic purchases and head off competition between the needs of the United States military and those of the Allies. It was easy to see how the railroad orders for Russia could become bogged down in the absence of government control. Lansing's lame communication to Francis in mid-April disclosed that locomotive manufacturers had "consented to give precedence" to the Russian orders, while the railroads had "agreed to help" in getting the required raw materials to the plants and the finished orders to the ports, and "It is believed that all possible speed will be given to these orders." The CND had no executive power for

requisitioning or setting quotas or prices. It was created in 1916 as a clearinghouse for information on the economy, and in McAdoo's opinion, it had outlived its usefulness and had to be replaced altogether by a more powerful agency.¹⁸

The most serious limitation of Baker's proposed WIB, in McAdoo's mind, was its lack of coordination between Allied and American supply. It put the Allies in a supplicant role toward American industry, while it left the British in control of shipping, through the London Inter-Allied Supply Committee. After touring the nation in June to promote liberty bonds, McAdoo plied the President in July with his plans for one big purchasing agency in Washington. His agency would set equitable price controls, avoid competition, and achieve some government control over the market. Once the agency was established, the London Inter-Allied Supply Committee could be transformed into an advisory body, estimating supply needs for the different fronts, ships required to move the supplies, and credit needed by each government, and reporting to Washington. The agency would be "one of the greatest steps we have taken toward a proper organization and control of our own market," he urged, "and toward the orderly, efficient and economical purchase of war supplies."¹⁹

Behind the bureaucratic power struggle between McAdoo and Baker, the two secretaries were seeking different broad objectives. McAdoo wanted the United States to replace

Britain as the financial leader of the world. In June and July he suspended loans to Britain to demonstrate the power of the Treasury and make the British more amenable to Wilson's liberal aims for the peace. Among Wilson's goals was a world system of free trade, which would obviate tariffs and big navies. Russia, McAdoo believed, had to be integrated into the community of free trade. There were suggestions in high circles in both Britain and the United States that Germany's past domination of the Russian market would pass either to the British or the Americans. McAdoo therefore viewed with suspicion an agreement between the Allies in late 1916 that projected a tariff wall around Germany after the war, ostensibly to prevent the Germans from making a rapid economic recovery. Russia had been coerced into the agreement, and McAdoo perceived that its real thrust was against American, not German, economic power. He believed that Britain was forging a colonial trade relationship with Russia, contrary to the United States' desire for free trade.²⁰

As secretary of war, Baker's horizon was more immediate; he believed that the nation's resources must be focused primarily on the American military build-up in France. In April Baker was supportive of the plan to send a railroad commission to Russia, but as shortages of railroad equipment began to obstruct traffic both in the United States and France in the summer of 1917, Baker grew

increasingly skeptical of the effectiveness of railroad exports to Russia. General John J. Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, had ordered a study of railway conditions in France, and in July it came to light that the Americans would have to undertake "an immense program of construction of new yards, terminals, multiple tracks, cut-offs, regulating stations and other additions," while providing "personnel as well as locomotives and cars." Pershing had called for a commission similar to the Stevens Commission to conduct a thorough survey of yards, buildings, rolling stock and repair equipment in northern France. By August it was obvious that Stevens' request for 2,000 locomotives and 40,000 cars in Russia would stretch American resources dangerously thin. Even General Scott of the Root Mission acknowledged in his July 25 report to the War College Division that locomotives were the riskiest form of assistance to Russia: they would have to be written off in the event of a separate peace, because the railroad material had to precede other American assistance and had to be specially built for the Russian gauge; it could not be diverted elsewhere if the situation deteriorated over the next several months.²¹

Baker was concerned as well about the needs of American railroads. The Railroad War Board, an ad hoc committee attached to the CND, was commissioned in April to study the railroad situation. In its May 31 report, the Board

determined that a shortage of rolling stock was afflicting American railroads too. With the car-service rules revised so that railroads could more freely share their rolling stock, the situation was improved; but still, the Board warned in its report to the CND, the railroads needed an additional 150,000 cars. Since April 1, car manufacturers had received domestic orders totaling just 104,917, because many railroad companies had withdrawn from the market in the face of competing orders from the governments of France and Russia.²²

The railroads were under strain. In June the Interstate Commerce Commission ruled against their request for freight rate increases. Railroad labor, meanwhile, persisted in its demands for higher wages to meet inflation. Management pressed the Interstate Commerce Commission throughout the summer for a new ruling. The transportation crisis affected the American car manufacturers, casting a pall over Russia's car and locomotive orders. How could Stevens' orders for 40,000 cars and 2,000 locomotives be filled when the American roads faced a shortage of 150,000 cars?²³

Wilson tilted in favor of Baker's plan in July. He wanted the three chiefs of raw materials, finished products and priorities, together with Hoover as food administrator, to constitute the executive of the WIB, with McAdoo's Allied Purchasing Commission separate from and subordinate to the

WIB. McAdoo expressed his sharp disappointment to Wilson: handling domestic and foreign purchases separately would reduce the Allied Purchasing Commission's "efficiency, power and prestige" for procuring the Allies' needs. The President's decision kept the WIB under Baker's control, in an advisory relationship to the War Department. Baker's triumph over McAdoo had profound consequences for locomotive shipments to Russia. It assured that France, not Russia, would receive the bulk of American locomotive and rolling stock exports. It reinforced the "western" strategic orientation of the War Department to concentrate American might in France, instead of dissipating it in various expeditionary forces to the Balkans, Turkey, north Russia and Siberia. Stevens' recommendations were foiled because Baker's WIB would not muster a concerted effort by the Shipping Board, the Treasury and the manufacturers to fill Stevens' orders.²⁴

Subsequent pleas from the President's close advisor, Colonel House, to pour American resources into Russia were in vain. "We cannot devote too much attention to the Russian situation," House wrote to Wilson on July 23, "for it that fails us our troubles will be great and many....I am wondering if you cannot say a word to Denman [head of the Shipping Board] on the one hand, and McAdoo on the other, and send word to Willard...regarding the necessity for rolling stock." Another prod came from General Scott, who

staunchly supported "risking immense sums of money on Russia" since the "dangers attending her withdrawal [were] too great for haggling." House suggested sending a contingent of American troops to improve the Russians' morale, an idea that was echoed by Root. But Wilson declined to intercede with the WIB or the War Department. Without the President's vigorous support, Stevens' orders were bound to be winnowed by the War Department's influence over production and supply.²⁵

Once it was clear that United States industry could not provide locomotives and rolling stock to Russia on the massive scale envisioned by some in the spring, Stevens' recommendations became an embarrassment. His speech in Petrograd on July 4, promising huge quantities of locomotives and rolling stock, was reported in the American press and caused no immediate reaction from the State or Treasury Departments. It was first brought to the President's attention by Root, when he made his report in early August. A few days later Lansing sent Wilson a copy of Stevens' July 4 address, and charged Stevens with "assuming an authority and giving the Commission a diplomatic character which neither possesses." The pledge could not now be rescinded, Lansing advised, but Stevens must be told that he had "no authority to carry on negotiations or enter into agreements for the United States." Wilson agreed; his message to Stevens on August 15 closely followed Lansing's

line of thought.²⁶

The President's message, admonishing Stevens not to make further promises of material assistance, was not an abandonment of Russian railroad assistance, but only a refusal to escalate America's minimal commitment. Wilson reiterated the original purpose of the commission, to "serve Russia" and discover by what means the United States might assist. Wilson's intent was to steady the program of railroad assistance, which he had regarded as a minimal commitment from the beginning. For Wilson, railroad assistance was a technical matter bearing on the Russian war effort and peripheral to the larger problem of sustaining the forces of democracy in Russia. With the collapse of the Russians' offensive in July, it was becoming evident to Wilson that the Provisional Government lacked the people's support to prosecute the war with vigor; the best that the Provisional Government could do was hold the line against Germany and hope for an end to the war before the situation in Russia went to pieces.²⁷

The return of the Root Mission in late July reinforced his views. Root described the political unrest in Petrograd and the decay of the Russian Army and attributed them mainly to the demoralizing misrepresentations made by German propaganda. Root argued that the only way to affect the Russian war effort was through an American "publicity" campaign. He characterized Kerensky as a strong leader and

urged Wilson to support the Provisional Government. Wilson accepted Root's appraisal of the Kerensky government, but he did not approve Root's publicity plan. Propaganda was effective in lowering morale, but it could not bolster it. Months later, after Wilson had consented reluctantly to a modest effort, he remarked that "spending money in Russia for propaganda was like pouring water in a bottomless hole."²⁸

The main object of Wilson's Russian policy was to support the Provisional Government. Though weak, the Provisional Government was the obvious champion of a nationalistic, liberal vision for Russia's revolution. It was pledged to organize national elections for a constituent assembly, which would in turn give to Russia a democratic constitution. In the meantime, while conducting the war against German imperialism, Kerensky was making heroic efforts to unite the social classes of Russia in a nationalist coalition. Since his decision in April to separate the Root Mission and the Stevens Mission, Wilson had distinguished between American sympathy for the Russian Revolution and American material assistance to the Russian war effort. Throughout 1917, Wilson was cautious not to place his policy on a collision course with the Russians' search for peace. This was consistent with his feeling that the Russians, "in setting up their new forms of Government and working out domestic reforms...would find the war an

intolerable evil." He had not mired United States resources in a huge program of railroad assistance, nor had the Russians' received an inordinate amount of the Treasury's loans. By August it was clear that pressing Kerensky too hard to prosecute the war ran the risk of undermining his government.²⁹

Stevens' effort to bring action on the Tomsk line in Siberia was a case in point: was it in the interests of the United States to force a dangerous confrontation between the Provisional Government and labor, in order to get more supplies from Vladivostok to the eastern front? The wisest policy, Wilson believed, was to limit the locomotive shipments to what the United States could afford to lose if Russia quit the war, and more importantly, to restrict American operation of the Russian railways to what the Provisional Government definitely desired. The Russians' wariness about allowing Americans to operate the Trans-Siberian, or even the port facilities at Vladivostok, showed that in their view, outside assistance was a double-edged sword.³⁰

Wilson was considering another means of assisting the Provisional Government: by a revision of war aims. It was possible that United States pressure, combined with the Russians' plea, could bring the western Allies behind a new declaration of war aims. By revising and publicizing the war aims of the Allies it was hoped that Kerensky's

"defensist" position could be strengthened -- the premier could more easily fend off the Bolsheviks' charge that Russian blood was being shed for the imperialist aims of Britain and France, and he could raise the people's hopes that the door had been opened to a negotiated settlement with Germany, that peace was at hand. The war aims question had burst upon Russian politics again in late July. Throughout June the Provisional Government and the Soviet had managed to patch their differences while the former stood behind the Soviet's call for an international conference among socialist party representatives at Stockholm to discuss war aims. But the governments of the United States, Britain and France had boycotted the Stockholm Conference, refusing to issue visas to their socialist citizens, and the Conference had been a bitter disappointment for the moderate socialists in Russia. With this latest great effort at ending the war discredited, the coalition forged in May and June broke down. The sense of helplessness was compounded by the collapse of the July Offensive. In August it was clear that the Russians were desperate for peace and disillusioned with the Allied cause.³¹

Wilson had another reason to join with the Russians in calling for an Allied conference on war aims. He had led the United States into the war as an "Associated Power," keeping aloof from the Allies' agreements and secret

treaties. He had announced in general terms the goals that the United States was fighting for, but at some point he would have to articulate them more firmly and begin to mobilize public opinion in the Allied nations behind them, in preparation for the eventual peace conference. Now the President could use the Russian situation for leverage to force open the international debate over war aims. Still there were obstacles. Wilson was anxious to preserve the status of the United States as an Associated Power; he hesitated to tarnish what he regarded as the moral superiority of the United States by involving it directly in an inter-Allied conference. Moreover, the American military build-up had not yet proceeded far enough to give the United States the kind of leverage that might be needed to assert some leadership over the Allied coalition. In August there was only one American division in France. Other newly trained divisions would not begin to arrive at the front for months and Wilson could not expect to project significant American military power in Europe until the following summer. Wilson stressed the limits of American power in a letter to House on July 21: "When the war is over we can force [Britain and France] to our way of thinking, because by that time they will, among other things, be financially in our hands; but we cannot force them now." A diplomatic offensive at this time, he reasoned, could be disastrously premature.³²

The western Allies were growing deeply apprehensive about the Russian situation and were skeptical that Kerensky could last, even if the Allies held a conference on war aims. Their best hope, they thought, was if Kerensky would become a war dictator, and as one conservative British newspaper put it, "save Russia with a whiff of shrapnel." It was a bleak indication of the Allies' resistance to war aims revision that Russia was not even invited to participate in an Allied conference on war strategy, which met in London at the beginning of August. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George opened the conference by proposing that the three governments of Britain, France and Italy send a "stern protest" to Kerensky over the chaos in the Russian Army. These proceedings highlighted the widening gulf between American interests in Russia and those of the western Allies. Whereas Wilson was primarily concerned with shoring up the forces of democracy in Russia, with a view to the new world order after the war, the leaders of Britain, France and Italy were more immediately concerned with maintaining the eastern front. They were willing to see counterrevolution in Russia if it would improve the Russian war effort.³³

There were many people in Britain and France, particularly in the socialist opposition, who supported Wilson's aims and saw dangers in their own governments' policies. House conveyed a letter from Norman Angell, an

important British intellectual, to the President, warning that counterrevolution was apt to bring the Russians and the Germans to the bargaining table. "We should have lost the political and diplomatic advantage of a weak Russia and the military advantage of a strong one," Angell wrote, urging Wilson to propose a conference on war aims. House too believed it was imperative to accommodate the Russian demand for peace. "It is more important," House wrote Wilson, "that Russia should weld herself into a virile republic than it is that Germany should be beaten to her knees....With Russia firmly established in democracy, German autocracy would be compelled to yield to a representative government within a very few years."³⁴

