

On the Borders of Bolshevism: Class, Race, and the Social Relations of Occupied Vladivostok, 1918–19

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RESÜMEE

Nach der Revolution von 1917 war die Machtfrage in Vladivostok ungeklärt. Rivalisierende staatliche und nicht-staatliche Akteure rangen um politischen Einfluss. Die geopolitischen Konflikte übertrugen sich auf die lokalen Verhältnisse und sozialen Beziehungen – ein Prozess, der mit Blick auf Klasse, Rasse und Ideologie seinerseits Grenzen festlegte und soziale Räume im besetzten Vladivostok formte. Nach dem Machtverlust der Bolševiki in Vladivostok strömten im Sommer 1918 mehr als einhunderttausend ausländische Soldaten in Russlands fernöstliche Hafenstadt. Sie mischten sich mit der dort ansässigen asiatischen und europäisch-russischen Zivilbevölkerung und Emigranten, vorwiegend Anhängern der antibolschewistischen Weißen Bewegung, die vor dem Bürgerkrieg im Inland geflohen waren. Am Beispiel des besetzten Vladivostok soll in diesem Artikel das Konzept des „Wanderarbeiters“ so erweitert werden, dass es sowohl ausländische Soldaten als auch die lokale Zivilbevölkerung und Flüchtlinge erfasst. Ein besonderer Schwerpunkt liegt dabei auf den Beziehungen zwischen den kanadischen Soldaten und der lokalen Zivilbevölkerung. Die höheren Offiziere identifizierten sich mit den Anhängern der Weißen Bewegung und reagierten mit Empörung auf die Guerilla-Taktik der Partisanenverbände aus den Dörfern der Region Primor'ë. Einfache Soldaten hingegen standen den Zielen ihrer Länder in Russland eher skeptisch gegenüber und identifizierten sich mit dem Volksaufstand im Frühjahr 1919. Die Zivilbevölkerung chinesischer und koreanischer Abstammung wurde durch einen „kolonialen Blickwinkel“ wahrgenommen, aber kaum mit Geringschätzung, weil man sie (fälschlicherweise) für immun gegenüber kommunistischen Einflüssen hielt. In Cafés, auf den Straßen, in den Kinos und der Straßenbahn, auf Marktplätzen, in den Kasernen und Bordellen des besetzten Vladivostok entwickelten sich zwischen alliierten Soldaten und der aufsässigen Zivilbevölkerung der Grenzstadt komplexe Wechselbeziehungen, die einen einzigartigen sozialen Raum an der Grenze zum Bolschewismus schufen.

“Vladivostok is full of the scum of the earth,” observed Harold Bickford, a 42-year-old career soldier from Toronto and second-in-command of the 4,200-strong Canadian Ex-

peditionary Force (Siberia), which occupied Russia's Far Eastern border town during the winter of 1918-19 along with motley Allied powers.¹ In the words of another soldier, American chief intelligence officer Robert Eichelberger, it was "a dirty place for Americans to be."² These officers articulated a widely held view among the foreigners who converged on Vladivostok: the city was a chaotic social and geopolitical space, combining the unruliness of a port town with the upheaval of revolution and the horrors of civil war. However, beneath this veil of insecurity and general unease toward the civilian population, shades of difference could be discerned. Borders – political, economic, ethnic, and ideological – were shaped and contested in occupied Vladivostok.

The Allied soldiers – migrant workers impelled to this corner of Northeast Asia by rival state and non-state actors and overlapping imperial interests – interpreted and negotiated relations with Vladivostok's local civilians through the lenses of class, race, and ideology. Elite officers identified with the White Russian refugees who converged on the terminal city after fleeing the fighting in the Eurasian interior; they saw legions of Bolsheviks and responded with outrage to the irregular tactics waged by *partizan* guerrillas from the hill villages of the Primorye region. Rank-and-file troops, meanwhile, were more suspicious of their countries' aims in Russia and identified with, or at least sought to understand, the popular insurgency that surged in the spring of 1919. Local citizens of Chinese and Korean ethnicity were viewed through a "colonizer's gaze," yet were held in lesser contempt because they were seen (inaccurately) as being impervious to Bolshevik influence. In the cafés, street corners, cinemas, marketplaces, trams, barracks, and brothels of occupied Vladivostok, Allied soldiers entered into a complex interaction with each other and with the bordertown's restive civilian population – creating a unique social space located on the borders of Bolshevism.

This tumultuous moment in the history of Russia, Northeast Asia, and the world challenges and expands our conception of "borderlands," while building on a trans-national historiography of the Pacific world and the Russian Far East, "a region where Europe, Asia, and America come together."³ Occupied Vladivostok was significant not so much because of the ethnic diversity created by a surge in human migration, but because of the blurred lines of political authority which prevailed in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution. Migration is "a structural aspect of human life," Lucassen notes.⁴ Cross-cultural

1 H. C. Bickford diary, 20 January 1919, Bickford Family Collection, Providence, Rhode Island, USA (Private Collection); H. C. Bickford Attestation Paper, Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter LAC), Record Group (hereafter RG) 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 717-20.

2 As quoted in Paul Chwialkowski, A "Near Great" General: The Life and Career of Robert L. Eichelberger (PhD diss., Duke University, 1991), p. 35, as cited in Ernest Zitser, "A Dirty Place for Americans to Be", in: *Slavic & East European Information Resources* 10 (2009) 1, p. 36.

3 John J. Stephan, *The Russian Far East: A History*, Stanford 1994, p. ix; B. I. Mukhachev (ed.), *Dal'nii Vostok Rossii v period revoliutsii 1917 goda i grazhdanskoi voi ny* (The Far East of Russia in the Period of the Revolutions of 1917 and Civil War), Vladivostok 2003; Canfield F. Smith, *Vladivostok Under Red and White Rule: Revolution and Counterrevolution in the Russian Far East, 1920–1922*, Seattle 1975; Amir Khisamutdinov, *Vladivostok: Window or Fortress?*, in *The Russian Far East: Historical Essays*, Honolulu 1993.

