A Peace that Never Had A Chance: American and Allied Diplomacy towards the Russian
Provisional Government, March-November 1917

by

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Abstract

In March 1917, the Russian Revolution caused the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II. A Provisional Government, composed of moderate Duma members, replaced the imperial government. Nine months later, the Bolshevik party seized power, overthrew the Provisional Government, and removed Russia from the war. This “second revolution” of 1917 has been the concern of many past and present historians while the interim period of the Provisional Government has received considerably less attention. This study deals with a critical aspect of the interim period. The Provisional Government created a peace program, which came to be based on the principles of no annexations, no indemnities, and the right to self-determination, with the hopes its partners in the war, especially the United States, would accept this program and bring an end to the war. This monograph analyzes the extent to which American and Allied decision makers constituted an obstacle to the Russian Provisional Government’s peace program.

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List of Abbreviations

AFL – American Federation of Labour
AUAM – American Union Against Militarism
CPI – Committee for Public Information
FRB – Federal Reserve Board
FRS – Federal Reserve System
FRUS – Foreign Relations of the United States
ISB – International Socialist Bureau
ISC – International Socialist Committee
MIT – Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NEC – National Executive Committee (of the British Labour Party)
NS – New Style
OS – Old Style
SFIO – *Section française de l'internationale*
SPD – *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*
UDC – Union of Democratic Control
YMCA – Young Men's Christian Association

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Appendix 1: Trade Statistics for the United States and Imperial Russia

Introduction

The March Revolution

The two belligerent camps of the First World War were defined by their military alliances and in part by their internal political systems. Generally speaking, the Central Powers were autocratic governments with a weak parliamentary component, while the Allied Powers were democratic governments with strong parliamentary institutions. The exception on the Allied side was Russia, an autocracy ruled by a tsar holding autocratic power, at least up to the constitutional experiment that followed the revolution of 1905 – an experiment the Imperial Government never sincerely accepted. Since the outbreak of war in 1914, Russia had been a thorn in the side of Allied propaganda, which aimed to represent the Entente as a group of democratic nations fighting to protect Europe from the autocratic rule of the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires. In March 1917 all of this changed, when revolution in Russia brought about the downfall of the 300 year-old Romanov dynasty.¹ A Provisional Government, composed of moderate Duma members, replaced Tsar Nicholas II and his ministers. These men took up the task of guiding the “New Russia” to both a transition to democracy and a successful conclusion of the war.²

The Allies first perceived the March Revolution as a very welcome change. The Provisional Government was seen as a new *democratic* ally on the Eastern front and Paris and London believed the Provisional Government would revive Russia’s war effort. The

¹ Until the November Revolution, Russia still used the Julian or Old Style calendar, effectively putting the country 13 days behind the rest of the world which used the Gregorian or New Style calendar. For the purposes of this work I will be using only New Style dates, unless I am discussing an event or document in or from Russia, in which case I will use both New and Old Style (NS/OS), or if I directly quote a source that uses Old Style dates; in such an instance, I will note the use of the Old Style with (OS)

² The State Duma, created by the Fundamental Laws of 1906, was roughly equivalent to a lower house of parliament

transition in Russia from autocracy to democracy injected a new spirit into the Allied propaganda effort as well. The Allies were now able to argue with greater plausibility that they represented a crusade of democracy against the absolutism and autocracy of Germany and the Central Powers.

The New Russia soon welcomed a new associate in the Allied coalition: the United States. Autocratic Russia had been a point of concern for American President Woodrow Wilson since the beginning of the war. Before the revolution, negative opinion of tsarist Russia had been a significant factor in reinforcing “a strict rule of neutrality” in the United States; but now the New Russia and the new Associated Power provided new hope for the Allied cause.³

This new hope began to fade. The new Russian government quickly encountered the same problems tsarist Russia had faced, the most pressing issue being the war itself. The new Russian leaders did not need to look far to understand the benefits of getting Russia out of the war, for doing so would allow them to concentrate on restoring order and stability to the country and enable the Provisional Government to enact a land redistribution policy that would be popular with the people. The problem, of course, was how the “getting out” could be arranged. With this in mind, the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet devised a set of measures that they hoped would not only remove Russia from the war but do it in a way that would satisfy the new democratic fervour that had overtaken the country.⁴ The Russian peace policy eventually developed

³ Benson Lee Grayson, *Russian-American Relations in World War I* (New York: Ungar, 1979), 121. Grayson uses the word “strict” to describe American neutrality in the war, however, it is arguable whether or not Wilson’s definition of neutrality was as strict as Grayson seems to imply.

⁴ The Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ Deputies was a workers’ council that had appeared in the revolution of 1905 as a representative body of the city’s workers. An Executive Committee as well as a chairman, Nickolay Chkheidze, was elected and the name was soon changed to the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, which reflected the number of delegates sent from army units. After the March

into a two-pronged program launched by both the Petrograd Soviet as the socialist representative of the country and the liberal-bourgeois Provisional Government. The Petrograd Soviet would rally popular support for a negotiated peace in Allied countries through an international socialist conference, while the Provisional Government would use traditional diplomatic channels to achieve the revision of Allied war aims by means of an inter-Allied conference to prepare for a general negotiated peace. Both the Soviet and the Provisional Government pursued this program from April until the Provisional Government stood at death's door in November.