Wilson also believed that the Right posed the biggest threat to the forces of democracy in Russia, and he regarded Kerensky's idealism and patriotism as a strong bulwark against the forces of reaction. His secretary of state did not share his estimate of Kerensky; Lansing perceived the Russian leader as weak and too sympathetic to "the radical element of the revolution." He was shocked by the optimism of Root's report, saying that he could not trust Root's views "without doing violence to my better judgment." Nevertheless, Lansing accepted the administration policy, writing in a memorandum on August 9,

As long as there is a possibility that [Root] is right and I am wrong...I feel that we should do all that we can to strengthen morally and materially the existing government. If Mr. Root

is wrong, nothing that we can do will stay the current which is toward a period of disorder and national impotency. All our efforts will amount to nothing; they will simply be chips swept along by the tide to be swallowed up by the calamity which seems to me in store for Russia.³⁵

The issue of war aims became acute when the Pope, on August 1, called on all the belligerent governments to state their war aims, as a first step to negotiating a peace settlement. Germany complied, offering harsh terms. Wilson deliberated whether to respond to the Pope's appeal or ignore it. Lansing advised Wilson to ignore it; the Pope was pro-Austrian and a declaration of war aims would weaken the position of the Allies. House counseled the President to respond, fearing privately that making no answer would be a "colossal blunder," because of the impact it would have in Russia.³⁶

It was while Wilson was considering a response to the Pope's Peace Proposal that a query arrived from the French government, asking for the President's position on the volatile issue of an Allied conference on war aims. The British and French governments were opposed to any such conference, not only because they wished to stand by the postwar territorial adjustments in their secret treaties, but because opening an official debate on war aims would unleash partisan debate at home; the political truce that the parties had observed since 1914 would be shattered. What if Kerensky demanded a conference on war aims? What would be the attitude of the United States, the French

wanted to know. "If the Russian Government...should propose a conference," Wilson wrote back, "the President does not see how such a suggestion could be wisely rejected." There was a democratic feeling everywhere, a burgeoning demand for popular control of foreign policies, and the Allied governments could not long withstand an open debate on the war aims question. Wilson was not yet prepared to force the issue, but he was willing to support the Provisional Government if Kerensky deemed a conference necessary.³⁷

The President dispatched his reply to the French on August 7. That same day, Wilson called a cabinet meeting to discuss the Russian railway situation. He was filled with doubts about the program of assistance. Stevens had failed, after five weeks of discussions with the Ministry of Transport, to win approval of his commission's recommendations. If the Russians were unhappy with the Stevens Mission, they were unable to provide information of their own either. When Ambassador Bakhmatev was asked for detailed estimates of their most pressing needs, he answered with vague and conflicting requests. "Please let us have \$165,000,000," he had asked McAdoo recently. "If this is not done it will cause [a] misunderstanding." His request was accompanied by no lists, no particulars. How could the United States send locomotives and railroadmen to Russia when the Russian government refused to send for them? As long as the Russians evaded the recommendations of the

Stevens Mission, Wilson remained dubious.³⁸

Wilson was also disturbed by the attitude of the British. He produced for his cabinet a report on the Russian railway situation written by the British ambassador in Petrograd, Sir George Buchanan. The report, written for the British Foreign Office, had been sent through their embassy in Washington to the State Department, and then to the President. Buchanan believed that "the real reason underlying the whole of the disastrous situation [was] the deplorable state into which the means of transportation [had] fallen." The tracks, the locomotives, the rolling stock, Buchanan explained, were "all used up." The railway material being shipped from the United States would "fall far short" of what was needed. He proposed that the United States, with the approval of the Provisional Government, take over "the entire task of repairing rolling stock," for the chief problem now was to staff the repair shops with reliable labor. If the United States did not take over the railway administration and the repair shops, Buchanan argued, then the only other means of keeping the trains moving would be to "split up the Russian railways into sections of which each one would be taken in hand by one of the Allies." The Foreign Office had dispatched Buchanan's report with a brief note allowing that the British considered American assistance preferable to Allied assistance, because the United States was already involved

and could more easily "reorganize the Russian railways on the broadest lines." The implications were clear: the Allies deemed the Russian railways so vital to the war effort -- "of transcendent importance," they called it -- that they would act on it independently if the United States did not. Representatives from Britain, France and Italy were at that time convened in Paris to discuss transportation, and the Russian railway situation was on their agenda.³⁹

In August the two lines of Wilson's Russian policy began to fuse into one -- a clear, consistent respect for Russia's self-determination. Wilson's overriding concern in Russia was to stabilize the beleaguered forces of democracy. The Stevens Mission, originally intended to explore means of getting American assistance to the eastern front, now assumed the more important, if subtler, function of forestalling an Allied intervention on the Russian railways. In September and October Wilson would use the Stevens Mission to head off a collision between the British and the Provisional Government over the operation of the railways. He could only do this by enveloping the purpose of the Stevens Mission in a fog of uncertainty, encouraging the British to hope that the Stevens Mission was the entering wedge for American reorganization of the railways. Wilson's policy in Russia was constrained by the vital necessity of avoiding a rupture with the British, either

over war aims or intervention in Russia. What is most remarkable about his policy after August 1917 is how far he was willing to oppose the British and allow the military situation on the eastern front to degenerate in the interest of shielding the Provisional Government. That Russia had to have peace became a certainty, it was only a question of how soon and what kind -- an armistice? a capitulation? a negotiated peace with the help of the Allies? In the meantime Wilson endeavored to strengthen the Provisional Government against its internal foes of anarchy and counterrevolution. This was a dynamic and constructive policy, aimed at mitigating a disastrous situation.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BRITISH CALL FOR INTERVENTION

In early August 1917, delegates from Britain, France and Italy met in Paris to discuss transportation problems, including the deepening crisis on the Russian railways. No representatives from the Russian government were invited to the conference, while the Americans, standing by their status as an "Associated Power," declined to attend. The Russian railways were of growing concern to the western Allies. With the Russian Army breaking up and the railways on the point of total collapse, there seemed few obstacles to a deep German penetration into Russia. At this time the northern front, particularly the Baltic city of Riga, was thought to be the key to the situation. If Riga fell, it was widely believed, the German Army would advance like a juggernaut on Petrograd. Without rail traffic, Kerensky would be unable to organize a defense of the capital. It was reported at the transportation conference that Kerensky's train was halted four times on a recent trip between the northern front and Petrograd when its locomotives broke down and had to be replaced. The Allies now considered drastic measures for railroad assistance to Russia, anything that would keep some traffic moving and sustain the line of defense between the Germans and the Russian interior. In the longer view, it was essential to

keep the Murman Railway operational through the winter, so that Russia would not be cut off from Britain and the Atlantic supply line when the harbor at Archangel froze. The conference concluded with a joint resolution directed at both the Provisional Government and the Wilson Administration. To Russia the Allies pledged all possible aid, both in material and personnel, for the rehabilitation of the railways. To the United States they continued to appeal for more American involvement. They dispatched a delegation to Washington with the urgent request that American railroad assistance be widened from the Siberian Railway to the most strategic lines in European Russia as well, and that American personnel, with the help of British, French and Italian railwaymen if necessary, supervise the operation of rail traffic.¹

The British had been pushing for a wider commitment of American railroad assistance for several weeks. The railroad commission had not been in Petrograd a week when General Poole of the British Military Equipment Section in Russia approached the American engineers about inspecting the Murman line. The British were anxious to know how much this new line could alleviate the backlog of freight at Archangel, and how well the railway would function in the coming winter when Archangel's harbor would be closed by ice. In several meetings with the railroad commission the British general described his view of the supply problem.

He had inspected the port facilities of both Archangel and Vladivostok and was bitter that the Russians did not furnish enough labor to unload ships efficiently. He spoke disparagingly about the poor administration of the railways and the official inertia in facing up to the supply problems. Disillusioned, Poole had told his superiors in Britain that it was useless to send any more supplies to Archangel until the port was cleared. He urged Stevens to send one of the commission's members to inspect the Murman line. Stevens consented, noting that an inspection of that line would help fill out the commission's impressions of the entire Russian railway situation, so that the commission could more accurately assess the needs of the Siberian system.²

British and French officials pressured the Provisional Government to allow an inspection of the Murman line. Darling volunteered to make the trip, and on August 7 he set out in a special train with representatives of the British, French and Russian general staffs and several Russian engineers.³

The Murman line was an extraordinary example of the engineering feats that Russia accomplished during the war to remedy its isolation and dearth of railway lines. In 1914, Murmansk was a fishing village of about 4,000 inhabitants, located on the Arctic Coast of the Kola Peninsula, a great lobe of land bounded on the west by Finland and on the east

and southeast by the White Sea. Unlike the port of Archangel on the White Sea, the small harbor at Murmansk remained ice-free all year around because it benefitted from warm ocean currents rounding the top of Scandinavia. The line to Murmansk was needed to carry Archangel's burden through the long winter months. It was in the first winter of the war, in Arctic darkness, that the government began a survey of the 600-mile Murman route. A hundred thousand Russian laborers and thousands of German prisoners had completed the line by November 1916, and it carried a light service through the winter of 1916-17. Built through swampy Arctic tundra, long sections of the track sank and vanished into the ground in the first spring thaw in 1917. When the Stevens Mission arrived in Petrograd in June, some 45,000 men were employed repairing the line and enlarging the port facilities at Murmansk.⁴

The journey up the Murman line was extremely slow due to the repairs. Their train crept along about seven miles per hour, Darling spending much of the time leaning out his window taking notes. All along the line the Russian laborers were restless and undisciplined. On one section the men were digging drainage ditches when they needed to give priority to the construction of tracks and buildings. When Darling asked why, he was told that the men refused to work at anything but ditching for which they were paid by the cubic yard. Further north, Darling encountered two

Americans operating steam shovels; these men complained that there was too much work and not enough to eat. Once while stopped for the night, Darling heard a cluster of workers formulating some demands outside his window. When the workers started off toward the Russian engineers' car, the train suddenly pulled out. Evidently the engineers had become frightened and did not think it was safe to stay the night.⁵

At Murmansk, Darling and the British and French officials met with the governor-general and the general manager of the line, who assured them that the railway would be fully repaired by November 1. Darling was skeptical in view of the poor labor productivity he had seen. Supervision was so lacking that nearly everywhere the construction was proceeding in the wrong order. Ballasting had to be completed before the winter frost or much of the work would be undone. To ensure that the line could carry traffic through the coming winter, Darling insisted that their efforts should be concentrated on ballasting, building construction and water supply. He was also critical of the chain of command. Ostensibly the line was divided into two districts, yet neither chief engineer had full control of his section, and to make matters worse, all heavy equipment was under someone else's authority.⁶

On their return trip they stopped at the camp where the workers had tried to board the train, and the railway

officials went to the workers' committee meetings and agreed to all their demands. Afterwards, the workers told them that had the train not stopped, they were prepared to blow up the tracks. This had a disquieting effect on the Russian engineers, who prudently attended line committee meetings on the rest of the southern leg. Darling accompanied the railway officials and found them consenting to everything the workers requested. He asked once why whole stretches of track seemed deserted, with the work left incomplete. The Russians alluded to "one or two holidays" -- there were hundreds of religious holidays in Russia, different from region to region, and it was impossible to keep them all straight. Probably the men were in camp.⁷

Darling made a formal report of his inspection to the commission, but the commission was not invited to offer recommendations for the Murman line. The problems that Darling turned up -- the chief one being the risky postponement of ballasting before winter set in -- were not taken up by the Ministry of Transport or the Railway Department. Stevens did not press the issue, preferring to concentrate the commission's efforts on the Trans-Siberian. By the time Darling returned to Petrograd, Stevens had achieved his breakthrough with Kerensky and he was anticipating his second trip over the Trans-Siberian accompanied by Ustrugov. They were to see for themselves the adoption of new operating methods, longer engine runs and

rotation of shifts in the repair shops. For the time being the British were stymied in their efforts to involve the Stevens Mission with the rest of Russia's railways.⁸

Stevens' high hopes in mid-August quickly began to fade as Ustrugov came up with one excuse after another for delaying their departure. Finally, Ustrugov told the commission to leave without him and he would join them one or two days later. Stevens complained to Francis, who warned Foreign Minister Tereshchenko that if Ustrugov did not make good his promise it would be "almost a breach of international courtesy." Stevens, Miller and Darling and the remaining staff of the commission left Petrograd on the night of August 24. The Ambassador saw them off. He reported to the State Department that Stevens had been demoralized in recent days, threatening to disband the commission, but that the chairman had "left in good spirits."⁹

Their eastward journey took nearly a month. Enroute, they spent two days in Tomsk and another day inspecting the nearby Taiga mines, which were now putting out a dismal twenty-five tons of coal per day, less than one percent of their capacity. They were in the Manchurian city of Harbin long enough to dispatch a cable to Willard. This single, undated cable from Stevens was almost ebullient about conditions on the railway. He described "a decided improvement...already as a result of our work and expect

much greater results from our present trip with government officials." Later dispatches in October bear this out; there is no doubt that the capacity of the Trans-Siberian improved at this time while the situation in European Russia rapidly disintegrated. Ustrugov joined the commission in Siberia, and the group proceeded methodically eastward, meeting with the railway officials and implementing changes in the operation. Stevens was carrying out the President's directive "to serve Russia on the ground."¹⁰