4 Leo Lucassen, *Migration and World History: Reaching a New Frontier*, in: *International Review of Social History*, 52 (2007), pp. 89-96; also Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe Since 1650*, Bloo-

relations within bordertowns and borderlands are therefore imbued with meaning when placed in the context of the “power politics of territorial hegemony,” with borderlands viewed as “the contested boundaries between colonial domains” (according to Adelman and Aron), shaped by inter-imperial dynamics.⁵ Post-revolutionary Vladivostok is therefore a vital site of analysis as a “bordertown,” shaped by the overlapping imperial interests of foreign powers and rival Russian authorities, as well as the interests of non-combatant civilians and refugees.

Taking occupied Vladivostok as a case study, this work embraces a broad conception of “migrant worker” that extends from the foreign soldiers to local civilians and refugees – placing particular emphasis on relations between Canadian soldiers and local civilians. States have always shaped migration in important ways, embracing policies that either encourage or discourage migration among specific groups. Military intervention is perhaps the most developed and tightly regulated form of state-supported migration: thousands of worker-soldiers being mobilized and transported across borders to project national power. However, domestic civilians are also “migrant workers,” attracted or repelled by state policies or by political and economic conditions. Whether they reached Vladivostok as refugees in the heat of the civil war, or arrived decades or centuries earlier from European Russia, China, and the Korean peninsula, the process of migration shaped the social relations and social spaces of the bordertown. This work engages diverse fields: migration and borderlands studies, race relations in the Pacific world, urban history, labour history, intellectual history, military history, and the history of international relations. It seeks to break free from “methodological nationalism,” which erases important distinctions and historical questions by treating the nation-state as the inevitable frame of historical analysis, moving beyond “imagined communities” to encompass the messy social relations of diverse migrant workers in this corner of northeast Asia and the Pacific world.⁶

Finally, this work engages the historiography of Allied intervention in Russia’s civil war, giving priority to the voice of individual soldiers – both officers and the rank-and-file.⁷ Applying the lens of social history to interpret dynamics of military occupation raises fresh questions on the class identity of soldiers, civilian insurgency, the politics of coal-

ington 1992; Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium*, Durham, NC 2002; Jan Lucassen/Leo Lucassen (eds), *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, Berne 2005.

- 5 Jeremy Adelman/Stephen Aron, *From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History*, in: *American Historical Review* 104 (August 1999) 3, pp. 815-16.
- 6 Andreas Wimmer/Nina Glick Schiller, *Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and Social Sciences*, in: *Global Networks*, 2 (2002) 4, pp. 301-34; Daniel Chernilo, *Social Theory’s Methodological Nationalism: Myth and Reality*, in: *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9 (February 2006) 1, pp. 5-22; Daniel Chernilo, *Methodological Nationalism: Theory and History*, paper presented to the annual conference of the International Association of Critical Realism, King’s College, London July 2008; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1991.
- 7 One of the few works that employs a trans-national approach is John Albert White, *The Siberian Intervention*, New York 1950.

tion warfare.⁸ Such an approach has the potential to engage new generations of scholars (in Russia and beyond) in a post-Sovietological pursuit of Russia's revolutionary past.⁹ In Vladivostok after 1917, power was in flux. Rival state actors vied for legitimacy, a geopolitical conflict that translated into local and human relations—a process mediated by class, race, and ideology – which in turn defined borders and shaped social spaces in occupied Vladivostok.

Spaces of Occupation

In June 1918, foreign marines landed from warships in Vladivostok's harbour, joining the anomalous Czecho-Slovak Legion and Chinese troops to topple the local Soviet government led by a 24-year-old Bolshevik student, Konstantin Sukhanov.¹⁰ One hundred thousand foreign soldiers would pass through the city in ensuing months, the Far Eastern manifestation of Allied intervention in Russia's Civil War. Vladivostok's population had surged during the war, from 65,000 people in 1914 to about 170,000 by the time of the Allied intervention. One third of Vladivostok's population was ethnically Asian, including Korean fishers at Gornostai Bay and Chinese merchants, farmers, and city-dwellers.¹¹ They mingled with immigrants from European Russia, who had populated the hilly shores of Golden Horn Bay (*Zolotoy Rog/Gamat*) as the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern Railroads were completed at the dawn of the 20th century. The toppling of Czarist authority and establishment of Sukhanov's Soviet administration inaugurated the most unstable moment in Vladivostok's past. Tens of thousands of White Russian refugees flooded the city, fleeing the Siberian interior, while the warships dropped anchor in the harbour followed by the landing of foreign troops: Japanese, Czechoslovak, American, Canadian, British, French, Chinese, Serbian, Polish, and Italian.¹² They propped up the White Russian government of Dmitri Horvath, manager of the Chinese Eastern

8 Timothy C. Winegard, The Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force, 1918–1919, and the Complications of Coalition Warfare, in: *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 20 (2007) 2, pp. 283–328.

9 For a discussion of this emerging post-Soviet historiography, see Michael Confino, The New Russian Historiography and the Old – Some Considerations, in: *History and Memory* 21 (Fall/Winter 2009) 2, pp. 7–33; Boris Kolonitskii, Russian Historiography of the 1917 Revolution: New Challenges to Old Paradigms?, in: *History and Memory* 21 (Fall/Winter 2009) 2, pp. 34–59; Teddy J. Uldricks, War, Politics and Memory: Russian Historians Reevaluate the Origins of World War II, in: *History and Memory* 21 (Fall/Winter 2009) 2, pp. 60–82; Vera Kaplan, The Vicissitudes of Socialism in Russian History Textbooks, in: *History and Memory* 21 (Fall/Winter 2009) 2, pp. 83–109; Victor Shnirelman, Stigmatized by History or by Historians?: The Peoples of Russia in School History Textbooks, in: *History and Memory* 21 (Fall/Winter 2009) 2, pp. 110–49; Yaacov Ro'i, The Transformation of Historiography on the "Punished Peoples", in: *History and Memory*, 21 (Fall/Winter 2009) 2, pp. 150–76.

10 See The Red Funeral of Vladivostok, in: *British Columbia Federationist* (Vancouver), 13 December 1918 (Reprinted from the *New Republic*). See also Dorothy Findlay letter, 1 July 1918, in: *Letters from Vladivostok, 1918–1923*, in: *Slavonic and East European Review* 45 (July 1967) 105, pp. 497–502.