Major Research Questions

In this chapter I will enter into a discussion of culpability in the failure of the peace program and I will ask whether the Russian peace program was a failure or if it ever had a chance? However, unlike previous histories which focus on Russia and the European allies' reaction to the Russian peace program this investigation will focus around President Woodrow Wilson and American policy towards the peace program because Wilson was the leader who seemed most likely to be in sympathy with the Provisional Government's peace program in 1917.⁵ Therefore, throughout this investigation, when attention is directed towards the Allies, it is either to contrast their attitudes and responses with American policy or to ask if American policy was influenced by them.

After the formation of the Provisional Government, the members' aimed to consolidate the gains made by the revolution. The purpose of the Provisional

Revolution, the Soviet quickly began organizing the city, appointing commissions to deal with food supply, the press, work stoppages, and other quasi-governmental activities.

⁵ These previous histories include Robert D. Warth, *The Allies and the Russian Revolution: From the Fall of the Monarchy to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1954), Rex Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969).

Government was to keep the country in one piece until a constituent assembly had drafted a constitution and a government had been elected. Since the autocracy had been overturned, Russia was ready to join the ranks of liberal-democracy. Unfortunately, the Provisional Government also had to contend with the problem of the war; the same issue that forced the abdication of the Tsar. But fortunately for Russia's allies, the Provisional Government committed Russia to continuing the war. Furthermore, the Russian peace program did not greatly change the Russian plan of action in regards to a separate peace. Although the peace program aimed to conclude a general peace, the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet vowed not to abandon the Allies to a German army and a one-front war by negotiating a separate peace with the Central Powers.⁶

History hardly ever gives the gift of an easy decision. Time and again, the difficult choice has been between two evils, or between the devil that was known over the devil that was not. Hardly ever do we find clear "goods" as opposed to evident evils. However, after the March Revolution, Wilson was confronted with just such a choice: for the establishment of democracy in Russia and the victory of an Allied coalition that included Russia were both "goods". The two "goods" that Wilson faced meant a choice between supporting Russia to become a liberal democracy and keeping Russia in the war. In supporting a liberal-democratic Russia, Wilson would have had the opportunity to create Russia in the image of the United States. He would fulfill the concepts of "mirror-imaging" and "Americanization" (that I will discuss below) espoused by historians like Gordon Levin and Norman E. Saul. If Russia became a mini-America – not in size but in principle and institution – Wilson would have the potential to expand American influence in Russia.

⁶ Rex Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969) 7, 1, 9, 47.

If instead Wilson fought to keep Russia in the war, he would guarantee Russia would continue to occupy German forces on the Eastern front, further eroding the German war effort and ensuring fewer guns would be pointed at the fresh American troops being sent to the Western front to join in the conflict. These two goods were not necessarily in opposition to each other, at least in Wilson's mind. The support of democracy in Russia would create a new efficiency towards the prosecution of the war and the national war effort and in order to create that democracy Wilson needed to recognize and address the issues raised by the New Russia. These issues pertained to the above mentioned peace program: the revision of war aims through diplomatic means and through an international socialist conference.

As mentioned previously, the Provisional Government's part in the peace program was to press for the revision of war aims among the Allies. The Provisional Government hoped the Allies would renounce their annexationist war aims and revise their war aims to be more in line with the Petrograd Formula of no annexations, no indemnities, and the right to self-determination. Doing so would make it clear that the Allied camp was not fighting for or prolonging an imperialist war and would create the environment for a more democratic peace. The Petrograd Soviet wanted to convene an international socialist conference to discuss how peace might be forced upon the belligerents and to rally popular support for peace in the warring countries.

The decision between Wilson's two goods hinged on Wilson's willingness to perceive these issues and seriously consider them; however, Wilson did not choose either of these goods and this leads me to ask what kinds of decisions and policies were implemented towards Russia and what was the purpose of these policies? Why did

Wilson decide to not to choose from the two goods that had been presented to him? The answer lies in President Wilson's own ideas about how the war and the future peace would turn out and how his ideas shaped his diplomacy towards the Allies. This is especially true of Wilson's diplomacy towards Russia after the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet created a two-pronged Russian peace policy. Did Wilson's motives come into conflict with the aims of the Russian peace program? Were the Allies attitudes towards that program as much of an obstacle to the Provisional Government's peace policy as the internal issues that Russia faced? The amount of historical writing on the Russian Revolution is enormous but many historians have focussed on the March Revolution and the November Revolution in Russia and often skip over the interim period of the Russian Provisional Government. My aim is to give more attention to the Russian Provisional Government and its peace program before the Bolshevik coup in November 1917.