Stevens was completely out of contact with Petrograd and Washington until his arrival in Vladivostok. In his one cable to Willard he stated that he had heard nothing from Lansing or Willard since August 17. He did not know the status of his locomotive orders nor how soon he could depend on the twelve units of operators that he had sent for. He wanted instructions sent to Vladivostok. For his part, Willard was equally anxious for word from Stevens. Two telegrams that he sent to Stevens at Harbin went astray. In the first one Willard explained the progress of raising and outfitting American railroadmen to go to Siberia. Samuel M. Felton, the director general of military railroads, was responsible for organizing what was now being called the Russian Railway Service Corps, and with his large staff was "giving his entire time to the matter." In addition one hundred mechanics were being sent to supervise the construction of the engine shops at Vladivostok. As always,

there were snags. In a second cable, Willard announced that the Russian Railway Service Corps and the one hundred mechanics were to be paid by the Russian government through credit in the United States. Before they could leave, there had to be definite agreement on this. Assuming mistakenly that Stevens was in contact with the Ministry of Transport in Petrograd, Willard called on Stevens to finalize these arrangements.¹¹

When Stevens finally reached Vladivostok he was given new orders to return to Petrograd. Miller and Darling were to stay in Vladivostok and assist with the deployment of American personnel when they arrived, while Stevens was needed in the Russian capital as a contact with the Ministry of Transport. A last meeting with Ustrugov in their train at Vladivostok reaffirmed that the Russians would provide accommodations for the American personnel, and finalized the layout of the engine shops for Baldwin Locomotive, which were to be completed by November 15. After the arduous four-week trip from Petrograd, Stevens was ill again and weary of train travel, but following a few days rest, he set out once more on the 5,000 mile journey across Siberia.¹²

Ironically, Stevens' inspection of the Trans-Siberian and his removal from the political crisis unfolding in Petrograd during the month of September gave him the most optimistic outlook on the railway situation that he had during his entire time in Russia. The commission was seeing

real progress on the eastbound trip across Siberia, and for the first time they had tangible evidence that their mission was making a difference. Their morale was high. Meanwhile, the British and French were beginning to despair for the Russian situation. In mid-September, Colonel House was informed by his London contact that the British had begun to look on Russia as "a hopeless problem." Once again, just as it had in the Ukraine in July, the Stevens Mission was forming a hopeful impression from the situation in one part of Russia while calamities were occurring elsewhere in the empire. The importance of the Trans-Siberian was eclipsed in September by the collapse of the railways in European Russia.¹³

Two significant events in early September had transformed the situation. On September 1, Riga was abandoned to the Germans. This portended a debacle on the Russian front. After years of exhausting stalemate, Europeans had become almost obsessive in their expectation of a "break," like a dam bursting, that would transform the war of the trenches back into a war of movement. Though no German march on Petrograd occurred, it seemed to the Allies in early September that the loss of Riga would unleash the German divisions like floodwaters across the Russian plain.¹⁴

The other event had an enormous impact on the internal affairs of Russia. This was the Kornilov Affair, an

attempted counterrevolution led by the commander-in-chief of the Russian Army. For weeks before Kornilov's attempted march on the capital, forces on the Right had rallied around this intensely patriotic general. The Left, meanwhile, had grown suspicious that Kerensky was in collusion with him. When Kornilov finally marched, it was the Bolsheviks who took the lead in arming the workers' militia to defend Petrograd. On the approach to the city, Kornilov's army melted away as the railwaymen tore up the tracks and wrecked the engines in his path. The failed counterrevolution destroyed Kerensky's efforts to moderate between the Left and the Right, and increased the popularity of the Bolsheviks. Now the latter's representation in the Petrograd Soviet began to mount steadily toward a majority -- their self-proclaimed mandate for seizing power.¹⁵

Significantly the British were deeply implicated in the attempt by the Right to overthrow Kerensky. General Alfred Knox, the ranking British military observer in Russia, led a brigade of British armored cars in Kornilov's march on the capital. The British had scarcely disguised their enthusiasm for Kornilov on the eve of the attempted coup, believing that he was their best hope for staving off a Russian separate peace. It was an indication of the diverging priorities of British and American policy in Russia that the British looked favorably on Kornilov while Wilson stood by Kerensky.¹⁶

The Kornilov Affair compressed the timetable of revolution. Stevens, crossing Siberia at the time, still thought he had three to four months to produce some improvement on the railways. Western observers generally had assumed that the Provisional Government would face its critical test in the winter of 1917-18; now they saw its collapse was imminent. The British and French believed that Stevens was cut off from the changed situation in European Russia, ignorant of its urgency. In August, the French had sent an engineer to Russia; in September the British sent their own man, General A. DeCandolle, and pressured the Provisional Government to appoint him "advisor" to the Ministry of Transport. Even the American military attache at the Petrograd embassy, Colonel Judson, concurred with the British in late September that Stevens' long absence from Petrograd had made him "out of touch with the general situation." When the British learned in early October that Stevens was on his way to Petrograd, they were ambivalent. They hoped that the United States was finally preparing to assume a greater role in the critical railway situation, yet they questioned Stevens' competence for the role.¹⁷

The railwaymen were growing restive at the time of the Kornilov revolt. Sharp inflation and rising food prices had badly eroded their wages. Some line committees were becoming impatient with Vikzhel's protracted efforts to extract wage increases from the government. A powerful

union of railwaymen on the Moscow-Petrograd line submitted its own wage demands to the government in late August, and a major strike threatened just days after the Stevens Mission had departed for Siberia.¹⁸

The American consul in Moscow, Maddin Summers, alerted the State Department to this crisis on August 25. In the past, the Provisional Government had granted higher wages only to the most radical elements of the union, the yard workers in Moscow and Petrograd. Lacking the revenue to do anything else, it had responded with promises and delays to the rest. Now the union, acting independently from Vikzhel, sent a delegation to the Ministry of Transport warning that only the immediate approval of higher wages would avert a strike. Summers' initial interpretation was that the threatened strike was politically motivated: the union wanted to demonstrate its power to cripple a government of the Right.¹⁹

Two days later, Summers had reason to reassess the crisis. Minister of Transport P. P. Yurenev went to Moscow and made an extraordinary appeal to the All-Russian Congress of Railwaymen. As obstructive as Vikzhel had been to the government's control of the railways, the Ministry of Transport now faced a worse spectre. Vikzhel was at least a moderating influence over the unions; if it could not control them the demands could proliferate and the strikes could spread. The government needed Vikzhel. Speaking to

the Congress of Railwaymen, Yurenev denied rumors that the government was about to "resort to repressive measures," nor did he believe rumors that the Congress of Railwaymen intended to assume control of the railways. The danger, Yurenev insisted, was from those who sought to undermine the existing sources of authority. Vikzhel and the Ministry of Transport would continue to work together. Appealing to their patriotism, he concluded, "Unless we shall be able to accomplish heroic deeds in the way of repairing rolling stock we shall witness terrible things in Russia."²⁰

On August 30 the crisis took definite shape: the Union of Locomotive Operating Crews on the Moscow-Petrograd line promised to strike if they did not receive their wage demands. Yurenev stood firm, referring their request as usual for arbitration by a special railway commission that had been established in April. To the union he coolly responded, "I cannot believe that the railroad men would decide to strike a cruel blow at their motherland at the moment of deadly danger."²¹

A three-way struggle between the union's strike committee, Vikzhel and the Ministry of Transport followed. The strike committee threatened to end passenger traffic at midnight September 2, and official traffic at noon September 3. Freight traffic would be suspended from September 3 to September 4. Only military and medical trains would be allowed to run. On September 1 a delegation from the

All-Russian Railwaymen's Union convinced the strike committee to negotiate, and the strike was called off.²²

Vikzhel halted the centrifugal forces of the local unions in this crisis, but by late September it could no longer prevent a spate of spontaneous strikes by various line committees that had ceased looking to Vikzhel for leadership. Vikzhel had compromised itself by its cooperation with the government, and now it was virtually as powerless as the Ministry of Transport; it was only able to assume leadership of the critical strike along the Moscow Central Railway by calling a general railway strike and then bringing it to an early conclusion. Locomotive crews on the line received wage increases, but the wage demands of the rank and file were not granted; instead the government gave the union control of the food supply for its workers. Kerensky was willing to grant wage increases for the locomotive engineers only on the condition that they come from higher passenger fares. Some line committees continued the strike in defiance of Vikzhel.²³

In view of the railwaymen's suspicion of any attempt by the government to extend military control over the lines, the British call for intervention on the railways was clearly unrealistic. How could the unions accept orders from Allied or American personnel if they were already wary of the Provisional Government's intentions? If the railwaymen had responded so effectively in obstructing the

advance of Kornilov's army on Petrograd, how might they react to British or American efforts to take control of the railways? If Allied intervention was opposed by the Soviet, let alone the Provisional Government, their resistance would be stronger yet. Even the Russian Railway Service Corps, invited by the Provisional Government and bound for positions in Siberia far from the political turmoil in Petrograd, would have to proceed cautiously, for it would be regarded with suspicion by all the line committees that were accustomed to controlling their own affairs, protecting their jobs and striving for better wages. It was a delicate matter, indeed potentially scandalous, that the government was mustering the funds to pay the American railroadmen in Siberia while it could not meet the wage demands of its own people on the railways around Moscow!

Yet the British persisted in looking for ways to get hold of the railways and save as much as they could of the eastern front. No longer very hopeful of sustaining Kerensky's government through the winter, the British began to search for sectors of the eastern front that could be preserved independently of the government in Petrograd. On the southern end of the thousand-mile front Rumanian and Russian forces defended what remained of Rumania's territory. Rumania had entered the war on Russia's side in 1916, only to be quickly overrun by the Germans. The capital, Bucharest, and the fertile plain of the Danube

River had been lost, but the Rumanians still clung to the northern third of their country, the government having evacuated to the city of Jassy. The Russian army in Rumania, with its supply lines running back into the Ukraine, was relatively well fed and undisrupted by German and Bolshevik propaganda. But the breakdown of the railways in the Ukraine now threatened to starve Rumania. From Jassy, the foreign legations sent out urgent cables in the fall of 1917. Six hundred thousand Rumanian and Russian soldiers were largely feeding upon the country, depleting the crops and cattle. The armies and the civilian population faced a famine winter. The British and French embassies in Petrograd called on the Americans to send a "good railway man" to the Russian Black Sea port of Odessa to assist in rail transport from the Ukraine to Rumania.²⁴

Another front that the British hoped to support in the event of a Russian debacle in the north was the Trans-Caucasus front on the border of Turkey. The deteriorating railway situation had virtually isolated this region from the government in Petrograd, and since the Americans were not involved with the railways there, the British began formulating their own plans for the reorganization of transport.²⁵

The clearest signal that the British were preparing to intervene in the Russian railway situation was the arrival in Petrograd on September 14 of the British General A.

DeCandolle, whom the British had forced the Provisional Government to accept as an "advisor" to the Ministry of Transport. Ostensibly DeCandolle's mission was to assess the railway problems and make recommendations, both to the Ministry of Transport and to the British Foreign Office. At the time of DeCandolle's arrival Stevens was out of contact in Siberia. DeCandolle's presence in the Russian capital put pressure on the United States government to send another railroadman and increase the American involvement. Otherwise the initiative would pass to the British.²⁶

In three days DeCandolle held two interviews with Tereshchenko, sifted through reams of data at the Ministry of Transport and wrote a preliminary report to the Foreign Office. His preliminary report agreed basically with the views of the Stevens Mission: labor problems and a failure of administration were chiefly to blame for the crisis. DeCandolle absolved the railway officials in the Ministry of Transport. They were competent men. The source of disorganization was in the lower echelons, where corruption, demoralization and the absence of a clear chain of command had bred chaos. But DeCandolle's recommendations differed from those of the Stevens Commission on one vital matter: the British general believed it was useless to attempt reforms in methods of operation -- such as longer engine runs or dispatching -- until the railway divisional staffs were reorganized, or replaced by personnel from the United

States or Great Britain. Essentially he recommended that units like the ones that the United States was raising for the Trans-Siberian should be formed quickly and sent to run the lines all over European Russia.²⁷

After filing this report DeCandolle departed on a ten-day inspection of the Donets Basin. Conditions had changed dramatically since the Stevens Mission had been over the railways in the Ukraine in July. DeCandolle found railway traffic almost at a standstill; the lack of movement in the military sector was especially ominous. In the repair shops workers were idle, or simply absent, while locomotives were breaking down faster than they could possibly be put back into service. Coal production in the Donets mines was still declining, even as more men were employed in them.²⁸

Upon his return DeCandolle held several conferences at the French and American embassies, trying to enlist support for some broader plan of railway assistance than that now being effected in Siberia by the Stevens Commission. He wanted an advisor, preferably an American, appointed immediately who would bring to Russia a large corps of personnel for overseeing communications along the railway lines and labor in the repair shops and the coal mines. As the British Foreign Office construed his recommendations, the advisor would "direct [an] Allied intervention on [the] Railways of European Russia."²⁹

DeCandolle and the British learned in early October that Stevens was on his way back to Petrograd, but in Petrograd both American and Russian officials stressed to DeCandolle that the Stevens Mission's work was confined to the Trans-Siberian Railway. Stevens, DeCandolle was led to think, would not be called upon to undertake the reorganization of the railways in European Russia. This was something of a relief to DeCandolle, for the British general had taken a disliking to Stevens. He was critical of the American engineer's work before the two men had ever met and he readily agreed that Stevens' work on the Trans-Siberian was "task enough." To the Foreign Office DeCandolle confided doubts about Stevens' judgment and his ability to work forcefully with the Provisional Government. On October 11 the Foreign Office instructed the British ambassador in Washington, Cecil Spring-Rice, to urge the United States to send a new man to Russia.³⁰