11 Smith, *Vladivostok Under Red and White Rule*, p. 4; Stephan, *The Russian Far East*, pp. 71–80.

12 See Michael Kettle, *The Road to Intervention: March–November 1918*, London/New York 1988; John Silverlight, *The Victors' Dilemma: Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War*, London 1970.

Railway who relocated from Harbin to Vladivostok, while battling a growing *partizan* insurgency in the hill villages of Primorye.

The convergence of foreign armies on Vladivostok strained an already desperate social situation. The port town had a modern electricity grid and tramway system, but no waterworks or sewers. Dead dogs and cats lay strewn across the roads. The lack of sanitation created a conducive climate for contagion, reflecting Vladivostok's "unfinished attempt at a flashy civilization" that had been "plunged into a sordid and dingy savagery."¹³ The Civil War made a bad situation worse, as a typhus epidemic hit in early 1919. As terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railway, Vladivostok was "an end-of-the-road haven" for "scores of thousands of refugees – White Russians, Poles, Georgians, Mongolians, Chinese and Koreans; aristocracy, bourgeoisie, peasants and beggars... It was said that one could have a man's throat cut for a rouble."¹⁴ The refugees – described as "the backwash of the revolution" – were in desperate need of food, clothing, and shelter. According to one Allied soldier, Vladivostok was "one of the worst holes on the face of the earth," a "God forsaken hole."¹⁵

The refugees included White Russian aristocrats aligned with the old regime as well as ordinary peasants and townsfolk displaced by the fighting in the Ural Mountains 6,000 kilometres to the west. They lived in abandoned boxcars and passenger cars that cluttered the sidings along the railroad, and squatted vacant buildings and Vladivostok's bullet-scarred rail station, a "foul place" with refugees "reeking with typhus."¹⁶ A Canadian medical doctor described the scene aboard one of these railcars, where an old Czarist general clung to a world that was rapidly disappearing in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution:

There were an old general and his wife, living in this used railway carriage. And they were selling what things they'd managed to escape with their life, which was a tea and coffee service, all in gold. And they'd sell a cup, and then a plate. And I said to this old general, "What's going to happen when you've sold all that?" "We will just die," he said. "We will just die."¹⁷

The Trans-Siberian Railway station was "full of thousands of starving refugees. Literally starving. They had a little area on the floor and they all had fled from the Bolsheviks."¹⁸ The motley Allied armies aggravated an already tense situation, consuming scarce accommodation in Vladivostok's centre and sprawling Czarist-era barracks that dotted the hillsides around the port. "Warehouse space on the wharves is limited" along with "suit-

13 Pares, *My Russian Memoirs*, pp. 498-99.

14 Clingan, *Siberian Sideshow*, p. 40.

15 Harold to Josie, 8 March and 19 March 1919, LAC, Harold Steele Collection, MG 30, E564, file "Correspondence, 1 Dec. 1918-1 May 1919"; see also *Letters from Vladivostok, 1918-1923*, in: *Slavonic and East European Review* 45 (July 1967) 105, pp. 497-530.

16 Pares, *My Russian Memoirs*, pp. 498-507; Mackintosh Bell, *Sidelights on the Siberian Campaign*, p. 49.

17 Eric Elkington interview, June 1980, University of Victoria Archives and Special Collections (hereafter UVAC), Military Oral History Collection, SC 141, 169.

18 Elkington interview, June 1980, UVASC.

able accommodation,” a Canadian report noted in October 1918. The regal sixty-room Versailles Hotel had been claimed by the French mission, requiring the turfing of refugee inhabitants with “nowhere to go.” Lamenting the “inequitable” distribution of accommodation, the Canadians claimed that the first Allied contingents had seized quarters that were “not occupied to their full capacity.”¹⁹ White Russian military commanders were powerless to requisition civilian buildings and the White-sponsored Town Council was reluctant to supersede property rights. “There is no recognized law or force that can turn them out of their buildings,” the Canadians complained.²⁰ General Horvath had nominal authority over the Russian Far East, after sidelining another would-be-anti-Bolshevik regime, Pyotr Derber’s Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia.²¹ However, locally, a political vacuum existed between White Russian administrators and military rulers.

Contested social space was graphically revealed in October 1918 when Canada’s advance party landed in Vladivostok and seized the Pushkin Theatre, an ornate building housing the Cultural-Enlightenment Society and featuring a theatre and library. This unilateral action angered local business leaders, who were staunchly anti-Bolshevik but resented foreign incursion on property rights and culture. At an emergency meeting on 1 November 1918, members of the Vladivostok Trade-Manufacturers’ Assembly passed a protest resolution, with a scant five opposing votes, lambasting the “trampling” of the rights of Russian citizens and “interference” in Russia’s “internal affairs.” “It would seem that such a Society would have a just cause on inviolability, and meanwhile, our Allies, in the name of the Canadian command, have grasped the Society’s premises,” depriving its 700 members from continuing cultural-educational and “public work.” Revealing that class did not always shape social relations in Vladivostok in a straightforward way, the Vladivostok merchants and industrialists demanded “the clearing of the occupied premises.”²² In an open letter published (in Russian) in Vladivostok’s *Dalekaya Okraina* newspaper, Canadian General James Elmsley refused to vacate the theatre, assuring the city’s elite that the library and reading room would remain open, while reminding them that the “Allied armies have entered the country under the invitation of the Russian people who

19 War Diary of Force Headquarters CEF(S), 27 October 1918; Correspondence of Maj. George Addison McHaffie, Deputy Assistant Director of Supplies and Transport, Canadian Army Service Corps, Vladivostok, in LAC, George Addison McHaffie fonds, MG 30, E22. Earlier inquiries for Canadian office space had been made by Knox, head of the British Military Mission, and CPR representative Ross Owen. See Knox to CGS, 29 September 1918.

20 Situation at Vladivostok under Allied occupation, n.d. (c. 27 October 1918), War Diary of Force Headquarters CEF(S), October 1918, appendix G.