Historiography

A prevalent theme throughout the political historiography of the First World War and the Russian Revolution is the struggle that the war represented between democracy and autocracy, an issue that I have already touched upon. This theme is also present throughout much of the historiography of Russian peace policy and American diplomacy towards Russia in 1917. Robert D. Warth's *The Allies and the Russian Revolution* is a book that formulates this theme quite early on. Warth discusses how the March Revolution caused a necessary shift in Allied propaganda that made the fight for freedom against autocracy a reality.⁷ Warth's book is certainly a product of the Cold War, in that

⁷ Robert D. Warth, *The Allies and the Russian Revolution: From the Fall of the Monarchy to the Peace of Brest-Litovsk* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1954) 26.

it seems to convey a warning of how *not* to deal with communism and Soviet Russia, given that “Allied policy and diplomacy in the period concerned was based on an almost total lack of understanding of the forces and events of the Russian Revolution.”⁸ Yet however dated this book may be, Warth is able to make a useful point when he states that “the Allies – like the Central Powers – were primarily concerned with the efficient conduct of the war, but the idealistic reasons for which they were supposedly fighting were contradicted in practice by their policy towards both democratic and Bolshevik Russia.”⁹ This glaring contradiction is especially apparent in Wilson’s Russian policy, making Warth’s analysis of the Allies’ Russian policy integral to my understanding of the democracy versus autocracy element in Allied thinking and their diplomacy towards Russia.

Like Warth, who deals primarily with the Russian Provisional Government, Rex Wade is another scholar who has dealt with the Provisional Government, and more specifically with the Provisional Government’s peace program. Wade is a specialist on the Russian Revolution and has contributed an important study, *The Russian Search for Peace*. This book is essential to a scholarly understanding of the events that took place in the nine months of 1917 before the Bolshevik coup. Wade begins with an introduction to the March Revolution and a discussion of the power struggle that ensued between the Provisional Government and the popular organization of the Petrograd Soviet. He then discusses the two-pronged policy of the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet in two chapters: one, explaining the Petrograd Soviet’s contribution to the peace program and the other explaining the contribution of the Provisional Government. His

⁸ Warth, *The Allies and the Russian Revolution*, v.

⁹ *Ibid.*

final chapters explore the continuing rift between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet, and the collapse and eventual failure of the peace program.

Wade recognizes that some blame must be laid at the Allies' feet for the failure of the Provisional Government's peace program. However, Wade also re-focuses that blame on the Russian "Revolutionary-Defencists" who "had a particular love-hate attitude toward the Allies...[and] this ambivalence carried over to the Allied socialist parties."¹⁰ Wade argues that the Allied governments were interested only in a decisive victory over the Central Powers and "in this they were supported by the great majority of their constituents."¹¹ Therefore, the Provisional Government set an unrealistic goal with their peace program since no one else within the Allied camp was willing to accept a negotiated peace. However, this judgement is in danger of becoming an oversimplification. Public opinion is fickle. To be able to say that a majority of citizens within the Allied countries were willing to endure the war until the very end would be to ignore many labour and military strikes and "mutinies" that were, arguably, symptoms of the serious war weariness which had swept over Europe in 1917. Wade also questions how energetically and skilfully the Provisional Government pushed for a negotiated peace as well as the nature of the Petrograd Soviet, its leadership, and its support.

Finally, Wade asserts that the Petrograd Soviet's program expected too much from

¹⁰ Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 145 The Revolutionary-Defencists was a group of Russian socialists who called for a revival of the International and for a general peace, in that way this group was very similar to the Zimmerwaldists (and were often known as the Siberian Zimmerwaldists) There were however differences between the Zimmerwaldists and their Siberian counterparts, the biggest difference being the stand the Siberian Zimmerwaldists took on the war: this group held a firm anti-war position, but admitted that under certain conditions the *defence* of one's country was a justifiable reason for war. One of these justifiable reasons was the fact that, by 1917, the Central Powers occupied a large part of Russian territory. This was a key element of the Revolutionary-Defencists position justifying the continuation of a defensive war. This position aided the Siberian group to gain power within the Soviet and for a time within the Provisional Government and it came to be known as Revolutionary Defencism

¹¹ *Ibid* One must also question the nature of Wade's evidence on this matter How can the author prove that a majority of the constituents of the European belligerents were interested in continuing the war to a decisive victory?

European socialism by believing that Allied socialists would quickly abandon the *union sacrée* within their national governments in favour of the Soviet program.¹²

Although at times Wade can be very harsh on the Provisional Government, the Petrograd Soviet, and the Russian peace program, he has put forward very shrewd arguments as to why the peace program failed. Wade's book is the stepping-off point and foundation for my own research. Interestingly, while Wade is very critical of the Provisional Government's policies, he is less so of the Allies, especially the United States. In fact, the American perspective does not figure prominently in Wade's analysis. Wade's purpose is to explain how domestic factors in Russia played a role in the peace program's failure. However, my aim is to discover how the United States dealt with the New Russia as it became an increasingly difficult ally and to what extent and at what point Washington had dismissed Russia as an ally that could contribute to the common victory. This study considers the American reaction to the Russian peace program and to what extent that reaction contributed to the peace program's failure.