The British discouragement with Stevens finally rubbed off on Francis. Though the ambassador had not always trusted Stevens' tact with the Russians, he had held the chairman's judgment in high esteem. But in late September his confidence in Stevens was shaken. The situation had become so grave, he cabled Lansing, that he recommended that the State Department send the "biggest railroad man available, even Willard himself."³¹

Neither Lansing nor Willard, however, ever considered

sending a new railroad man to Russia. In three months Stevens had acquired a knowledge of the Russian railways, labor problems and the personalities in the Provisional Government. No man could step into the situation and hope to act quickly in an informed manner. When Francis called for a new railroad man for the railways west of the Urals, Willard wired back that Stevens was the best man for the job. Lansing had not yet decided whether the chairman should assume an advisory post in the Ministry of Transport. The British were talking of an American "Tsar of Russian Railways" who would direct American (or Allied) control. Lansing could not accept the British plan, nor could he overtly disappoint them, for they had their own candidate now in DeCandolle and they were becoming insistent that they would act without the United States if necessary. So he was deliberately vague about Stevens' new assignment.³²

The essential conflict between the Foreign Office and Washington at this time was whether Wilson would redefine the purpose of the Stevens Mission. The British viewed the commission as an entering wedge; Wilson did not. The United States government held to the position that the reorganization of the railways had to be a Russian initiative. By ordering Stevens back to Petrograd, the United States was able to appease the British, while still avoiding deeper American involvement on the Russian railways.³³

Stevens arrived in Petrograd October 14. Lansing was anxious to restore the breach between Stevens and Francis. Through Willard, he instructed the chairman to "cooperate as closely as possible with the American Ambassador in Petrograd and keep him fully informed concerning [his] plans and movements." For his part, Francis saw the direction of policy in Washington and revised his opinion of Stevens accordingly. He passed on to Lansing Miller's claim that the stockpiles at Vladivostok had been reduced by forty percent, and that the commission's recommendations were "being put in operation rapidly." After his meeting with Stevens at the embassy on October 15, Francis came away satisfied that Stevens was competent. When they discussed DeCandolle's gloomy observations of the railways in the Donets region, Francis was impressed to learn that the commission had tried to head off the very problems that DeCandolle described with recommendations in early August.³⁴

The State Department acted as though Stevens' presence in Petrograd was enough to quell British demands for a new railroad man. Ambassador Spring-Rice's inquiry of October 11 was left unanswered. Lansing did not inform the British specifically what Stevens' new functions were, but only cabled a vaguely-worded message to Francis, stating that Stevens would act as an advisor to the Ministry of Transport, and that "no better selection than Stevens could be made for [the] particular place or duties you had in mind

in Petrograd." Nor did the American embassy inform DeCandolle; the British general still assumed that the Stevens Mission was limiting its concerns to the Trans-Siberian. Just a few weeks earlier DeCandolle had had Francis' ear at the American embassy; now he was not even informed of Stevens' appointment. Francis had grasped Lansing's intent: the State Department was endeavoring diplomatically to steer an independent course from Britain, and forestall Allied intervention in Russia by trying to keep the matter of railroad assistance between the Russian and American governments. Lansing was abiding by Wilson's desire that railroad assistance not conflict with Russia's self-determination. Since this policy did not satisfy the British, he could only maintain the situation by clouding it and keeping the British guessing.³⁵

Stevens accommodated himself to Lansing's diplomacy equally well. He described his new position as "what the Russian called Director-General of all railways, but knowing the Russians, I interpreted it correctly as meaning 'advisor'." Stevens' sardonic appraisal of his role as a smoke screen for the helpless Ministry of Transport meshed perfectly with Lansing's objectives.³⁶

As soon as Stevens accepted the post, he was told that he, Francis, Tereshchenko and Liverovskii would soon make a trip to Mogilev to confer with the army staff in charge of military railways. But a few days later Tereshchenko

admitted that there would be delays; they would depart on October 21 or 24. On October 26 Stevens and Francis were still in the capital; they discussed the situation and decided to abandon the planned visit to Stavka. Thus for two weeks Stevens waited for orders from the Provisional Government. He understood the government's weakness and had abandoned his coercive policy. His inaction, however, began drawing sharp criticism from British officials in Petrograd. General Poole of the British Military Equipment Section, the man who had urged the commission to inspect the Murman Railway, goaded Stevens with a letter that questioned his assessments. The main issue, for Poole, was whether Stevens had badly underestimated the shortage of locomotives. DeCandolle's report had agreed with the Russians' assessment on this point (it was the one disturbing discrepancy between DeCandolle's view of the situation and that of the American commission), and Poole implied that Stevens' lower estimates were faulty and debilitating to the program of American railroad assistance. Stevens replied with a curt explanation of the basis of his estimates, and reminded Poole that the commission was only advisory. The United States government was not responsible for the Russian railways, he stated, and the rumors that his commission planned to take over operations of the railways were counter-productive and "entirely unfounded." He saw no need to exchange reports with the British military, he added,

since his commission did not even send formal reports to Washington.³⁷

DeCandolle, meanwhile, stepped up his demands on the Minister of Transport, Liverovskii. The minister tried to appease DeCandolle with a promise that his government would create a special bureau for labor problems, but DeCandolle had drawn up a comprehensive plan of his own, a virtual blueprint for intervention, which he presented in a "confidential note" to Liverovskii. The core of his plan was the creation of a "Department of Relationship," staffed by American or Allied personnel but attached to the Provisional Government. The department would oversee such far-reaching problems as the coal supply to the railways, the reorganization of engine repair shops, and the improvement of transportation on waterways, and it would include a subordinate department for arbitrating labor disputes. To assure Russian cooperation with his "Department of Relationship," DeCandolle insisted that it would handle distribution of food for the railwaymen and its own staff!³⁸

DeCandolle also dispatched a memorandum to the British General Staff, reiterating the urgent need for an American or Allied representative. "Whoever is selected should have great tact, character and railway experience....The vital point is that the control should be in the hands of America or some other Ally and preferably under the direction of one man and not of a commission."³⁹

Stevens and Francis met with Tereshchenko and Liverovskii on October 25 to request an assignment for Stevens. The engineer suggested that he travel south and implement his commission's recommendations on the railways in the Ukraine. He was impatient and no doubt affected by Poole's carping letter, which he had answered that day. Tereshchenko, however, was reluctant and agitated, and finally burst out that his government did not require any assistance and was being assailed with "altogether too much advice." Two days after this meeting, Tereshchenko changed his mind. He summoned the "director-general of all railways" and requested him to inspect the line from Moscow to Omsk, with a view to increasing food supplies from western Siberia. The foreign minister told Stevens that this was the most pressing railway problem in Russia.⁴⁰

The political situation in Petrograd was desperate at the end of October. A Bolshevik coup seemed imminent, and the disposition of the Petrograd garrison in such an event was in doubt. In Stevens' estimation, many of the Russian ministers wanted to "let go of the bear's tail." The railway situation placed Tereshchenko and the minister of transport in a vice: they were faced with paralysis and anarchy on the one hand, and an encroaching Allied intervention on the other, each closing in on the middle ground that the Provisional Government had staked out for the revolution. It was part of the larger dilemma between

war and peace that Russia faced throughout 1917: a democratic revolution could no more survive the continuing war effort, and the spreading radical dissent that that produced, than it could survive a separate peace with imperial Germany and a severance of ties to the western democracies. Tereshchenko's extreme discomfiture with railroad assistance at this time can be glimpsed from his remarks on the eve of the Bolshevik coup, when he had to defend the Stevens Commission before -- of all people -- the minister of defense. In a closed meeting between their two ministries, the latter complained to Tereshchenko that American railroad assistance was an empty gesture, that too few locomotives had arrived to even offset the losses, that the American engineers' recommendations on the Trans-Siberian had yielded nothing. To this last point, Tereshchenko responded that according to his figures the Stevens Commission had increased the capacity of the Trans-Siberian five-fold. But through the minister of defense's diatribe about numbers of locomotives and rolling stock, Tereshchenko was silent; the record spoke for itself.⁴¹

As Stevens left Petrograd for the Ukraine, the British were still uninformed about American intentions. General DeCandolle believed that the State Department still intended to send some "really big people." Confused, the Foreign Office sent notes to Buchanan in Petrograd and Spring-Rice

in Washington to pin down the State Department -- had it or had it not requested the Provisional Government to give Stevens direction of all the Russian railways? The War Office sent a similar message to both ambassadors on November 7: "Failing selection of Mr. Stevens it is hoped that United States Government will at once nominate a man of similar qualifications."⁴²

This flurry of diplomatic notes from the British still drew no immediate response from the State Department. United States railroad assistance was not delimited until November 11, when the State Department informed Spring-Rice of Stevens' advisory capacity as director-general. The United States was standing by its offer to cooperate and assist, but it did not deem appropriate the proposals for intervention and control of the railways.⁴³

By then the Provisional Government had been swept from power by the Bolshevik Revolution. On the night of November 7 the Bolsheviks seized the telegraph office and moved on the Winter Palace. The next day the Bolsheviks proclaimed a new government, arresting all the ministers of the Provisional Government except Kerensky, who fled the city in disguise in a car commandeered from the American embassy.⁴⁴

CHAPTER SIX

WITHDRAWAL

Stevens was on his way back from Omsk, satisfied that he had expedited the grain shipments on the main lines from western Siberia to Moscow, when he heard rumors of the Bolshevik coup in Petrograd. His train continued west but got no further than Moscow, for rail traffic had ceased along the troubled line from Moscow to Petrograd. The Bolshevik insurgents were fighting for the city, and Stevens was unable to telephone or telegraph Francis, one side or the other having cut the wires. Stranded, he watched the street fighting intensify and heard rumors that the Bolsheviks had captured the Kremlin. After a few days holed up in his train car with his clerk and his interpreter, Stevens managed to reach the ambassador by telephone. He tried to explain the conditions in Moscow, but Francis seemed unappreciative, describing the Bolshevik insurrection as a "mere flurry" and predicting that Kerensky would soon "come back stronger than ever." He told Stevens to return to Petrograd. When the chairman explained that it was impossible, Francis advised him to wait in Moscow until the rail link was restored; he could contact Summers at the consulate if necessary.¹

Even after this conversation, Stevens had no intention of trying to get back to Petrograd, for the fighting in

Moscow persuaded him that the situation was "desperate" and "looked like civil war." Later he would contend that Francis had tried to deceive him, describing the relative calm in Petrograd without telling him that Kerensky had left the city and other government ministers had gone into hiding. As soon as the railways were nominally in the hands of the Bolsheviks, Stevens implored the Commissar of Railways to find him a train to the east. On November 12 his car was attached to a train headed northeast to Vologda, where it would connect with the Siberian Express. Hastily he wired Francis that he was going east and would wait in Harbin for the arrival of the Russian Railway Service Corps. As it turned out, Stevens' train was the last Siberian Express for the next four years to make the entire journey.²

News of the Bolshevik coup, though disturbing, did not come as a shock to the administration in Washington. The Bolsheviks had increased their strength in the Soviet steadily since the Kornilov Affair, and they had made no secret of their intention to seize power from the Provisional Government. Kerensky's government had grown perceptibly weaker in the last two weeks before the coup. Speaking to a correspondent of the Associated Press in late October, Kerensky had said that Russia was on the defensive on the battlefields and the burden of attacking Germany must now fall to the Allies. This prompted the alarming Washington Post headline, "Russia quits war." But if

Russia's war effort appeared crippled under Kerensky's leadership, his heir to power, V. I. Lenin, the intense, bald-headed Bolshevik leader, went further, issuing a Decree of Peace on November 8, the first day of the new regime. To the American public, this was the most alarming implication of the Bolshevik Revolution. The Bolsheviks were pledged to take Russia out of the war. But Wilson knew that the Bolsheviks could not deliver peace overnight, for they could not survive politically if they simply capitulated, and if they negotiated, Wilson was sure the Germans would try to extract unacceptable terms. The Decree of Peace was neither a surrender nor an olive branch to the German government, but a call to international revolution. Reflecting on the Bolsheviks' predicament, Wilson likened Lenin's brazen effort to end the war by decree to "opera bouffe." Since they had promised the impossible, it seemed as though the Bolsheviks could not last. Various moderate socialists in Russia predicted the Bolsheviks' imminent downfall, and the Wilson administration saw no reason to doubt their view. The new leaders of Russia were professional revolutionaries without any administrative experience and they had inherited a state of near anarchy. How could they possibly hold on long to the reins of power?³

Even so, the Bolshevik coup raised a number of pressing and difficult issues. The collapse of the Provisional Government and the advent of an anti-democratic regime

hostile to the Allies was the very calamity that Wilson had been trying to avoid since August. From the outset Wilson presumed that the Bolsheviks did not represent the will of the people; he observed correctly that the Bolsheviks had gained power with the help of copious money and propaganda from the Germans. The first problem was the official attitude of the United States government to the new regime in Petrograd. Lenin made clear the attitude of his government to the Allies immediately by publishing and denouncing the secret treaties between imperial Russia and the western Allies. These treaties pledged the signatories to a long list of territorial adjustments at the expense of the Central Powers. Bringing to light these starkly imperialist war aims was calculated to sow discord in the legislatures and the news media of the western democracies, and spark revolution, for Lenin at this time was banking on an international revolution. The Bolsheviks showed no desire to assist the Allies against Germany, and as Lansing pointed out again and again, as internationalists they were "avowedly opposed to every [national] government on earth...they [were] as hostile to democracy as they [were] to autocracy." Lansing urged a policy of non-recognition and Wilson agreed. For Lansing it was the Bolsheviks' ideology which made recognition unwise. "I cannot see how this element which is hostile to the very idea of nationality can claim that they are the Government of a

nation or expect to be recognized as such," he wrote. Wilson took the view that the Bolshevik regime was too unstable and had too little popular support to be considered "legitimate."⁴