21 Ask Horvath to Yield Dictatorship Claims, in: *New York Times*, 16 July 1918.

22 Resolution passed by Vladivostok Trade-Manufacturers’ Assembly, 1 November 1918; K rekvizitsii Pushkinskogo Teatra (“On the Requisition of Pushkinsky Theatre”), in: *Dalekaya Okraina* (Vladivostok), 4 November 1918. Vladivostok State Historical Archive.

repeatedly asked for help.”²³ Guards were posted at the theatre, which served as the Canadian headquarters until the force evacuated in June 1919.²⁴

Spaces of Fraternization

The foreign troops in Vladivostok faced the common task of defeating “Bolshevism”, but the similarity ended there. Class and rank segmented each national contingent, which included large numbers of conscripts who had deployed to the Far East against their will. This included French-Canadian conscripts from the province of Quebec, who had mutinied in the streets of British Columbia’s capital city, Victoria, the day they embarked for Vladivostok.²⁵ The Canadian contingent provides a compelling window into social relations and social spaces in occupied Vladivostok, since the Canadian government refused to authorize their deployment into the Siberian interior. The 4,200 Canadians stand out as unlikely “tourists” during one of the roughest moments in Vladivostok’s history. Their experiences are therefore distinct from the horrors experienced by many Canadian and Allied troops in the trenches of France and Flanders. They “served as mere ‘spectators,’” making “the least contribution to the White cause” of all the anti-Bolshevik armies in eastern Russia.²⁶ Lacking authorization to proceed “up country,” the Canadians tried to keep busy in barracks at Gornostai Bay and Second River. “Every day here is about the same,” Brig-General Harold Bickford wrote two weeks after reaching the Russian Far East.²⁷ A week later, he would lament: “I am beginning to think from reports received that this expedition is a faust.”²⁸ The *Siberian Sapper*, published by the Canadians, blared the banner headline “What Are We Doing Here?” – posing a question on the minds of many troops.²⁹

The class location of soldiers shaped social spaces in occupied Vladivostok. Within the Allied officer corps, strong fraternal ties developed, even as the strategies of the imperial powers diverged. Officers shared a common class experience, often hailing from the elite of their respective states and sharing a common antipathy to the amorphous menace of

23 Raz’yasnenie po povodu rekvizitsii Pushkinskogo teatra (“Explanation concerning requisition of Pushkinsky Theatre”), in: Dalekaya Okraina (Vladivostok), 6 November 1918; Otvet Kanadskogo Komandovaniya na rezolyutsiyu protesta bynesennogo na obschem sobranii torgovo-Promyshlennogo Obschestva (“The answer of the Canadian command to the resolution of protest of general meeting of the Commercial and industrial Society”), in: Primosrskaya Zhizn’ (Vladivostok), 7 November 1918, Vladivostok State Historical Archive.

24 War Diary of Force Headquarters CEF (S), 29 October 1918 and 31 October 1918; War Diary of Advance Party 6th Signal Company CEF (S), 3 November 1918, Centre for Research on Canadian-Russian Relations Special Collections (hereafter cited as CRRC), series 1, section 1 (Archival Materials); Hertzberg diary, 3 November 1918, LAC, Hertzberg fonds, vol. 1, file 1-18, Diary #8; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, p. 151.

25 Benjamin Isitt, *Mutiny from Victoria to Vladivostok: December 1918*, in: *Canadian Historical Review* 87 (June 2006) 2, pp. 223-64.

26 *Canadians Had Easy Time in Siberia*, in: *Daily Times*, 19 April 1919; Beattie, *Canadian Intervention in Russia*, p. 381.

27 Bickford diary, 29 January 1919.

28 Bickford diary, 5 February 1919.

29 *Siberian Sapper* (Vladivostok), 8 February 1919, LAC, RG 9, ser. III, vol. 363, file 119.

Bolshevism. Officers' diaries and memoirs paint a picture of a vibrant social scene, with regular leave from the barracks to dine at restaurants and cafés that dotted Svetlanskaya, bathe in authentic Russian bathhouses, and frequent theatres and private homes in the cosmopolitan port. Allied officers travelled on *droshky*, horse-driven carts.³⁰ At their mess halls, they feasted on duck and geese. Many took lessons in Russian. Some developed strong camaraderie with White Russians attached to the Allied units as translators, such as Lieut. Aleksandr Ragosin, a former Czarist officer attached to the Canadian force headquarters. The small coterie of foreign women in Vladivostok, such as Mrs. Ross Owen, wife of the Canadian Pacific Railroad envoy, provided entertainment for the officers and offered civilian relief.³¹

The lower ranks satisfied themselves with more frugal pursuits: frequenting the bustling markets and bazaars and rambling around the fortifications that dotted the coastline inside and outside town.³² The lower ranks reached Vladivostok by tram or on foot. Organizations including the YMCA and Knights of Columbus operated canteen huts, readings rooms, and movie theatres at the barracks, and organized concerts, lectures, dances, baseball and soccer games, and church services.³³ In February 1919, the Illusion Idyllion theatre on Svetlanskaya was leased for four months and transformed into the Maple Leaf Cinema and Café, a facility intended to be “as nearly Canadian in all its services as possible.”³⁴ An eight-team hockey league was established, as well as two brigade newspapers.³⁵ On 1 May 1919, the various Allied contingents participated in a large *Gymkhana* sports day at Vladivostok's Exhibition Grounds, with activities ranging from tug-of-war and polo to wrestling.³⁶

30 Capt. W.E. Dunham, *The Canadians in Siberia*, in: Maclean's (May 1918), 11-12; Bickford diary, 11 February 1919 and 8 March 1919.

31 Dorothy Findlay to Mother, 2 December 1918, in: *Letters from Vladivostok, 1918–1923*, in: *Slavonic and East European Review* 45 (July 1967) 105, pp. 506-7; Tompkins, *A Canadian's Road to Russia*, pp. 369-404; Elkington interview, July 1980, UVASC, Military Oral History collection, SC 141, 170; Massey, *When I Was Young*, pp. 212-13; Hertzberg diary, 28 October-5 June 1919, LAC, Hertzberg fonds, vol. 1, file 1-18, Diary #8 (10 May 1918-15 Nov. 1918) and Diary #9 (16 Nov. 1918-22 July 1919); Hertzberg, *Military Engineering with the Canadian Brigade in Siberia 1919*, p. 8; Ardagh diary, January 1919-May 1919, LAC, Harold Vernon Ardagh fonds, MG 30, E-150; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, p. 198.