Scholars like Arno Mayer, Gordon Levin, and William Appleman Williams have contributed much to the history of Wilsonian diplomacy in the period of the First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the peace conference at Versailles. Their studies of the ideals upon which Wilsonian diplomacy was based is integral to an understanding of how Wilson approached the Russian Revolution and the Provisional Government's peace program, which was similar to Wilson's own program for peace. *Wilson vs. Lenin:*

Political Origins of the New Diplomacy 1917-1918 by Arno Mayer discusses and

¹² Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 145-6. *Union sacrée* is the French term used to describe the political truces that the socialist parties of the warring European nations undertook at the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. Throughout Europe, socialist parties supported their governments in declarations of war, voting for war credits, etc. because they believed it was their patriotic duty to do so. These political truces are a prime example of the patriotic fervour that overtook the continent in the summer of 1914.

analyzes the history of war aims and their political context from March 1917 to January 1918. Mayer's study allows the historian to understand the politics of war aims during "the breakdown of Europe's political and ideological equilibrium under the combined impact of the military stalemate, the Russian Revolution, and the American intervention."¹³ To Mayer, the 'parties of movement' favoured the "New Diplomacy": open diplomacy and a new start in international relations.¹⁴ The 'parties of order' espoused secret diplomacy and war aims that sought annexations and indemnities. Throughout the First World War, but specifically from March 1917 to January 1918, Mayer argues that a power struggle took place throughout the major belligerent nations between the 'parties of order' and the 'parties of movement'; a struggle that Mayer asserts was won by the 'parties of movement'.¹⁵

Russia plays an important role in his discussion of war aims and the New Diplomacy. Mayer cites the "Proclamation by the Petrograd Soviet to the Peoples of the World" of 27 March 1917 (NS)/14 March 1917 (OS) as a moment when the Petrograd Soviet showed itself "as a loyal opposition which would seek to bargain its support of the political truce for concessions in the field of war aims."¹⁶ The Petrograd Soviet's Proclamation of 27 March 1917 (NS) marked the beginning of the end for the *Burgfrieden* and *union sacrée*, and in his view this document marked the beginning of the ascendancy of the 'parties of movement' and the New Diplomacy over the 'parties of

¹³ Arno Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy 1917-1918* (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1964), vii.

¹⁴ The "New Diplomacy" was an ideology which advocated citizen involvement in the formation of international policy.

¹⁵ Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin*, 7-8.

¹⁶ Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin*, 73.

order'.¹⁷ Mayer goes on to argue that although Wilson and Lenin used different means, their “transformational” outlooks were the same: Lenin’s “ultimate objective of the classless society in a warless world had the same hopeful and utopian quality as Wilson’s search for a peaceful community of sovereign democratic nations of unequal power.”¹⁸

The March Revolution was the catalyst for the struggle for the New Diplomacy, but the New Russia was unable to see her own peace policy (which was based on the New Diplomacy) through to completion. The Petrograd Soviet and President Woodrow Wilson were essentially on the same page when it came to the general principles that would guide the Allied revision of war aims; however, they were “worlds apart on one crucial point.” Once the United States joined the war, Wilson became a proponent of peace through victory, while the Petrograd Soviet espoused the idea of a negotiated peace now. Indeed, “the Petrograd Soviet became the foremost exponent of Wilson’s earlier peace without victory”. At a time when he was needed the most, Wilson abandoned – or at least greatly altered – the means by which he sought to achieve peace and by doing so created a huge problem for peace hungry Russia. Although Wilson and the other Allied ‘parties of movement’ had to fight for their New Diplomacy program to be accepted by the Allied ‘parties of order’, the representatives of the Russian peace program had to fight even harder.¹⁹ Nowhere is this better illustrated than with the case of the “Petrograd Formula” created by the Petrograd Soviet. It adopted a peace formula that adhered to the principles of no annexations, no indemnities, and the right of all peoples to self-determination. The ‘New Diplomacy’ and its supporters espoused this type of peace.

¹⁷ *Burgfrieden* is the German term used to describe the political truces that the socialist parties of Europe undertook at the outbreak of hostilities in 1914

¹⁸ Mayer, *Wilson vs Lenin*, 393.

¹⁹ Mayer, *Wilson vs Lenin*, 182-4.

This kind of peace had been adopted by many Radical Leftists who had not adhered to the political truce with their governments at the outbreak of hostilities. Now it was co-opted by the Petrograd Soviet, as it later would be by the Bolshevik Party.

Mayer argues that Wilson's reaction to the Petrograd Formula was cautious because as a war leader Wilson no longer enjoyed the diplomatic latitude he had possessed during the period of American neutrality. This argument is logical but not entirely convincing. Before bringing the United States into the war, Wilson had been the loudest voice for termination of the fighting through a negotiated peace.²⁰ Wilson's diplomacy in this regard was driven by the expectation that if he could force the two camps to open talks (under his auspices, of course), the dynamics of negotiation would give him the opportunity to cajole both sides into agreeing to the kind of peace without victory that *he* wanted. But now the Provisional Government was taking over the push for a negotiated peace, and the new peace formula would make it *their* peace. In this study I will argue that, Wilson faced the prospect that his new international order would be upstaged in any negotiations undertaken under the Provisional Government's initiative. This study is an alternative explanation of the president's "caution" with regard to the peace formula, which had at least the potential to derail or supplement his own ambitions. This study also follows Woodrow Wilson's evolution from being a proponent of peace without victory to aiding, both directly and indirectly, in its demise, something which earlier specialists have not emphasized.