Another political issue raised by the Bolshevik Revolution was whether a belated revision of Allied war aims could affect the internal situation in Russia. This question could not be separated from another one, whether the Allies' refusal to discuss war aims in October had contributed decisively to Kerensky's downfall. A mood of self-recrimination, even a desire for atonement, weighed heavily on the western Allies after the Bolshevik takeover. Wilson stirred these sentiments when he told Congress on December 4 that if the Allies had revised their war aims in the summer, he believed the Provisional Government could have been saved. Socialists in Britain's Parliament seized on the President's words and charged their government with a "grave and terrible blunder" in refusing to redefine war aims. It was clearly an auspicious time for Wilson to push his own liberal war aims in Britain and France; the public mood in Russia, however, was inscrutable.⁵

Colonel House believed that the Bolshevik leaders themselves could be lured back into the coalition against Germany. Lansing did not think so, but if war aims revision would not influence the Bolsheviks, it would strengthen the position of the moderate socialists against the ruling

Bolsheviks. This appealed to Wilson, who still had confidence in the democratic forces in Russia. Thus House and Lansing might have differed widely on their views of the Bolsheviks, but there was a consensus in the administration that the most promising way to influence Russia was through a conciliatory approach of war aims revision. Vital to this policy was a continuing respect for Russia's self-determination. It dictated continuing restraint in the railway situation. Wilson believed that whatever an Allied intervention could accomplish for the Russian forces on the eastern front, it would be debilitating to the forces of democracy in Russia.⁶

The Allies took up the question of intervention as they convened in Paris to organize a much needed unified command, a Supreme War Council. This conference had been planned for months; it was happenstance that it brought together the leaders of Britain, France and Italy just as the Bolsheviks took power in Russia. Now the Allies considered a new vehicle for intervention; instead of taking over operation of the railways, they would give financial assistance to the opponents of the Bolsheviks who were coalescing on the edges of the Russian empire, particularly in the Ukraine. Colonel House was attending the conference as an "observer," and notified Wilson of their deliberations. Apparently the Russian general, A. M. Kaledin and his army of Cossacks were opposed to the Bolsheviks and had declared they would carry

on the war against Germany with Allied backing. Wilson, however, thought the situation was too chaotic to give them recognition or material support. It was unclear whether Allied support would be used against the Germans or against another faction in Russia, and he would not support any government in Russia unless it possessed more than local support.⁷

Though the conference was mainly concerned with military strategy, House went to Paris with instructions to get a major Allied statement on war aims. The Allies had pressed for American participation at the conference since October, and Wilson's concession to send House was a sign that the United States was moving away from its status as an "Associated Power;" indeed, Wilson was feeling his way toward assuming leadership of the Allied coalition. After the Bolshevik Revolution House was able to increase the pressure for a discussion of war aims. He wrote his chief that he was introducing a resolution declaring that the Allies were waging war neither for aggression nor indemnities. This was a deliberate echo of the Petrograd formula, "no annexations, no indemnities." House believed it would strengthen the moderate socialists in Russia and dissuade Lenin from making a separate peace. The British were supportive, but the Italians adamantly refused to give up their claims to Austrian territory. No Allied agreement on war aims emerged from the conference, and in December

House went back to Washington empty-handed.⁸

Wilson was persuaded that he would have to project his liberal war aims not through quiet coalition diplomacy, but by going directly to the people. Already he had commissioned some of the best minds in the United States, his "Inquiry," to formulate peace terms that would secure the borders in Europe while embodying the main goals he had enunciated the previous January: open diplomacy, disarmament, freedom of the seas, self-determination. Now Wilson planned to draft his own principles of peace based on the Inquiry's research and announce them to the world himself. This became the famous Fourteen Points speech, which he presented in January 1918. His sixth point, bearing on Russia, is worth quoting in full:

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

Whether or not the situation in Russia was Wilson's overriding concern as he wrote the speech, clearly an important thrust of Wilson's Fourteen Points address was

this bone thrown to the Bolsheviks and the Russian people. Lenin called the speech "a great step ahead towards the peace of the world." Through its agent in Russia, and with the assistance of the Bolsheviks, Wilson's Committee on Public Information distributed a million translations of the speech in handbills and posters in Petrograd and Moscow. It was the preparation of this momentous address on war aims that formed the background for Wilson's decisions on Russia through November and December. He pinned his hopes on the redeeming influence that his war aims speech would have in Russia.¹⁰

As the Allies continued to press for intervention in November and December, Wilson procrastinated. In Woodrow Wilson and World Politics, historian N. Gordon Levin Jr. describes the President's response to the Allies' queries as "erratic." He attributes Wilson's ambivalence to his divided counsels. "Two broad approaches towards Russia emerged within the Administration," Levin writes, Colonel House urging accomodation and Lansing pushing for "an overtly anti-Bolshevik position."¹¹ But both House and Lansing agreed with the President that a large scale intervention would only rally the Russian people behind the Bolsheviks. There is no evidence that Wilson ever deviated from this view. The President's ambivalence stemmed not from the question of intervening but from the dilemmas of coalition diplomacy. To oppose categorically American involvement

would only prompt the British and French to intervene without the United States. He could no more afford a rupture with Britain and France over intervention in November and December, on the eve of his Fourteen Points address, than he could in October, when he was trying to support the Provisional Government. Wilson was preparing to assert American leadership of the Allies: he wanted to strengthen the coalition, not weaken it. So the State Department continued with the same policy it had followed in October, answering the Allies' call for intervention with evasions and apparent indecision, while maintaining its leadership of railroad and financial assistance to Russia.¹²

The Bolshevik Revolution threw into doubt the whole program of railroad assistance and Treasury loans. McAdoo first raised the issue in a cabinet meeting on November 9. He wanted to know if he should loan Russia more money to expedite the locomotive shipments. Wilson thought they must wait and see. The situation in Petrograd was still unclear; the Bolsheviks controlled the city, but Kerensky had gone for loyal troops. As bad as the situation appeared, Wilson decided, it was wrong to assume that Russia would collapse.¹³

The Bolshevik Revolution checked the flow of railroad material to Russia but it did not stop it. The day after this cabinet meeting Lansing consulted Baker on the schedule of locomotive shipments. The secretary of state thought

that the railroad assistance should be contingent on Russia's continuance in the war, and the locomotive shipments should be suspended until Lenin's plans became more clear. Lansing acknowledged that he was also influenced by a November 2 message from Francis, which stated that both Stevens and Miller were reporting mismanagement and poor use of motive power in Siberia; he suggested a "short delay pending word from Stevens," because Stevens had indicated the "possibility of modified recommendations," given the unfolding events. Apart from the uncertain leadership in Russia, the locomotive shipments were held up by the same obstacles that had hindered them through the summer and fall -- real doubts that the locomotives were being used effectively in Russia and the belief that they would be more valuable somewhere else.¹⁴

Meanwhile Willard had pushed ahead Stevens' plans to reorganize the Trans-Siberian with American personnel. The director general of railroads, Felton, raised the Russian Railway Service Corps (RRSC) and appointed George Emerson, a former engineer of the Great Northern, as the Corps commander. The RRSC comprised 213 men. All the railroadmen in the Corps were given commissions and Emerson took the rank of colonel. The Corps sailed from San Francisco November 18, accompanied by 137 mechanics and interpreters employed by the Baldwin Locomotive Company. The dispatch of the RRSC revealed the administration's hope to continue its

policy of cooperation, either with the Bolsheviks or another regime.¹⁵

Stevens was encouraged to preserve contact with the Bolsheviks. One cost of non-recognition was the isolation that it imposed on the embassy staff. Francis, with Lansing's approval, issued a gag order to his diplomatic corps, cutting it off from official contact with Russia's new leaders. This was strictly enforced; when Judson ignored the gag order and met with the Bolsheviks' foreign commissar, Leon Trotsky, he was reprimanded. But Stevens, as an advisor to the Ministry of Transport, now the Commissariat of Railways, was free to communicate with them. The Bolsheviks, for their part, were none too anxious to sever this slender contact with the American government, and the material assistance it might provide. According to a State Department press release in mid-December, the Stevens Mission was continuing its work on the Trans-Siberian and was in "constant contact" with the Bolsheviks' department of railways. When Stevens reached Vladivostok, dispirited and physically exhausted, and learned that Miller and Darling had left for the United States, he shot off another of his "hot" cables, requesting permission to go home. Willard promptly answered him, "Your work is appreciated but it is not finished." Stevens was a valuable emissary and his advice would be needed in deciding what to do with the RRSC.¹⁶

The administration's decisions on loans to Russia showed the same overriding concern with Russia's self-determination which constrained its efforts at railroad assistance. Secretary Lane had informed the President in August that credit, not shipping, had become the limiting factor in getting locomotives to Russia. In late September Ambassador Bakhmatev requested another loan. McAdoo balked, alarmed by the hopeless state of Russia's finances and the "enormous pressure on [the] Treasury from all sides." Increasingly, credit, like railroad assistance, was becoming so entangled with demands for intervention that it was no longer consistent with a policy of self-determination. A Navy Intelligence report, filed on October 31 while Kerensky was still in power, outlined United States naval operations in the event of an Allied intervention in Russia. The report recommended American involvement first and foremost to ensure repayment of loans. Clearly the Provisional Government's growing indebtedness was a menace to Russia's independence.¹⁷

More insidious was the Provisional Government's use of American loans to pay its mutinous soldiers and sailors in the border regions of the Russian empire, where the paper ruble had become useless currency. A precedent was set in July when the Russian finance minister asked Root to intercede with McAdoo and get a special, emergency \$75,000,000 loan with which to buy Finnish marks to pay the

striking sailors in the Russian Baltic Fleet stationed at Helsingfors. In late October Francis conveyed a "confidential" request from the minister of finance for another \$75,000,000 "for the same object as previous \$75 million loan." This second loan was never made. The earlier credit had already involved the State Department in a complicated scheme to prevent mutiny in two Russian corps on the Turkish front in the Caucasus. From August through October the State Department sanctioned shipments of American silver to Persia for the purchase of Persian crowns, which had replaced paper rubles as unofficial currency in the Caucasus. Over the course of three months one million crowns were supplied by Persian banks for the payment of Russian soldiers. Ostensibly this arrangement was deemed a short term loan while the Russian government shipped its own silver from the mint in Petrograd, but the state of the railways made it impossible to get the silver bullion from the capital to the Caucasus. Thus the separate credit for a so-called "specific purpose" had gone into other channels.¹⁸

As news of the political disorders in the capital spread to the Caucasus, the soldiers increased their demands. The American consul in Tiflis, F. Willoughby Smith, believed he had the situation well in hand. He had arranged the supply of Persian crowns in the fall, and he now estimated that the two Russian corps could be kept in

the field at the cost of about eighteen million crowns monthly. Nearly a quarter of this expense could be met by shipping sugar and petroleum from Trans-Caucasia to northern Persia; the rest would have to come from the United States through Persian banks. Smith informed Lansing in November that both the Caucasus population and the army refused to accept the Bolshevik government, but without financial assistance he did not think the army could hold together for more than five days. He requested authorization to "draw \$10,000,000 by telegraph." Lansing replied that such financial support would "tend to encourage sectionalism or disruption of Russia or civil war," and the State Department could not "encourage tendencies in any of these directions."¹⁹

Smith disclosed that the British had become involved in financing the anti-Bolshevik government in Tiflis; the British were supplying \$13,500,000 for payment of the army and planned to provide another \$15,600,000 monthly. Lansing sent Smith's cables to Colonel House in Paris, asking House to find out what the British were up to. The British and the French, House learned, were sending missions to Tiflis and were inclined to intervene. "I consider it dangerous," House wrote, "for the reason that it is encouraging internal disturbances without a definite program in mind."²⁰

Other pleas for intervention in the Ukraine were coming from the Rumanian government in Jassy: a Russo-German

armistice would seal off the Rumanian Army. There were suggestions that Allied assistance to the anti-Bolshevik General Kaledin and his army in the Ukraine could be combined with efforts to supply the Rumanians. One memorandum circulating in the War Department in early December estimated the cost of supplying the Rumanian Army at \$60,000,000 monthly, split between the United States, Britain and France. The plan was to supply Rumania by way of the Trans-Siberian Railway -- after deploying 13,000 Japanese and American troops in Siberia! The memorandum's author concluded that the plan appeared "most chimerical" and "might start civil war."²¹

Proposals for sending troops to Siberia had been circulating since August; their original intent was not anti-Bolshevik but pro-Kerensky, to give moral support to the Russian war effort. American troops in the Philippines were readily available. The British were enthusiastic. Wilson raised this possibility in a cabinet meeting at the end of October, and though he did not reach a decision, he informed the press that the plan was under consideration. Shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution, Judson wrote from Petrograd that "many Russians" were recommending an American division be sent to Russia by the first available transport. The Army General Staff drew up a plan for deploying an expeditionary force in Russia, including details on the use of ice-breakers and the railways. But in

late November Lansing quashed the plan, calling it "unfeasable," and Baker too made up his mind that non-intervention was the only practical course.²²

The anti-Bolshevik forces coalescing in Siberia were even more motley than the Cossacks and camp followers of General Kaledin in the Ukraine. Wilson was looking for some faction in Russia which could galvanize the Russian populace and pull together the forces of democracy. In the Far East the population was so sparse and so remote from the government in Petrograd that the anti-Bolshevik forces were at first mere tools of international intrigue. The Chinese, the Japanese and the British all had an interest in disrupting Russian dominion in the Far East; the British wanted either the Japanese or the Americans to get control of the Trans-Siberian in order to maintain the Allied lifeline to the eastern front. (Incredibly, the British would soon entertain lively hopes of a large Japanese army deploying on a reconstituted eastern front at the end of this 5,800 mile long supply line across Siberia.) The familiar problem arose: how could the United States discourage, or at least temporize, an Allied intervention? But in the Far East the problem was more critical, due to the plainly imperialist intentions of Japan.