32 Bickford diary, 24 April 1919.

33 MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, pp. 198-99; “Notice,” 29 March 1919, War Diary of General Staff CEF(S), Daily Routine Orders, March 1919, appendix XLI p. 31. For the activities of the YMCA, see LAC, RG 9, series II-B-12, “Part II Daily Orders – Vladivostok – YMCA”; Charles W. Bishop, *The Canadian YMCA in the Great War: The Official Record of the Activities of the Canadian YMCA in Connection with the Great War of 1914–1918* (Toronto, 1924), p. 304–10; I.J.E. Daniel and D.A. Casey, *For God and Country: War Work of Canadian Knights of Columbus Catholic Army Huts*, Ottawa, c. 1922, pp. 167-70.

34 YMCA Notes, in: *Siberian Sapper (Vladivostok)*, 8 February 1919, Stephenson Family Collection (private collection); Daily Routine Order No. 69, 31 January 1919, War Diary of Force Headquarters, CEF(S), Appendix XCII-XCIV, p. 69; also Stuart to Edna, 15 February 1919, in Tompkins, *A Canadian's Road to Russia*, p. 402.

35 Polk, *The Canadian Red Cross and Relief in Siberia*, p. 65; Faulstich, Mail from the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force, pp. 24-25; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, p. 198; Stuart to Edna, 25 January 1919, in Tompkins, *A Canadian's Road to Russia*, p. 378; Ardagh diary, 31 January 1919, LAC, Harold Vernon Ardagh fonds, MG 30, E-150, file 1/6. For the organization of sporting activities, see “Sports Organization CEF (Siberia),” 4 February 1919, War Diary of General Staff CEF(S), Daily Routine Orders, February 1919, appendix XLIX pp. 33-34.

36 “Notice – Gymkhana,” 26 March 1919, War Diary of General Staff CEF(S), March 1919, Daily Routine Orders, ap-

Mixed social spaces did, however, exist. Boxing matches animated barrack life most evenings – drawing crowds of officers and enlisted men – while American and Canadian soldiers (of all ranks) played frequent baseball games once the snow melted in the spring of 1919.³⁷ Theatrical performances also bridged the class divide, such as the vaudeville show *The Roadhouse Minstrels*, directed by Canadian machine-gun officer and future Hollywood actor Lieutenant Raymond Massey (an established member of Canada's elite), playing to two dozen packed audiences.³⁸ In March 1919, American troops from the 27th Infantry Regiment gave a concert for Allied officers in the Pushkin Theatre.³⁹

Social spaces were also contested in Vladivostok's sex trade. The Japanese command allowed for a regulated form of prostitution, acknowledging the reality of sexual relations in every theatre of war. Japanese commanders issued "ration cards" to their troops for "comfort visits" to sex-trade workers who had accompanied the expeditionary force from Japan; medical tests were frequent to limit the spread of venereal disease.⁴⁰ Even so, this system relied on the dubiously voluntary participation of working-class Japanese women and foreshadowed the horrific "comfort stations" that would emerge as Japan spread its power across the Pacific world.⁴¹ In contrast to this Japanese policy, the Canadian command officially forbade all sexual relations among the British and Canadian troops in Vladivostok, with the quarter master general informing all ranks that sexual intercourse with a woman was an offence punishable by court martial, equivalent to a self-inflicted wound. "The percentage of Venereal Disease in our Force is very high and unless there is some improvement [...] in the near future, it will be necessary [...] to modify or cancel the privilege of passes in the City."⁴² The policy reflected the rigid Protestant norms of the Anglo-Canadian elite. The quarter master's decree threatened to ship infected soldiers back to Canada and "notify the relatives of these men" as to the cause.⁴³ Canada's policy was a spectacular failure. According to medical records, roughly one half of all hospital cases at Canada's Second River Hospital related to venereal disease. Two Canadian soldiers died of Asiatic syphilis.⁴⁴ Defying the standing order, Canadian and British troops frequented sex-trade workers at the district known as "Kopek Hill." "These are the girls who love anyone with the price," one Canadian observed.⁴⁵ A graphic incident resulted

pendix XLI; Wilgress, *Memoirs*, p. 55; Charles Sumner Lund Hertzberg diary, 12 April 1919 and 28 April-2 May 1919, LAC, Hertzberg fonds, vol. 1, file 1-18, Diary #9.

37 See Bickford diary, March-June 1919 (particularly 22 March, 23 March, 25 April).

38 *The Roadhouse Minstrels*, in: Siberian Sapper (Vladivostok), 8 February 1919, Stephenson Family Collection (private collection); *The Roadhouse Minstrels Present the Following Bill*, n.d. (c. January 1919), LAC, RG 9, series III-D-3, vol. 5057, file 964; Massey, *When I Was Young*, pp. 214-21.

39 Bickford diary, 28 March 1919.

40 Stephan, *The Russian Far East*, p. 134; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, p. 201.

41 Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation*, London 2002.

42 Daily Routine Orders, 11 December 1918. LAC, RG 9, War Diary of Force Headquarters CEF (S).

43 Ibid.

44 "Officers & Others Ranks, C.E.F. (Siberia) Who Have Died," LAC, RG 24, series C-1-a, vol 1992, file 762-11-25 "Returns of Strength C.E.F. (Siberia)."