Gordon Levin's *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution*, discusses the Wilson administration's attempt to build a liberal-capitalist world order, protected from both traditional imperialism and revolutionary

²⁰ Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin*, 187-8.

socialism through what Levin defines as missionary means: an effort to “Americanize” international politics.²¹ Levin draws upon the work of Arno Mayer by employing the Wilsonian-Leninist approach to world politics and illustrating the conflict between the two.²²

In order to understand Wilson’s foreign policy, Levin states that we must first take note of his belief in “American exceptionalism”.²³ This American exceptionalism gave America and American foreign policy the upper hand against “traditional European imperialism”. For Wilson, the export of material goods would help to spread his values of American liberalism abroad. The ultimate hope was that America’s expanding commercial and political influence would help to launch the liberal-capitalist order on an international scale. Towards this end, Wilson adopted the role of mediator between the two camps in the First World War before American entry. Levin argues that Wilson’s peace probes – that is, the missions to Europe undertaken by Colonel House in 1915 and 1916 were attempts to convince the European belligerents that “their best interests would be served by a negotiated peace”. Again, we see Wilson as a mediator and diplomatist, a statesman who espoused the idea of a negotiated peace as the means not only to end the war but create a new international political and economic system.²⁴

Levin argues it was Wilson’s desire to fit world politics under the liberal-capitalist umbrella of the United States that led him to accept the ideological element of autocracy versus democracy in order to justify the war with Germany. Wilson was not willing to

²¹ Gordon Levin, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics America’s Response to War and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1, 6.

²² Levin, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics*, 7.

²³ Levin, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics*, 2.

²⁴ Levin, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics*, 2-3, 16, 22. Colonel Edward M. House was a close friend and associate of President Wilson and acted as an informal advisor on foreign affairs of which Wilson relied on him heavily. See Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace* (Chicago: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1979), 14.

completely accept this concept until after 30 January 1917 when the German High Command announced its decision to resume unrestricted submarine warfare and, when a few months later the autocratic anomaly in the Allied coalition became a democracy.²⁵

During the short rule of the Provisional Government in Russia, Levin states that “Wilsonians sought initially to buttress the pro-Allied liberal-nationalist regime of the March Revolution in order to save the moral and material strength of a liberalized Russia for the anti-German coalition.”²⁶ Levin’s argument is evidenced in the fact that in the summer and fall of 1917, the Provisional Government “sought to stabilize their own power, popularize the war against Germany, and pacify the Russian Left”. The Provisional Government achieved these aims through a Wilsonian-oriented program that emphasized liberal-nationalism against German autocracy and imperialism and through the efforts of their peace program which sought to rid Allied war aims of their imperialism. Furthermore, Levin states that Colonel House and the Russian Ambassador in Washington, Boris Bakhmet’ev, supported the Provisional Government’s attempts at revising the Allies’ war aims because both saw war aims revision as the best way of avoiding a separate peace between Russia and Germany and thereby maintaining “Russian political unity under liberals loyal to the Entente alliance.” What Levin does not discuss is whether the Russian Provisional Government used a “Wilsonian-oriented program” and if this program was backed by any member of Wilson’s inner circle of advisors. Nor does he explain why this peace program failed and why the Allies refused

²⁵ Levin, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics*, 37.

²⁶ Levin, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics*, 7.

to revise their war aims for an ally doing its best to stay in the war until a peace settlement could be reached.²⁷

The United States has engaged in a policy of imperialism since it first emerged as a world power in the late nineteenth century; this is the argument author William Appleman Williams makes in his book, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. Williams was a revisionist historian of American diplomacy; while most historians of his time celebrated America's legacy of freedom, Williams wrote of America's legacy of empire. The revisionist 'Wisconsin school' consisted of Williams and his graduate students. Named after the University of Wisconsin where Williams taught, the label was given to Williams and those who shared his vision of revisionist American diplomatic history. Writing at the height of the Cold War, Williams' main concern was to assert that unless the United States pursued a new policy without imperialism, the result would be nuclear war.

Williams argues that the "tragedy" of American diplomacy was the disconnect that existed between professed American ideals and the actual actions of American leaders in their relations with other countries. The type of imperialist policy put forward by several administrations was not the old-fashioned imperialism of territorial conquest and administrative control but rather of economic expansion – creating foreign markets for American trade – and ideological reform.²⁸ Williams argued that the elements of this imperialism of idealism were continued and "given classic expression in the rhetoric, style, and substance of the diplomacy of President Woodrow Wilson and [his first] Secretary of State [William Jennings] Bryan." Wilson viewed himself and the United

²⁷ Levin, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics*, 57.

²⁸ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Delta Publishing, Co., Inc., 1972), 63.

States as trustees of the world's best interests; William Jennings Bryan wanted to ensure that America's dominance in the world and that moral and economic expansion would give the United States more influence to thwart revolution and establish and support stable governments.²⁹ This outlook helps to explain both Wilson's interest in the type of government that would replace the tsarist regime in Russia as well as his policy of intervention after the Bolshevik coup and during the Russian Civil War.