Through November the situation in Siberia was quiet but tense. When Stevens journeyed east the Bolsheviks' control extended only to the Urals; throughout Siberia there was no

government other than the local authority exercised by each town's soviet, few of which were Bolshevik. Along the railway the operating methods introduced by the commission in September had all been abandoned and the worker's committees were in complete control. Stevens felt that fighting could erupt any day.²³

In Vladivostok the Soviet now exercised complete control over the city and port facilities. With Stevens approaching from the west and the RRSC on its way across the Pacific, rumors were rife that the Americans planned to occupy the port and seize the railway, in order to ensure repayment of Russia's loans. The arrival of an American warship, the U.S.S. Brooklyn, on November 25 increased suspicion. Actually the visit of the warship had been planned for some time with a view to lifting the morale of the Russian sailors in the port. When the U.S.S. Brooklyn arrived shortly before a local election for the Soviet, however, it appeared as though the warship's visit was intended to prevent a Bolshevik takeover. The Bolsheviks did not yet command a majority in the Soviet, probably because the inhabitants did not want to provoke a Japanese or American occupation. Caldwell, the American consul, tried to assure the Soviet that United States railroad assistance and financial assistance were unconnected; the United States had no intent of extracting concessions for the loans it made. Meanwhile, Stevens conferred with the

American consul in Harbin and decided that it would be dangerous for the RRSC to disembark in Vladivostok. He requested that Colonel Emerson of the RRSC be ordered not to land until he advised it.²⁴

As the Bolshevik Revolution spread from city to city along the Trans-Siberian in early December, the Bolsheviks' enemies (White Russians, as they came to be known) fled east, gathering across the Manchurian border in the towns along the Chinese Eastern Railway. From here the White Russians harried the Bolshevik forces and plotted against the government. The Bolsheviks sent two regiments into Manchuria against the Whites; they seized Harbin, ousted General Horvat and gained control of the Chinese Eastern. At the behest of the Allies, the Chinese sent 3,000 troops against the Bolsheviks, disarmed and deported both regiments, and occupied the Russian barracks along the railway. Horvat was reinstated as the governor-general, but once the Japanese had disclosed the concessions they wanted in return for their support, Horvat refused to form an independent government. Another anti-Bolshevik government sprang up under a leader more amenable to Japanese influence, and Horvat was deposed. Far from promising a nucleus for anti-Bolshevik support in Russia, this puppet government was only an entering wedge for the Japanese in Manchuria. A State Department memorandum concluded that none of the factions there "could make any claim to be

representative of any large body of Russian opinion."²⁵

Stevens reached Vladivostok just as the U.S.S. Brooklyn was weighing anchor for Nagasaki and Manila. The discipline of the American sailors had had a stabilizing effect on the city, and after their departure on December 11 the situation in Vladivostok worsened. Now there were rumors that Japan was about to send large numbers of troops to Vladivostok. The Japanese reportedly had 800 soldiers already in Vladivostok, disguised as civilian laborers, with their weapons stowed. Another report indicated that the Japanese had three divisions prepared for deployment at Vladivostok and Harbin. The British and French supported a Japanese occupation -- they made that clear at the Allied conference in Paris -- and it seemed that the Japanese were sending rumors to feel out the American attitude. The effect at Vladivostok was to create an atmosphere of almost unbearable tension. Stevens and Caldwell met with the Allied consuls December 11 and they decided collectively that a "foreign force" (preferably American but even a small Japanese one) was desirable until the Allies had agreed on a common policy and could dispell the rumors.²⁶

It is hard not to impute an element of fear behind this request for foreign troops. Until then Stevens had consistently opposed military intervention; indeed he would have many occasions in the months ahead to caution against military confrontation with the Bolsheviks. Stevens had been

badly shaken by his experiences over the past months. Even after he had escaped the fighting in Moscow, his train car was repeatedly broken into by soldiers on the arduous trip across Siberia, and he was mystified that there were not "general wholesale massacres" where the Bolsheviks were trying to take power. Moreover his health was failing; he had never fully recovered from the blood poisoning in June. If he did not get out, he sometimes thought, the Russian winter would likely do him in. The ice now forming around the rim of the Golden Horn would not only seal up the harbor, it would probably entomb this old man in Russia.²⁷

Lansing was surprised by Stevens' and Caldwell's message urging intervention. He happened to be meeting with Root that day and discussed with him the situation at Vladivostok. Root opposed intervention and reinforced Lansing's view that the United States could not sanction a large Japanese presence there. Considering Root's prior difficulties with Stevens, Root probably was inclined to discount some of the urgency in Stevens' message, while Lansing, familiar with Stevens' habit of letting off steam over the wires, had cause to agree. The secretary of state sent a cautioning reply:

In view of importance of avoiding hostility it would seem wise to refrain from discussing or considering in any way the question of the advisability of presence of foreign force in Vladivostok at the present time and you may so advise your colleagues if they bring up the matter again.²⁸

On December 14 the transport Thomas arrived in the harbor with Colonel Emerson and the RRSC. Stevens told Emerson that a landing was currently out of the question. Only a week earlier the crew of the U.S.S. Brooklyn had enjoyed extensive liberty on shore, mingling with the Russian population without incident. The situation had changed abruptly; the Bolshevik press was stirring up the populace against the RRSC and the Soviet was not about to provide accommodations on land for the 350 men aboard the Thomas. Stevens wired Willard, "Conditions make it absolutely imperative to delay decision as to landing for some time. It may be necessary to sail quick." He advised him to "cable instantly placing ship Thomas under my orders for any port in Japan we may select. Lose no time."²⁹

The next day the situation grew more complicated. Many of the interpreters sent over by Baldwin Locomotive turned out to be radical Russian exiles who had signed on to get free passage and evade the Allied passport control authorities. Emerson had decided that these agitators should not be allowed to disembark, but the Bolsheviks were demanding their release.³⁰

Stevens dispatched another cable to Willard, suggesting that he and the RRSC should sail to Japan until the situation cleared. It was "a serious error not to have brought rations," he wrote. "Emerson should be provided with plenty of money. A great good can be accomplished with

right government in full power but worse than folly to undertake at the present moment."³¹

On December 17 Colonel Emerson finally received instructions from Washington: the ship was to wait in port until further notice. Stevens was in a quandary. Washington did not understand the situation: it was useless to think of disembarking while the Bolsheviks were in power in Petrograd. The Commissariat of Railways had offered no funds, had no authority over railway operations in eastern Siberia. Telegraph communications were out from Chita west. Stevens was no longer in contact with Petrograd. The local Soviet barely exercised control over the soldiers, who had so intimidated the railwaymen that they were no longer attempting to ship out freight traffic; only troop trains moved between Vladivostok and First River. What made the situation urgent was the ice. The ice breakers were in the hands of the Bolsheviks and could not be relied upon to keep the harbor open. Without ice breakers the Thomas at any time might become stuck in the harbor. Stevens discussed the situation with Caldwell and both agreed that the Thomas must leave, despite the orders from Washington. Stevens boarded the ship that night. The Thomas steamed out of the Golden Horn at midnight, heading for Nagasaki.³²

The Stevens Mission was over. Without a government in Petrograd that the United States would recognize, and as yet no centralized government control in Siberia, it was no

longer possible for Stevens to "serve Russia on the ground." For some time it was hoped that the mission could be resuscitated. Some anonymous sources in Petrograd deeply regretted the withdrawal of the Stevens Mission, arguing that American railroad assistance was a valuable way for the United States to maintain cordial relations with the Russian people. Stevens himself told the press that he "fully expected to return to Russia to continue the work of reorganization." Even the Bolsheviks, in the desperate days of March 1918 after submitting to the Peace of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, appealed for the return of the Stevens Mission. Trotsky asked for assistance from American engineers in the reorganization of the railways, and urged Stevens to come to Russia immediately, promising that the new Commissar of Railways would be able to dictate policy over the objections of all local soviets and railwaymen's organizations.³³

When Stevens did go back to Siberia with the RRSC and the Siberian Expedition in 1918, it was in a new capacity, as chairman of the Inter-Allied Railway Committee for the supervision of the Chinese Eastern Railway, and as a watchdog on Japanese ambitions.

Despite his lapses in tact and judgment, Stevens persevered in extremely trying circumstances. At the age of sixty-four, poorly nourished and living out of a train car for months on end, his body still ravaged by his bout with

blood poisoning in June, Stevens stayed in Russia at considerable risk to his life. At one time he admitted that he did not want the assignment, "but in war time there is no room for excuses." Whenever he grew despondent or bitter, dashing off some rash remarks to Willard or the secretary of state, it was as if a part of him hoped that his impertinence would get him recalled from Russia. Perhaps he subconsciously dwelled on that other point in his career when the stress and hardship had become unbearable, in Panama, when a terse and caustic letter sent to President Roosevelt had brought back the jolting news that the President had accepted his resignation. His sudden removal from Panama in 1907 had shamed him, but it had brought relief too. Yet each time that Stevens shot off an angry cable, his better half seemed to be drawing itself together to forge ahead.³⁴

There is no better example of this pattern than in Stevens' actions in late December after arriving safely in Japan. A short message to the secretary of state, sent over the wires the day after his arrival, so contradicts his later recommendations it can only be understood as an almost involuntary release of tension: "We should all go back shortly with man-of-war and 5000 troops. Time is coming to put the fear of God into these people." After a week's rest, Stevens made a long statement to the press. His tone was utterly different. He described sympathetically the

situation in Russia, and said that American "influence" there was stronger than that of any of the other Allies and "should be exerted to the utmost." He warned against "the application of force in any degree," but urged the United States to "quadruple its efforts" in showing its concern for the Russian people.³⁵

It is in this latter statement, counseling restraint coupled with determination (a trying combination indeed), that Stevens showed himself to be a faithful servant of Wilson's policy. Influence, not force, was the basis of Wilson's aims in Russia. The principle of self-determination kept the goals of American railroad assistance on course, guiding the Stevens Mission through the shoals of economic interest and political and military intervention.

Wilson had little direct personal involvement in the Stevens Mission, yet it is a measure of his effective leadership that his idea of the spirit of the mission, which he explained to Lansing in May, permeated the cabinet, the Council of National Defense, the embassy in Petrograd, and the railroad commission itself. At every level Wilson's moral vision met with resistance. Stevens, on the scene, involved in the protracted negotiations with the Russian Ministry of Transport, was inclined to put real movement on his recommendations ahead of all other considerations; McAdoo tried to use railroad assistance as a weapon for bashing Britain's financial grip on the Allies; Baker wanted

locomotives and rolling stock to go wherever they would bring the best results on the battlefield; Francis had his nose to the ground for commercial opportunities in Russia, while Willard was vigilant for the railroad interests at home; Lansing and House disagreed on the staying power of the Provisional Government. With so many conflicting viewpoints and sources of input, the program of railroad assistance to Russia might easily have gone astray. Yet the President's original conception of the mission prevailed and gave the program coherence.

The Stevens Mission was making real progress on the Trans-Siberian Railway by September. Had the morale of the Russian people held up, had the army not disintegrated after July, American railroad assistance might have had an enormous influence in stabilizing the military and political situation in 1918. Stanley Washburn had proposed the mission with the year 1918 in view. When the Russian situation began to deteriorate rapidly in the fall of 1917 much of the commission's work became irrelevant. Still, the commission played a constructive and valuable role in staving off Allied intervention. When the Allies did intervene in Russia in 1918, the intervention carried the tragic results that Wilson had foreseen. Opposed by the mass of the Russian people, it sacrificed the fruits of influence for the chimerical gains of force.

CHAPTER NOTES

The following abbreviations are used in the notes:

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28. Darling, Diary, 9-10; Gibbs, Diary, 22.
29. Gibbs, Diary, 22. Both Gibbs and Darling noted the "Austrian" prisoners in Siberia, though the prisoners might have been Hungarian. The matter of their ethnicity was significant, because for many minorities in the Austro-Hungarian empire the war had begun to offer hope of self-determination; indeed in the multi-national Austro-Hungarian army large numbers of Slavic soldiers, particularly Czechs and Slovaks, were deserting to the Russian lines. The more disenchanting these prisoners were with Austro-Hungary, the more the Russians could treat them with leniency. Probably the

prisoners were not Slavs, because the Slavs were actually formed into a "legion," eventually numbering 45,000, which redeployed on the Russian side against Austro-Hungary. The mass of unguarded Hungarian and Austrian prisoners in Siberia became a major source of concern to the Allies in 1918 when Russia made a separate peace. Gibbs' and Darling's observations are corroborated by the journalist, Robert Crozier Long, who traveled over the Trans-Siberian in March 1917: the "Austrian soldier prisoners...were having a good time; their relations with the inhabitants were good, and thanks to their superior technical training and greater adaptability they rendered considerable services, and were more welcome than the disorderly [Russian] soldiers." Robert Crozier Long, Russian Revolution Aspects, E. P. Dutton and Company, New York, 1919, 35.