45 William H. Bryant photo album, overleaf of photograph of Russian sex-trade workers, from the Bryant Family Collection, Nanton, Alberta (private collection); Raymond Massey, *When I Was Young* (Toronto, 1976), p. 206.

in a Canadian military court of inquiry. Lance-Corporal Peter Marchik, an interpreter with the force headquarters battalion, was “shot in the penis” by a Russian woman at a Vladivostok brothel. The hearing, held in February 1919, found that the Lance-Corporal Marchik suffered a “flesh wound” that was not fatal.⁴⁶

In contrast with the prostitution practiced by rank-and-file Allied troops (whether regulated or illicit), Allied officers were more subtle and invisible in their sexual relations. Innuendo in personal memoirs gives a hint, such as a seemingly close relationship that developed between a certain Canadian lieutenant and an unnamed White Russian émigré woman living near the Canadian barracks at Second River. The officer referred euphemistically to nights spent “dancing” until the wee hours of the morning.⁴⁷ Another Canadian officer, Walter Halsall of the Base Depot Unit, remained in Vladivostok after the Canadians had evacuated to marry a White Russian wife.⁴⁸ Apparently transcending such class boundaries, American chief intelligence officer Robert Eichelberger interviewed hundreds of Russians of diverse socio-economic complexion, “everything from a Baron to a prostitute,” by his own account.⁴⁹

Class and gender shaped the social spaces of occupied Vladivostok, but so too did ethnicity and race. Reflecting the cultural traditions of the Maritime region prior to Russian colonization, as well as ongoing migration, a large minority of the local population was ethnically Asian, including Korean fishers at Gornostai Bay and Chinese labourers who performed much of the manual work for the Allies. “By 1900 all the towns between Chita and Vladivostok contained Chinese quarters” with large numbers of “shopkeepers and workmen.”⁵⁰ Nine-tenths of Vladivostok shipyard workers and half the city’s population were Asian at the turn of the century:

*were it not for the Chinese, the naval administration would have had to transport thousands of Russian labourers to construct Vladivostok’s naval fitting yards, arsenal, fortifications and coastal defences... The Chinese – construction workers, diggers, porters, merchants, and peasants – were quite simply indispensable to the continuation of the rapid pace of economic activity occasioned by the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway.*⁵¹

Like elsewhere in the Pacific world, “indispensability of the Chinese did not endear them to the Russian settler population” – as European Russians displayed cultural superiority and racism in their interactions with local Asians – displayed most graphically during

46 “Shooting of No. 417988 L/Cpl. P. Marchik,” 5 February 1919. LAC, RG 9, series III-a-3, vol 378, file “A3. SEF Courts of Enquiry,” Part II Daily Orders, 10 December 1918. War Diary of Force Headquarters CEF (S).

47 Ardagh diary, January 1919–May 1919, LAC, Harold Vernon Ardagh fonds, MG 30, E-150.

48 Correspondence with Raymond Halsall, Victoria, BC, 27 July 2010; Interview with Raymond Halsall, by author, Victoria, BC, 2 September 2010.

49 Paul Chwialkowski, A ‘Near Great’ General: The Life and Career of Robert L. Eichelberger (PhD diss., Duke University, 1991), 32, as cited in Zitser, “A Dirty Place for Americans to Be,” p. 31.

50 Lewis Siegelbaum, Another “Yellow Peril”: Chinese Migrants in the Russian Far East and the Russian reaction before 1917, in: *Modern Asian Studies* 12 (April 1978) 2, p. 316.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 316–17.

the Boxer Rebellion when several thousand Chinese civilians were slaughtered at Blagoveshchensk.⁵² Ernest Zitser's recent study on the "colonial gaze" of American troops helps us to extend to the interpretive lens into the Civil War period. According to Zitser, soldiers viewed Vladivostok civilians with a focus on "only certain racial types or social situations," in order to "reassert the superiority of [their] own nation, sex, and race." Such photographic representations of the Asian "other" help to illuminate "daily life during wartime in a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional region on the border of three major twentieth-century powers (Russia, Japan, and China)."⁵³

This assessment is supported by evidence from the Canadian soldiers in Vladivostok. Lacking authorization to proceed "up country", the Canadians (both officers and lower ranks) took thousands of photographs of Vladivostok and its people during the winter of 1918-19. The interpretive framework of "Orientalism" helps us to understand Canadian photographic representations of Vladivostok's Asian people, as does the concept of "multiculturalism" and a particularly "Canadian multiculturalism," which shaped the perception of the troops. Like the Americans, the Canadians focused disproportionately on the "other" and the exotic: Korean fishers at Gornostai; their sod huts and children and livestock; their cultural and religious practices; Chinese peddlers, merchants, and labourers; and "exotic" forms of entertainment such as bear and tiger shows on Svetlanskaya and acrobatic performances by Allied Chinese troops. This reflected an air of unfamiliarity (at least among those Canadians who lived outside the country's west coast, which had its own well-established Chinese and Japanese communities). But it also reflected a larger colonial mindset. Shortly after reaching Vladivostok, Canadian medical doctor Eric Elkington wrote how he was "were struck by the curious inhabitants who were about the wharf. Chiefly Manchurians well built and strong looking Mongolians and not like the Coolies so frequently seen in B. C. They were employed in unloading the boat and native transport being largely used."⁵⁴ Another Canadian, Private Percy Francis with the supply depot at Egersheld Wharf, worked closely with Chinese labourers and wrote fondly of one: "Mong ... would give me his shirt."⁵⁵ However, rather than a single "Asian" other, the Canadians' perceptions operated in complex ways. There is evidence of strong camaraderie with Japanese officers, who were largely viewed as "western," in distinction to the perception of local Korean and Chinese civilians, which raises questions over how "Japanese Orientalism" may have shaped race relations in occupied Vladivostok.⁵⁶

If the Canadian experience is indicative of the larger Allied experience, the soldiers appeared to interact more with the local Asian population than with Russian civilians of European ethnicity, who were likely suspected of Bolshevism to a greater extent. However, even this conclusion reflects a colonial mindset, that somehow the Chinese merchants

52 Ibid., pp. 317-19.

53 Zitser, "A Dirty Place for Americans to Be", pp. 40-42.

54 Eric Elkington diary, n.d. (c. January 1919), Eric Elkington Collection, University of Victoria Special Collections.

55 Photograph of Chinese labourer named "Mong," n.d. (c. April 1919), Percy Francis Collection, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA (private collection).