At the beginning of the First World War, the problem of American diplomacy was firmly established: American foreign policy's "generous humanitarianism prompted it to improve the lot of less fortunate peoples". Unfortunately this policy was defined in terms of making these people more "American" and worked to undermine the ideal of self-determination so important to President Wilson. American reformer Colonel Raymond Robins said this about the wartime president: "Wilson was a great man but he had one basic fault...He never seemed to understand the difference between trying to save people and trying to help them. With luck you can help 'em – but they always save themselves."³⁰ Given this problem with the President's outlook, Williams wants his readers to ask two questions about American entry into the war: as Wilson entered the war on the basis that the world had to be made safe for democracy, whose definition of democracy had to be saved and by what means was that democracy to be secured? Therefore when we think of the new democracy in Russia in its infancy in the months between March and November 1917, we must ask if Wilson believed that "Russian democracy" was a democracy worth saving. In other words, did he genuinely regard the

²⁹ Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 67-9.

³⁰ Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 88. Robins was a philanthropist and humanitarian; he had been appointed Commissioner of the American Red Cross Mission to Russia during the Russian Revolution.

regime of the Provisional Government as a democracy? It is too facile to conclude that since the Bolsheviks ultimately overthrew the Provisional Government, Wilson did not believe it was worth saving; even within the logic of that argument we would need to ask *why* Wilson did not believe it was worth saving. Did Woodrow Wilson perceive or understand that his actions or inactions were undermining Russian democracy?

The themes of autocracy versus democracy and American exceptionalism first discussed by historians like Robert Warth, Gordon Levin, Rex Wade, and William Appleman Williams are continued in Norman E. Saul's *War and Revolution: The United States and Russia, 1917-1921*. If Rex Wade is one of the foremost scholars of the Russian peace policy, then Norman E. Saul is one of the foremost scholars of American-Russian relations. Saul has written three books on the subject, spanning a period from 1763 to 1921. In his third book in the series, *War and Revolution*, Saul examines the relationship between the two countries at one of their most trying periods. Saul relies on a number of sources, using not only diplomatic correspondence and archival material but also personal diaries, letters, and memoirs. Saul also investigates American-Russian relations from a variety of perspectives, utilizing sources from American business enterprises or humanitarian efforts in Russia as much as official documents from the American Embassy in Russia and State Department. Saul also includes the discussions and perspectives of reporters, diplomats, consular officials, and business men on the ground in Russia and in Washington, giving an engaging human face and voice to what could otherwise have been a dry diplomatic history.

A theme developed in the first two books of the trilogy and continued in *War and Revolution* is that of Americanization or mirror-imaging: continuations of the idea of

American exceptionalism. Americanization refers to the ways that both Americans and Russians perceived themselves as sharing a common character that distinguished them from European or Asian nations.³¹ Russians looked to the United States as the example of what to do and how to do it, while Americans expected Russians to emulate American institutions. Saul's discussion of Americanization is reminiscent of William Appleman Williams' discussion of American foreign policy, in that many American leaders believed that "what was good for Americans was also good for foreigners," and this outlook shaped not only American diplomacy towards other nations but also American perceptions of other nations.³²

Saul asserts that Americans in Russia were better prepared to accept and understand the March Revolution than other foreigners. On the other hand, within the United States the March Revolution came as more of a surprise to people since their attention had been occupied by other important issues such as the conflict with Mexico, the Far East, the re-election of President Wilson, and the approach of war with Germany. Furthermore, Americans at home had a rigid outlook on Russia as a backward and autocratic power. That perspective was hard to shake. The connection between the Provisional Government and Americans sustained special American sympathy in Russia, the Russian Revolution, and the Provisional Government. The Provisional Government's new Foreign Minister, Paul Miliukov, and Minister of War Alexander Guchkov were both well known in American business and academic circles. Moreover, after the March

³¹ Norman E. Saul, *War and Revolution: The United States and Russia, 1917-1921* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), xi-xii.

³² Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 64.

Revolution, Americans and Russians could now claim to share a similar revolutionary history.³³

Saul, like previous historians, continues the discussion of ideological warfare after the March Revolution. The New Russia was now believed to be the prime illustration of the war as a “battle between republics and empires, between parliamentary democracy and autocracy.” Furthermore, Saul makes the point that the Allies hoped that the New Russia would also generate a new war effort that would turn the tide of the struggle. But Russia’s weakened military plus the disruptions caused by the Petrograd Soviet – especially its Order Number One – would not make the dreams of the Allies, a reality.³⁴ Saul chalks up the Russian Army’s continued defeats to the inexperience of the Provisional Government’s leaders: they were unable and ineffective in meeting the challenges of the military situation. Saul also believes that they relied too much on American assistance, “they trusted too much in the American miracle to save Russia by direct assistance or quickly winning the war on the Western Front.”³⁵ Through the themes of mirror-imaging and Americanization, discussed by Saul, Russians trained themselves to look to the United States in expectation. Russians saw America as their saviour in the war because, as Williams argued, Wilson saw himself and the United States as trustees of the world’s best interest. Russians were all too willing to believe that Wilson and the United States would help and protect Russia since they subscribed to the idea of Americans as trustees of the world.

³³ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 86, 89, 90.

³⁴ Order No. 1, was issued by the Petrograd Soviet at the insistence of soldiers’ delegate. It regulated service conditions, stipulated that commands of the Soviet be obeyed over those of the Provisional Government. In essence, the Soviet claimed the right to control the army with Order No. 1.

³⁵ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 86, 444.