30. Log of the Root Commission, June 7, 1917, Root Papers, LC.
31. Report by Darling, undated, Box 1, RG 43, NA; Westwood, Russian Railways, 112; Gibbs, Diary, 23.
32. Gibbs, Diary, 23-4.
33. "The Military Position of Russia," Asia, (June 1917) 262-3; "Wanted: 3,000 Locomotives," Literary Digest, (September 1, 1917), 25.
34. "Wanted: 3,000 Locomotives," 25; Boris E. Nolde, Russia in the Economic War, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1928, 135.
35. Report by Darling, undated, Box 1, RG 43, NA.
36. Gibbs, Diary, 25.
37. Ibid, 24-6; Michael T. Florinsky, The End of the Russian Empire, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, 1961, 49-51.
38. Gibbs, Diary, 29.
39. J. H. Bater and R. A. French, eds., Studies in Russian Historical Geography, 2 vols., Academic Press, London, 1983, vol. 2, 380-6.
40. W. H. Parker, An Historical Geography of Russia, Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago, 1968, 305.
41. Gibbs, Diary, 30.

42. E. Francis Riggs to Navy Intelligence, March 27, 1917, 6497-11, and May 20, 1917, 6497-26, RG 165, NA; Nicholas N. Golovine, The Russian Army in the First World War, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1931, 159.
43. Riggs to Navy Intelligence, March 27, 1917, 6497-11, RG 165, NA.
44. Gibbs, Diary, 31, 40.
45. Ibid, 31.
46. Kennan, Russia Leaves the War, 32-41.
47. Gibbs, Diary, 32.

III: NEGOTIATIONS

1. Florinsky, End of the Russian Empire, 41; Robert Paul Browder and Alexander F. Kerensky, eds., The Russian Provisional Government, 1917: Documents, 3 vols., Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1961, vol. 2, 762.
2. Golovine, Russian Army, 192-4.
3. Florinsky, End of the Russian Empire, 200-1; K. Leites, Recent Economic Developments in Russia, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1922, 27; "The Military Position of Russia," 263.
4. "New Railway Lines Projected in Russia," Scientific American Supplement, March 1917, 150; "Wanted: 3,000 Locomotives," 25; Nolde, Russia in the Economic War, 127.
5. Florinsky, End of the Russian Empire, 119.
6. "Wanted: 3,000 Locomotives," 25; "New Railway Lines," 150; Westwood, Russian Railways, 152.
7. St. John, John F. Stevens, 62-3.
8. John H. L. Keep, The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization, W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 1976; Wilson R. Augustine, "Russia's Railwaymen, July-October 1917," 668-9; Browder, ed., Provisional Government Documents, vol. 2, 763.
9. Browder, ed., Provisional Government Documents, vol.

- 2, 763.
10. Ibid, 755.
 11. The New York Times, June 26, 1917.
 12. Robert M. Lansing, War Memoirs of Robert Lansing, Bobbs-Merrill Company, New York, 1935, 334. The August 7 entry in the cabinet diary of Josephus Daniels suggests the administration's exasperation: "Very difficult to get statement of exact and most pressing needs. Russian Ambassador 'Please let us have \$165,000.000 dollars. If this is not done it will cause misunderstanding.' -- No particulars." House defended the Russians' position in a July 23 letter to Wilson: the Russian ambassador "says it is not true that Russia is making demands upon us for railroad equipment looking to after war conditions, but what they ask is needed immediately to conduct the war properly. He declares that Stevens will verify this statement."
 13. See Keep, The Russian Revolution for an analysis of the relative importance of the trade unions, the factory committees and the soviets in 1917.
 14. Golovine, Russian Army, 250-1.
 15. On the issue of war aims in 1917 see Arno Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1959. On the influence of the war aims issue on Russian politics in 1917 see Rex A. Wade, The Russian Search for Peace February-October 1917, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1969.
 16. Quoted in Wade, Russian Search for Peace, 9-15.
 17. Adam B. Ulam, The Bolsheviks, MacMillan Company, New York, 1965, 334-5; Leon Trotsky, The Russian Revolution, (F. W. Dupee edition), Doubleday Company, New York, 1959, 226-7.
 18. Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 72-78; Robert D. Warth, The Allies and the Russian Revolution, Duke University Press, Durham, 1954, 65; Wade, Russian Search for Peace, 40-9; Ulam, The Bolsheviks, 338.
 19. Gibbs, Diary, 32; Long, Russian Revolution Aspects, 288.
 20. Gibbs, Diary, 33; Darling, Diary, 12; Long, Russian Revolution Aspects, 287; report by Gibbs, November 5,

- 1917, 861.77/206, RG 59, NA.
21. Francis to Lansing, June 20, 1917, 861.77/110 and 861.77/109; Stevens to Willard, October 24, 1917, 861.77/239, RG 59, NA.
 22. Gibbs, Diary, 33; Gibbs to commission, July 27, Box 1, RG 43, NA.
 23. A quarter of the locomotives in use were over thirty-five years old and on the verge of retirement. Minutes of meetings, July 25 and June 30, 1917; commission to Nekrasov, July 3, 1917; memorandum on freight cars, undated, Box 1, RG 43, NA.
 24. Henry Miller, "Russian Railroads are not so Crippled as Has Been Represented," Current Opinion, (March 1918), 222-3.
 25. Ibid.
 26. Minutes of meeting, June 30, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA; Stevens to Willard, June 25, 1917, 861.77/114, RG 59, NA.
 27. Stevens to Root, June 21, 1917, Root Papers, LC.
 28. Minutes of meetings, June 29 and 30, 1917; Russians' report, June 30, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA.
 29. Stevens to Root, July 1, 1917, Root Papers, LC.
 30. Minutes of commission meeting, July 2, 1917; Stevens to Nekrasov, July 3, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA; Lansing to Wilson, August 13, 1917, 861.77/150.5, RG 59, NA.
 31. Russell, Unchained Russia, 155-6; Washburn to Baker, June 29, 1917; Washburn to Willard, July 5, 1917; Washburn to Hiram Johnson, July 5, 1917, Washburn Papers, LC; Washburn to Baker, July 8, 1917, Baker Papers, LC.
 32. Jessup, Elihu Root, 364-5; "What the Root Mission Learned About Revolutionary Russia," American Monthly Review of Reviews, (September 1917), 304-6; Charles E. Russell, Bare Hands and Stone Walls: Some Recollections of a Sideline Reformer, Charles Scribners' Sons, New York, 1933, 366.
 33. Jessup, Elihu Root, 364-6.
 34. Ibid; Willard to Stevens, July 14, 1917, 861.77/125a, RG 59, NA.

35. Gibbs, Diary, 50-1.
36. Ibid, 48-53; Miller, "Russian Railroads," 222.
37. Gibbs, Diary, 50; Roger Pethybridge, "Political Repercussions of the Supply Problem in the Russian Revolution of 1917," The Russian Review, (October 1970), 385.
38. Alexander F. Kerensky, The Catastrophe: Kerensky's Own Story of the Russian Revolution, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1927, 207-9; William Henry Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution 1917-1921, vol. 1, MacMillan Company, New York, 1935, 231.
39. Alexander F. Kerensky, Russia and History's Turning Point, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1965, 275; Golovine, Russian Army, 272-5.
40. Gibbs, Diary, 53.
41. Ibid, 54-5; St. John, John F. Stevens, 144.
42. St. John, John F. Stevens, 144.
43. Ibid, 163.
44. Gibbs, Diary, 56.
45. Ibid, 57-61.
46. St. John, John F. Stevens, 161-2.
47. Ibid, 164.
48. Ibid.
49. Gibbs to commission, July 27, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA.
50. Minutes of meeting, July 28, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA.
51. Quoted in St. John, John F. Stevens, 174-5.
52. Gibbs, Diary, 71, 77.
53. A. Liverovskii to Stevens, July 27, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA; Stevens to Willard, July 30, 1917, 861.77/149; Francis to Lansing, August 11, 1917, 861.77/136, RG 59, NA; Gibbs, Diary, 73.
54. Stevens to K. N. Vanifantiev, August 3, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA.

55. Wade, Russian Search for Peace, 93-4.
56. Stevens to Vanifantiev, August 7, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA.
57. Minutes of meeting, August 8, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid; Stevens quoted in James William Morley, The Japanese Thrust into Siberia, 1918, Columbia University Press, New York, 1957, 177.
62. Minutes of meeting, August 8, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA.
63. Gibbs, Diary, 76-7.
64. Stevens quoted in St. John, John F. Stevens, 161; Gibbs, Diary, 77; Francis to Lansing, August 10, 1917, 861.00/456 and August 11, 1917, 861.77/149, RG 59, NA; Kerensky, Russia at History's Turning Point, 395.
65. Francis to Lansing, August 12, 1917, 861.77/153, RG 59, NA.
66. Stevens to Lansing, August 2, 1917, 861.77/141, RG 59, NA; Gibbs, Diary, 72.
67. Lansing to Francis, 861.77/150a, August 15, 1917, RG 59, NA.

IV: WILSON AND THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

1. The New York Times, April 19, 1917.
2. Ibid, May 28, 1917.
3. Quotation from "Our Railway Invasion of Europe," Literary Digest, (November 3, 1917), 102. For American-Russian trade figures see Jeanette E. Tuve, "Changing Directions in Russian-American Economic Relations 1912-1917," Slavic Review, (March 1972). American railroad material exports to Russia totaled \$20,000,000 in 1916 and \$19,000,000 in 1917. St. John, John F. Stevens, 59-60.

4. Benjamin H. Williams, Economic Foreign Policy of the United States, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1929, 18; Carl P. Parrini, Heir to Empire: United States Economic Diplomacy, 1916-1923, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1969, 37; Williams, American-Russian Relations, 85; Rathbone, "Making War Loans to the Allies," 388.
5. Williams, American-Russian Relations, 85; Chamber of Commerce quoted in The New York Times, February 14, 1917, and see February 3, 1917; Richard B. Fisher, "American Investments in Pre-Soviet Russia," American Slavic and East European Review, (vol. 8, 1949), 93-8; Tuve, "Changing Directions," 61-3.
6. The New York Times, February 20, May 14, and September 9, 1917.
7. St. John, John F. Stevens, 46, 58, 111 for Darling quote; Tuve, "Changing Directions," 64.
8. J. P. Morgan Co. to Lansing, August 22, 1917, 861.51/190; R. Martens and Co. to Lansing, August 6, 1917, 861.51/196; J. A. Butler to Lansing, August 14, 1917, 861.51/200, RG 59, NA.
9. William G. McAdoo to Lansing, March 29, 1917, Lansing Papers, LC.
10. McAdoo to Wilson, April 30, May 10, May 12 and May 15, 1917, McAdoo Papers, LC. Referring to all of McAdoo's requests for consultation and representation, House noted in his diary, "When you sum up, he would be in complete control of the Government.... He makes a plausible argument; for, in a way, he ought to know something of the entire situation in order to act intelligently, but, taking his demands as a whole, it would leave him as arbiter not only of the United States but of the European nations as well." House Diary, August 7, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.43, 390.
11. McAdoo to Wilson, April 30, 1917, McAdoo Papers, LC; Daniel R. Beaver, Newton D. Baker and the American War Effort 1917-1919, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1966, 61-2; Robert D. Cuff, The War Industries Board: Business-Government Relations during World War One, Johns-Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1973, 99-110; Cronon, ed., Cabinet Diaries, 148-9.
12. Excerpts from McAdoo's speech and the comments of the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce are both in The New York Times, May 2, 1917.

13. McAdoo to Francis, April 3, 1917, 861.51/131; Francis to McAdoo, April 20, 1917, 861.51/134; Francis to Lansing, April 21, 1917, 861.00/327; Francis to Lansing, April 20, 1917, 861.51/137; McAdoo to Francis, April 28, 1917, 861.51/138, RG 59, NA; McAdoo to Wilson, May 15, 1917, McAdoo Papers, LC.
14. The London Inter-Allied Supply Committee is described in a memorandum from Riggs to War College Division, April 26, 1917, 6497-17, RG 165, NA. Morgan's dealings with the British are described briefly in Walter Millis, Road to War: America 1914-1917, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1935, 97-8.
15. Riggs to War College Division, April 26, 1917, 6497-17, RG 165, NA; Scott to Baker, July 25, 1917, 10063-3, RG 165, NA; McAdoo to Wilson, May 16, 1917, McAdoo Papers, LC.
16. Ibid.
17. Baker to Wilson, June 13, 1917, Baker Papers, LC; Cuff, War Industries Board, 99-102; Daniel R. Beaver, "Newton D. Baker and the Genesis of the War Industries Board, 1917-1918," The Journal of American History, (June 1965), 45-8.
18. McAdoo to Wilson, July 10, 1917, McAdoo Papers, LC; Lansing to Francis, April 16, 1917, 861.77/48, RG 59, NA; Report of the Secretary of War, 47-8.
19. McAdoo to Wilson, July 10, July 16 and July 30, 1917, McAdoo Papers, LC; W. B. Fowler, British-American Relations 1917-1918: The Role of Sir William Wiseman, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1969, 39-47.
20. Fowler, British-American Relations, 78; Parrini, Heir to Empire, 36-7; Tuve, "Changing Directions," 67-8.
21. John J. Pershing, My Experiences in the World War, vol. 1, Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York, 1921, 133-5; report by Scott, July 25, 1917, 10063-3, RG 165, NA. The report on the French railways, filed by Major W. J. Wilgus and his staff of engineers in July, served for the duration of the war. The limited geographic scope and the more tractable French officials made the task far simpler than that confronting Stevens in Russia.
22. Priorities in Transportation -- Amending the Act to Regulate Commerce, as Amended, Senate Report No. 48, 65th Congress, 1st Session, Washington Government

Printing Office, 1917.