56 Sang-Jung Kang, *Beyond Orientalism*, Tokyo 1996.

and Korean fishers were impervious to the radical political philosophy of Bolshevism: important partisan commanders hailed from both of Vladivostok's two major ethnically Asian communities, Do Lin Tsoy as commander of Primorye's Chinese partisans and Kim Pen Ha as commander of the region's Korean partisans.⁵⁷

Spaces of "Bolshevism" and Insurgency

Ideology had a major role to play in shaping the social relations and social spaces of occupied Vladivostok – particular as the *partizan* guerrilla movement surged in the city and surrounding hill villages in the early months of 1919. While Canada's official history claims that "the mass of the Siberian people, who were generally content with their ordered existence under the old regime, had little leaning towards the Bolshevik system," the top Canadian policeman in the city estimated in 1919 that in Vladivostok "the inhabitants are about ninety percent Bolshevik."⁵⁸ Another Canadian, press correspondent Wilfred Playfair offered a nuanced perspective, suggesting that while "there is undoubtedly a Bolshevik element in Siberia, the leading problem at present is not Bolshevism but the conflict between various types of reactionaries and the democratic element."⁵⁹ This view was confirmed by American intelligence officer Robert Eichelberger, who believed that the "typical bunch of Russians are practically all anti-Kolchak in sympathy."⁶⁰ William S. Graves, commander of the American Expeditionary Force, explained how the term "Bolshevik" broadened in tandem with the partisan insurgency in 1919: "In Siberia, the word Bolshevik meant a human being who did not, by act or word, give encouragement to the restoration to power of representatives of Autocracy in Russia."⁶¹ Finally, a Canadian officer elaborated on this point:

*The people of Siberia resent the presence of the Allied troops... They regard us as intruders... They are all Bolsheviks in the meaning of the word as it is used here. A Bolshevik, with them, is one who wants a change.*⁶²

Facing this amorphous enemy of "Bolshevism," the Allied soldiers were largely isolated from Vladivostok's ethnically European Russian community (with the exception of those White Russians who were deemed to be sufficiently anti-Bolshevik). A climate of fear was manifest when two White Russian officers were tortured and crucified on the road to Second River, with their noses, eyes, ears, and tongues cut off and their hands severed

57 Civil War Collection, V. K. Arseniev State Museum of Primorsky Region, Vladivostok.

58 Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, p. 518; G.S. Worsley Report on "B" Squadron RNWMP, 11 October 1919, LAC, RG 18, vol. 3179, file G 989-3 (vol. 2); MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, p. 197.

59 *Canadians Had Easy Time in Siberia*, in: *Daily Times*, 19 April 1919.

60 As quoted in Zitser, "Dirty Place for Americans to Be", p. 38.

61 Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, p. 101.

62 Capt. W. E. Dunham, *The Canadians in Siberia*, in: *Maclean's Magazine* (May 1919), pp. 94-5.

and nailed to their shoulder blades “in lieu of epaulettes.”⁶³ Canadian officer Raymond Massey wrote how they “continually found the bodies of these men, bearing obscene evidence of torture before death. Many times through the winter, we were alerted to take action stations according to prearranged anti-riot plans, but nothing happened ‘above-ground.’”⁶⁴ Apprehension was also apparent in March 1919, when a belligerent Russian civilian appeared at the Canadian supply shed at Egersheld Wharf, demanding gasoline on the grounds that “the czar was dead ... and everything was public property.” The local sentry panicked and stabbed the man in the groin with his bayonet.⁶⁵ A month later, as the Canadians prepared to evacuate Vladivostok, a Russian print shop expelled soldier Roderick Rogers, halting publication of the *Siberian Sapper*. The Russians claimed that the Canadian was a drunk, while Rogers insisted that “the Russian press men are Bolsheviks.”⁶⁶

As winter gave way to spring in 1919, the partisans intensified their guerrilla campaign against the Allies, tapping growing revulsion toward the tactics of White Russian authorities in Vladivostok and the Primorye. The “Supreme Ruler” of White Siberia, Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak, had decreed a conscription law to raise recruits for an anti-Bolshevik “New Siberian Army.” However, the tactics of White Russian soldiers in the hill villages around Vladivostok drove peasants to take up arms in concert with local Bolsheviks, who had gone underground since the fall of Sukhanov’s Soviet government in June 1918 (Sukhanov himself had been shot in November 1918). The partisans seized the village of Vladimiro-Aleksandrovskoye at the mouth of the Suchan River on 15 February, and two weeks later, a military-revolutionary committee from the Tetyukhe mine rode on horseback to the seize the port of Olga up the coast.⁶⁷ An appeal from the rebels conveyed the political mood: “We rose because with all our heart we want to help our Soviet country to get rid of the executioner Kolchak, to reinstall Soviet power in Siberia and the Far East, and to get rid of the interventionists.”⁶⁸ A Canadian intelligence officer attributed the disturbances at Suchan and Olga to “the government order for the conscription of men of military age” and a second order for the surrender of arms: “The peasants say they do not like the Kolchak government or believe its democratic professions and hence do not want to fight for it.” They objected to the second order since arms were

63 Clingan, *Siberian Sideshow*, p. 40; Memorandum, Vladivostok, 21 March 1919, LAC, RG 9, series III-B-3, vol. 5057; Ardagh diary, 23 March 1919, LAC, Harold Ardagh fonds, file 2/3; see also Harold to Josie, 8 March 1919, LAC, Harold Steele Collection, MG 30, E564, file “Correspondence, 1 Dec. 1918-1 May 1919.”

64 Massey, *When I Was Young*, pp. 206-7.

65 Memorandum, 21 March 1919, LAC, War Diary Base HQ CEF (S); Ardagh diary, 23 Mar. 1919, LAC, Harold Vernon Ardagh fonds, file 2/3.

66 Hertzberg diary, 23 April 1919, LAC, Hertzberg fonds, vol. 1, file 1-18, Diary #9.

67 Mukhachev, *Dal'nii Vostok Rossii v period revoliutsii 1917 goda i grazhdanskoi voi ny*, 318-19; Willett, *Russian Sideshow*, pp. 189-90; Report on Military Situation, 28 Feb. 1919, LAC, War Diary Gen. Staff CEF(S), Feb. 1919, app. 45; “Extract of Communication Received from Japanese Headquarters – Bolshevik Movements in the Priamur Province,” 1 March 1919.

68 *Borba za vlast Sovyetov v Primorye, Vladivostok 1955*, p. 193, as quote in Mukhachev, *Dal'nii Vostok Rossii v period revoliutsii 1917 goda i grazhdanskoi voi ny*, p. 318.