Saul goes into much discussion about the Allied technical and political missions that were sent to Russia. The technical missions focused mainly on the Russian transportation system, especially the railroads. The missions' aims were to investigate the needs of the ailing system and provide advice for its improvement through the potential for direct American involvement in the operations of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, the "key artery for the infusion of American products into Russia." Former Secretary of State, Elihu Root, a prominent Republican, led the political mission sent to Russia as a display of support and friendship to the new democracy, "to stabilize and strengthen the 'Americanophile' Miliukov-Guchkov-Lvov government," and to boost military morale. Unfortunately, this political mission according to Saul did too little and did it too late. The political mission relied heavily on poorly funded public information campaigns aimed to inform the Russian public that the only way to make Russia safe for democracy was to continue the war effort. These information campaigns took too long to be implemented, making their effect almost useless in comparison to the growing anti-war appeals by the Soviets and Bolsheviks.³⁶ Saul's analysis of American diplomacy and perspectives towards the Provisional Government illustrates the inconsistency in it. Although excited about the change in the Russian regime, the leadership in the United States was too preoccupied with other concerns, misled by inconsistent reporting from Russia, or unsure of how to help the leaders of the Provisional Government. And when help was provided, it was too late.

As the above historiographical overview demonstrates, a gap exists in the historiography between the late 1970's and the early 2000's. This gap can be explained for a number of reasons. Since the 1960's the cultural turn in academic history has

³⁶ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 105-6, 444, 132.

rendered many diplomatic histories to be considered unimportant or less relevant than in the past. Instead of an emphasis on politics and economics, historians have chosen to emphasize history from below, cultural history, and to explore themes like gender, race, class, power, and space. Furthermore, many scholars have already addressed the intricacies of the Russian Revolution. Scores of historians have addressed the Russian Revolution's place within diplomatic, cultural, and social history and some might consider the subject to be closed. However, this literature often deals with questions and attitudes towards Russia before the March or after the November Revolution and often ignores or glosses over the Provisional Government; what about the interim? My research will hopefully help to fill this gap.

The diplomatic questions addressed by previous scholars also have deeper theoretical implications. The Russian policies implemented and pursued by the Wilson administration were deeply shaped and influenced by the perceptions and ideas of new and old Russia that were held by President Wilson and his Cabinet. But how, specifically, did these perceptions affect and mould their diplomacy towards a Russian government that, now more than ever, invited their assistance in establishing a democracy in what had previously been a backward and autocratic country? Although, I am writing a diplomatic history I recognize – as mentioned previously – that the shape of diplomatic history has changed greatly since the 1960's. With this in mind, I feel it is necessary to recognize that diplomacy alone cannot complete a history. Therefore it is important to look to the diplomats and politicians behind the diplomacy to better understand the decisions they made and why.

American leaders, policy makers, and self-styled experts on Russia all perceived and understood Russian events in 1917 in different ways; these American opinions are the subject of David S. Foglesong's book, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"*. Foglesong investigates American opinions of Russia from 1881 until the post-Soviet era and he demonstrates how an investigation into these opinions and perceptions allows us to see American-Russian relations in the wider context of an "American global mission" and worldwide resistance to it.³⁷ Like historians Gordon Levin and William Appleman Williams, Foglesong argues that the American people had participated in a long history of missionary and civilizing activity, both within and outside of the United States, and that Russian-American relations need to be understood in this context. As an element in the worldwide resistance to the American global mission, Russians have also been unsure about the United States. Foglesong asserts that America has had a love-hate relationship with Russia, or perhaps more accurately a like-disappointment relationship with Russia. Americans saw many similarities in Russia and the United States, such as "youth, vast territory, and frontier expansion;" however, Americans often felt disappointment or even frustration over other unsavoury aspects of Russian life and culture, like the autocracy.³⁸

Foglesong discusses the American response to the March Revolution and the Bolshevik Revolution and relies on the writings and reactions of great Russian commentators like George Kennan, and President Wilson's own reactions in his second chapter, "The United States of Russia: culmination and frustration, 1905-20".³⁹

Primary Source Material

³⁷ David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.

³⁸ Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"*, 3-5.

³⁹ George Kennan (Sr.) was an American explorer and war correspondent. He had travelled through Siberia in the 1890's and was an expert on Tsarist Russia.

The primary sources I will utilize in order to answer the questions I have asked above are derived from a variety of categories. Editors Paul Browder and Alexander Kerensky produced a three volume work, *The Russian Provisional Government, 1917: Documents*, containing diplomatic correspondence issued from the Allies to the Provisional Government and visa versa. Further diplomatic correspondence can be found in the online database of digitized volumes of, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*. *FRUS* contains *Supplement, The World War* pertaining to each year of the war (1914-1918) and the complete two volumes of *The Lansing Papers*. The availability of this source compensates for the absence of a comparable British series and for the fact that the French have only just begun to publish diplomatic documents for the war years. The official diplomatic correspondence is supplemented by the memoirs and journals of Allied ambassadors in Russia and Russian ambassadors in Allied nations; these memoirs include *An Ambassador's Memoirs* (volumes 1-3) by Maurice Paléologue, French Ambassador to Russia; *My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories* (volumes 1-2) by Sir George Buchanan, British Ambassador to Russia; and *The Ordeal of a Diplomat* by Constantine Nabokov, Russian Chargé d'Affaires in England. Furthermore *With the Russian Army*, the memoirs of General Alfred Knox, British military attaché to the Russian Army, is a wonderful example of a memoir that provides not only diplomatic material but also the perspectives and impressions of a foreigner in Russia. Knox's monograph as well as those mentioned above give the reader insights into different perceptions of Russians before and during the Provisional Government. Although this work is considered a diplomatic history it is important to recognize that diplomacy and politics was influenced by the perceptions and ideas of politicians and policy makers.