23. For a discussion of the railroad situation in the United States in 1917 see K. Austin Kerr, "Decision for Federal Control: Wilson, McAdoo and the Railroads, 1917," Journal of American History, (December 1967).
24. On the Baker-McAdoo conflict see Beaver, "Newton D. Baker and the Genesis of the War Industries Board, 1917-1918," 44-48.
25. House to Wilson, July 23, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol. 43, 249; report by Scott, July 25, 1917, 10063-3, RG 165, NA; Report on publicity by Root, undated, Root Papers, LC.
26. Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson Life and Letters, vol. 7, War Leader, Doubleday, Dorah and Company, New York, 1939, 215. McAdoo, summarizing the foreign loans to Russia for Wilson in September, referred to the "\$140,000,000 for railway material" to which "Stevens committed our government in an irresponsible but embarrassing proclamation." McAdoo to Wilson, September 29, 1917, Baker Papers, LC.
27. Lansing to Francis, August 15, 861.77/150a, RG 59, NA. The record of locomotive shipments to Russia during 1917-1918 supports the view that Wilson did not wish to escalate the American commitment nor give up on the railway situation. The shipments increased considerably during 1917, though they never approached the numbers that Stevens recommended. In the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1917 the United States exported 302 locomotives to Russia, nearly triple the number that had been shipped in the previous twelve months. Over 150 locomotives were delivered to Russia between July 1 and the Bolshevik Revolution in November, at which time shipments were temporarily suspended. The pace of deliveries reached its height in September and October. These increases over the previous year's exports reflect the efforts of Willard and the Railroad War Board and the War Industries Board; the government's policy of assistance to Russia overcame some of the manufacturers' resistance to expand their participation in the Russian market. On the other hand the WIB did not have the authority or the will to counteract radically the market forces that had governed war production before April 1917. Locomotive exports still trailed far behind Willard's projections. In July Willard estimated that 875 engines could be sent by February 1918. In August he expected that 375 decapods would be sent in the next month. Ships were no longer a problem in the Pacific;

- the Russian orders depended on an uncertain supply of credit from the Treasury and they simply could not compete with the many domestic orders. In the first two months after the United States was at war American companies placed orders for a total of 2,209 engines. Trade of the United States with the World 1917-1918: Part II -- Exports, Washington Government Printing Office, 1919; "Russian Trade in the First Half of 1917," Commerce Reports, December 20, 1917, 1096; Lansing to Stevens, September 25, Box 1, RG 43, NA; Willard to Stevens, July 20, 861.77/126, RG 59, NA; Willard to Stevens, August 27, FRUS 1918 Russia, vol. 3, 198.
28. Report by Root, undated, Root Papers, LC. Root predicted that Kerensky would be able to restore discipline in the army and in the civil life of Russia "notwithstanding the current enormous stresses....They are moving now with a rapidity which is quite extraordinary." On Wilson's reception of the Root Mission see Warth, The Allies and the Russian Revolution, 106; and Jessup, Elihu Root, vol. 2, 367. Wilson quoted on propaganda in Cronon, ed., Cabinet Diaries, 262.
29. By the end of 1917, Russia's share of the Treasury loans had become very small. Of \$2,717,200,000 extended in war loans to the Allies up to November 1, 1917, Russia received only \$159,700,000 -- a relatively minor loss to the American war effort in the event that Russia left the war. Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1917, Washington Government Printing Office, 1917, 17-18. Wilson quoted in Link, Campaigns for Progressivism and Peace, 410.
30. To repeat, Wilson had written Lansing in May, "This is my understanding of the mission....They are to report nothing back to us. They are delegated to do nothing but serve Russia on the ground, if she wishes to use them, as I understand she does."
31. Warth, The Allies and the Russian Revolution, 88; Wade, The Russian Search for Peace, 93-4; Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 97.
32. Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 250-4; Fowler, British-American Relations, 44-5; Harvey A. DeWeerd, President Wilson Fights His War, MacMillan Company, New York, 1968, 234-5; Wilson to House, July 20, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol. 43, 238.

33. Newspaper and Lloyd George quoted in Warth, The Allies and the Russian Revolution, 117-8; Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 254-5.
34. House to Wilson, August 9, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol. 43, 407; House to Wilson, August 15, Wilson Papers, vol. 43, 471.
35. Lansing's estimate of Kerensky quoted in Daniel M. Smith, The Great Departure: The United States and World War One 1914-1920, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1965, 139; Memorandum on the Russian Situation and the Root Mission, August 9, Lansing Papers, LC.
36. House diary, August 18, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol. 43, 521. For an account of the impact of the Pope's Peace Proposal on Wilson's relations with the Provisional Government, see Lasch, American Liberals and the Russian Revolution, 46-53.
37. Memorandum by Wilson, August 7, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol. 43, 388.
38. Cronon, ed., Cabinet Diaries, 188.
39. British embassy memorandum, August 5, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol. 43, 370-2; Frank L. Polk to Joseph Tumulty with enclosure, August 6, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol. 43, 386-7.

V. THE BRITISH CALL FOR INTERVENTION

1. British embassy to State Department, August 5, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.43, 371; Polk to Tumulty with enclosure, August 7, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.43, 386; Arthur Balfour to Cecil Spring-Rice, August 8, 1917, 861.77/156, RG 59, NA.
2. Gibbs, Diary, 34-5.
3. Report by Gibbs, November 5, 1917, 861.77/206, RG 59, NA.
4. Robert Crozier Long, "The Murman Railway Question," The Nation, vol.107, (August 31, 1918), 224; report by Gibbs, November 5, 1917, 861.77/206, RG 59, NA.
5. St. John, John F. Stevens, 181-2.
6. Report by Darling, August 21, Box 1, RG 43, NA.

7. St. John, John F. Stevens, 182.
8. Ibid, 183.
9. Francis to Lansing, August 25, 1917, 861.77/158, RG 59, NA.
10. Report by Darling, undated, Box 1, RG 43; Stevens to Willard, undated, 861.77/166, RG 59, NA.
11. Stevens to Willard, undated, 861.77/166; Stevens to Willard, September 21, 1917, 861.77/176a; Willard to Stevens, October 5, 1917, 861.77/188, RG 59, NA.
12. Minutes of meeting, September 23, 1917, Box 1, RG 43, NA; St. John John F. Stevens, 213.
13. House Diary, September 16, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.44, 201.
14. For the reaction of the American press see "Russia and Austria Giving Way," Literary Digest, (September 15, 1917), 11-13. The British reaction is described in Page to Wilson, September 3, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.44, 132.
15. Warth, The Allies and the Russian Revolution, 128-9; Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, 199-222.
16. Richard H. Ullman, Anglo-Soviet Relations, 11-13.
17. Judson to War College Staff, September 29, 1917, 6497-16, RG 165, NA.
18. Augustine, "Russia's Railwaymen," 670.
19. Maddin Summers to Lansing, August 27, 1917, 861.77/203, RG 59, NA.
20. Summers to Lansing, August 27, 1917, 861.77/196, RG 59, NA. Yurenev's speech was translated by the Moscow consulate and sent to the State Department.
21. Browder, Provisional Government Documents, vol.2, 758.
22. Ibid, 757-8.
23. Augustine, "Russia's Railwaymen," 672-3.
24. Jassy to Lansing, September 8, 1917, 861.77/165, RG 59, NA; St. John, John F. Stevens, 226-7.
25. St. John, John F. Stevens, 227.

26. Ibid, 200.
27. Ibid, 200-1; memorandum by A. DeCandolle, October 24, 1917, 861.77/247a, RG 59, NA.
28. St. John, John F. Stevens, 219-20.
29. Ibid, 220-1.
30. Ibid, 220, 233.
31. Francis to Lansing, September 28, 1917, 861.77/183 and September 29, 1917, 861.77/184, RG 59, NA; Judson to War College Staff, September 29, 1917, 6497-16, RG 165, NA.
32. Willard to Stevens, October 5, 1917, 861.77/188, RG 59, NA.
33. Historian Roy Watson Curry agrees that by means of the railroad mission "Wilson sought to place the United States in a position of disinterested service to Russia, and to prevent any outside interference in her internal political affairs." Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy 1913-1921 Bookman Associates, New York, 1957.
34. Willard to Stevens, October 5, 1917, 861.77/188; Francis to Lansing, October 9, 1917, 861.77/190 and October 15, 1917, 861.77/198, RG 59, NA.
35. Lansing to Francis, October 15, 1917, 861.77/197, RG 59, NA.
36. Stevens quoted in St. John, John F. Stevens, 225-6.
37. Francis to Willard, October 15, 1917, 861.77/198 and October 27, 1917, 861.77/201, RG 59; Stevens to General Poole, October 25, 1917, Box 2, RG 43, NA.
38. DeCandolle to Liverovskii, October 24, 1917, Box 2, RG 43, NA.
39. Memorandum by DeCandolle, October 24, 1917, 861.77/247a, RG 59, NA.
40. Francis to Lansing, October 23, 1917, 861.77/200, RG 59, NA; Tereshchenko quoted in St. John, John F. Stevens, 227; Francis to Willard, October 27, 1917, 861.77/201; Stevens to Willard, undated, 861.77/208, RG 59, NA.

41. Browder, Provisional Government Documents, vol.3, 1742, Stevens quoted in St. John, 227.
42. St. John, John F. Stevens, 233-5.
43. Ibid, 235.
44. Kennan points out that the American embassy staff had no part in Kerensky's escape. It was merely a coincidence, though an awkward one, that the first available car for his escape belonged to an embassy official. Kennan, Russia Leaves the War, 71-3.

VI: WITHDRAWAL

1. St. John, John F. Stevens, 236-7.
2. Stevens to Willard, undated, 861.77/227, RG 59, NA; Francis to Willard, November 13, 1917, FRUS, Russia, 1918, vol.3, 207; Francis, Russia from the American Embassy, 131.
3. Lansing to Francis, November 2, 1917, FRUS, Russia, 1918, vol.1, 217-8; Wilson quoted in Cronon, Cabinet Diaries, 243.
4. Memorandum by Lansing, December 9, 1917, Lansing Papers, LC; Smith, Great Departure, 140-1; Link, Wilson the Diplomatist, 20.
5. State of the Union Address, December 4, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.45, 199; Parliamentary Debates, vol.100, 1917, His Majesty's Stationery Service, London, 1918, 1567-9.
6. House to Wilson, November 30, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.45, 166, and December 2, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.45, 184-5.
7. Cronon, Cabinet Diaries, 244.
8. Lansing to Wilson, October 3, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.44, 297; House to Wilson, November 30, 1917 Wilson Papers, vol.45, 166; House to Wilson, December 2, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.45, 184-5; Ullman, Anglo-Soviet Relations, 32; Link, Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War and Peace, Harlan Davidson Inc., Arlington Heights, Ill., 1979, 81; David F. Trask, The United States in the Supreme War Council: American War Aims and Inter-Allied Strategy 1917-1918, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Conn., 1961, 30-4.

9. Fourteen Points Address, January 8, 1918, Wilson Papers, vol.45, 537.
10. V. I. Lenin quoted in Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 373.
11. Levin, Woodrow Wilson and World Politics, 50.
12. See Trask, United States in the Supreme War Council, 100-1.
13. Cronon, Cabinet Diaries, 234.
14. Lansing to Baker, November 10, 1917, 861.77/212; Francis to Lansing, November 2, 1917, 861.77/238, RG 59, NA.
15. Willard to Stevens, November 19, 1917, 861.77/222, RG 59, NA.
16. The New York Times, December 16, 1917; Stevens to Willard, undated, 861.77/229; Willard to Stevens, undated, 861.77/230, RG 59, NA. On the effects of Francis' gag order see Kennan, Russia Leaves the War, 99-131.
17. Lane to Wilson, August 10, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.44, 424; McAdoo to Wilson, September 29, 1917, Baker Papers, LC; Lansing to Francis, October 4, 1917, 861.51/224a, RG 59, NA; Navy Intelligence report (anonymous), October 31, 1917, 8690-641, RG 165, NA.
18. Root and Francis to Lansing, July 8, 1917, 861.51/154; Francis to Lansing, undated, 861.51/161; F. Willoughby Smith to Lansing, November 26, 1917, 861.51/246, RG 59, NA.
19. Report from Tiflis, September 30, 1917, 6497-74, RG 165, NA; Smith to Lansing, November 9 and Lansing to Smith, November 26, 1917, FRUS, Russia, 1918, vol.2, 580-2.
20. Cronon, Cabinet Diaries, 244; House to Lansing, December 2, 1917, FRUS, Russia, 1918, vol.2, 584.
21. P. D. Lochridge (War College Division) to Army Chief of Staff, December 4, 1917, Baker Papers, LC.
22. Gregory Mason, "Shall We Send an Army to Russia?" Outlook, (October 24, 1917), 292; Lord Reading to David Lloyd George, November 2, 1917, Wilson Papers, vol.44, 495; Judson to War College Division, November

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 32. Stevens to Willard, December 15, 1917, 861.77/242; Lansing to Caldwell, December 17, 1917, 861.77/243 and January 9, 1918, 861.77/268; Stevens to Willard, December 17, 1917, 861.77/244, RG 59, NA.
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