*vital to their welfare against tigers, bears and robbers [...]. As the Kolchak men approach a village the young men clear off into the hills with their rifles and large bands are reported to have collected in outlying hill villages.*⁶⁹

Within Vladivostok itself, tensions were palpable by March 1919, as Allied commanders spoke openly of an impending insurrection. A tyrannical White Russian military commander, General Pavel Ivanov-Rinov, had inflamed public opinion by ordering the arrest without trial of Vladivostok's mayor and five other dissidents, "not Bolsheviks but plain radicals," four of whom were spirited away to a prison on the Manchurian border, inflaming the local population. "The Bolsheviks have placarded the city calling on the working men to gather to-morrow and protest against the action," Canadian engineer Charles Hertzberg recorded in his diary. On 12 March, a huge demonstration celebrated the second anniversary of the Romanovs' fall.⁷⁰ Japanese General Otani warned Allied commanders of a "considerable amount of unrest among the Russians in Vladivostok," suggesting "an uprising is not improbable," while consular officials (citing "political reasons") closed the port of Vladivostok to "all Russians returning to Siberia from America."⁷¹ A Canadian intelligence report shed light on the process of radicalization:

*The moderate socialists instead of standing with [Kolchak] at first wavered and then sided with the Bolsheviks, more as a modus operandi than from any actual sympathy. Anything was better than a return to Czarism, which they read clearly in the tactics of Kolchak's followers.*⁷²

The feared insurgency of March 1919 exposed schisms within the Allied camp, demonstrating contested spaces in Vladivostok but also ongoing fraternal ties. Canadian General James Elmsley warned in a secret cable: "I consider the only grave danger from [an] uprising here will be from the Allies, who having no unity of Policy or Command, may come into armed conflict themselves, particularly as strong Allied guards are mingled throughout Vladivostok and the feeling between American, Japanese and Russians is far from friendly."⁷³ It was an explosive situation, with Japan and Britain more tolerant of the White Russians' autocratic methods, while the Americans refused to participate in operations of a "political" nature. Even so, this strategic divergence did not sour friendly personal relations within the Allied officer corps. Canada's second-in-command, Brig-General Bickford, wrote in his diary that he favoured the American position, but he retained close ties with the Japanese command. In April 1919, 200 Canadians join a

69 Maj. Jason Adams, "Disturbance in Olga Bay and Suchan Mines Districts," 2 Mar. 1919, LAC, War Diary Gen. Staff CEF(S), Mar. 1919, app. 7.

70 LAC, War Diary 16th Inf Bde CEF(S), 12 Mar. 1919; Hertzberg diary, 9 Mar. 1919, LAC, Hertzberg fonds, vol. 1, file 1-18, Diary #9; "Canadians Had Easy Time in Siberia" and "Siberian Lines Being Improved," in: Daily Times (Victoria), 19 Apr. 1919.

71 Instructions in Case of Riotous Disturbances in Vladivostok Area, 15 March 1919, and Special Operation Orders, 13 March 1919, LAC, War Diary Base HQ CEF(S); "Cannot Enter Siberia," in: Tribune, 10 Apr. 1919; Pares, My Russian Memoirs, p. 506.

72 Mackintosh Bell, Sidelights on the Siberian Campaign, p. 125.

73 Elmsley to War Office, 18 March 1919, LAC, War Diary Gen. Staff CEF(S), Mar. 1919, app. P (g).

Japanese-led operation to protect the strategic White-held town of Shkotovo, which connected Vladivostok to its coal supply on the Suchan River. On 18 April, Bickford dined with General Otani, enjoying “plenty of wine of every variety.”⁷⁴ Five days later, he hosted three senior Japanese officers for a luncheon and game of bridge at Gornostai.⁷⁵ And on 1 May 1919, during the *Gymkhana* sports day organized for the Allied contingents, Bickford shared a viewing box with General Otani and chatted with General Horvath, who narrowly escaped an assassination attempt on his return to Vladivostok. While returning to his apartment on Svetlanskaya, partisans detonated two bombs near Horvath’s motorcade. A chase ensued, culminating in the culprit’s capture by two Canadian mounted police officers. They were handed over to White Russian authorities and shot by firing squad the following day.⁷⁶ Yet in this moment of tension, Brig-General Bickford remarked that the Russians he met in the villages during a horse ride up the coast from Gornostai were “very polite.”⁷⁷

Conclusion

From the fishing villages of Gornostai Bay, to Vladivostok’s brothels, bazaars, cafés, and Chinese Market, to the town of Shkotovo where foreign troops encountered the multi-ethnic *partizan* guerrilla movement, the social relations and social spaces of the occupied “bordertown” of Vladivostok were shaped by class, race, and ideology. Vladivostok, like Russia’s Primorye region generally, was a contested geopolitical and social space – located on the borders of Bolshevism – as rival state and non-state actors vied for influence. In the tumultuous wake of the 1917 revolutions, an array of borders were contested: political, economic, ethnic, and ideological. The preceding pages have located cross-cultural relations in the political context of the Allied occupation, with particular reference to Canadian soldiers and local civilians, illuminating how the foreign soldiers perceived of, and interacted with, each other and with Vladivostok’s diverse civilian population. Officers were strongly motivated by ideology, fearing a Bolshevik threat while nurturing a tight fraternal network within the Allied officer corps and the cafés and mess halls of the city and surrounding barracks. Rank-and-file troops were less committed to their countries’ war aims and were more open to engagement with civilian populations, but seemed to engage more with the local Asian inhabitants who were seen (however inaccurately), as being impervious to Bolshevik influence. Collectively, foreign soldiers’ class, race, and ideologies shaped their perceptions of, and relations with, Vladivostok civilians.

74 Bickford diary, 19 April 1919.

75 Ibid., 23 April 1919.

76 Bickford diary, 1 and 2 May 1919; G. S. Worsley Report on “B” Squadron RNWMP, 11 October 1919, LAC, RG 18, vol. 3179, file G 989-3 (vol. 2); War Diary of General Staff CEF(S), 1 May 1919; Hertzberg diary, 2 May 1919, LAC, Hertzberg fonds, vol. 1, file 1-18, Diary #9.

77 Bickford diary, 4 May 1919.