Therefore the personal insights of these historical actors must be taken into account when considering their diplomatic roles.

In addition to the work of Allied ambassadors, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* (volumes 1-4) edited by Charles Seymour and the *Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (volumes 1-69) edited by Arthur S. Link provides the personal and professional writings of the American president and his most trusted advisors previous to and after American entry into the war. Link's sixty-nine volumes are the best source to judge what kind of information Wilson was receiving about Russia, who was reporting to Wilson about Russia, and how accurate that reporting was. Link has contributed much to the field of the Wilsonian era and his work is integral to any scholarly discussion of the topic. Arthur S. Link is an authority on Woodrow Wilson and has published many works on the president, including a five-volume biography, entitled *Wilson* (1947-65), which is based on a range of primary sources. Starting with his youth and eventual road to the White House and ending with Wilson's decision to enter the war in 1917, Link's study is a capital source; volumes 1 and 2 have proven themselves invaluable, as they include a very frank and accurate discussion of Wilson's personal nature which, I argue, is a defining factor in his diplomacy.⁴⁰

Another scholar who has contributed to the discussion of Wilson's personality and its effects on his diplomacy is Edwin A. Weinstein. Weinstein's *Woodrow Wilson: A Medical and Psychological Biography* takes a psychohistorical approach to President Wilson. Psychohistory is, as a field, open to criticism and scepticism but Weinstein

⁴⁰ Link's collection has largely supplemented the earlier collection assembled by Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1927-39), volumes 1-8.

recognizes that his approach is limited by the fact that he lacked “contact” with Wilson.⁴¹ Weinstein also acknowledges that his study is somewhat obstructed by the medical knowledge and customs of the time and by the unique circumstances which bound the President and his medical history; for instance, Weinstein cites the fact that after one particularly devastating stroke Wilson was not hospitalized and his case records were either not kept or were destroyed.⁴² Accurate information about Wilson’s illnesses was not issued because of his position as president but Weinstein argues that the advantage of historical hindsight has enabled him to supplement any incomplete data with clinical judgement.⁴³ Arthur S. Link’s contributions, in the form of secondary and edited primary sources, to Wilsonian history have proven invaluable in my analysis of Woodrow Wilson and his diplomacy. Furthermore, his contributions have enabled other historians, such as Weinstein, to further delve into the psyche of a complex leader who had to make world-changing decisions at a crucial juncture in history.

This introduction has provided the basis upon which I will conduct my analysis. The next chapter will discuss Allied and American diplomacy towards Russia before the March Revolution and before American entry into the war. In the next chapter I will also discuss how Allied and American leaders and policy makers perceived Imperial Russia and how those perceptions affected their policies towards Russia before the March Revolution.

⁴¹ Edwin A. Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson: A Medical and Psychological Biography* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), ix.

⁴² Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson*, ix-x.

⁴³ Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson*, x.

Chapter 1: Russia in Allied and American Diplomacy before 1917

In the system of alliances that he constructed, Bismarck had two aims: to keep France diplomatically isolated and to prevent an Austro-Russian rivalry in the Balkans from causing a European war. Both of these goals were lost in the erosion of the Bismarckian system after 1890. Russia and France, who had first formed an alliance directed against Germany in 1894, were joined in the summer of 1914 by Great Britain, when that country entered the war in response to Germany's invasion of Belgium. These three powers formed the Triple Entente, which was solidified in the Treaty of London in September 1914 by which they undertook to continue fighting until victory and forswore concluding a separate peace. They were joined in 1915 by Italy, who had defected from her alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1914. In order to understand American and Allied diplomacy towards Russia during 1917, we must first understand Russia's role in the strategy of the Allied coalition and in the diplomacy of the neutral United States' before 1917.¹ This chapter will discuss Russia's place within Allied and American strategy and diplomacy before 1917 to demonstrate the patterns and policies the Allies and the United States created when dealing with tsarist Russia, as both a war partner and a neutral business partner.

Russia within Allied Strategy and Diplomacy before 1917

¹ Strictly speaking there was no alliance linking Great Britain to France or Russia before 1914. Great Britain's well known ententes of 1904 with France and 1907 with Russia were directed at settling colonial or overseas points of friction. They did not include any military commitment on Great Britain's part. Thus the so-called Triple Entente did not become an alliance until the three powers found themselves fighting a common enemy in August 1914. As the war progressed and the opposing coalitions were joined by other states, the term "the Allies" came into more frequent use. When I refer to "the Allies" or "the Allied coalition" I will be referring to the principal members of that coalition: Great Britain, France, Russia, and Italy. After April 1917 the United States became a member of that coalition, albeit a member with, at President Wilson's insistence, a special status: an "associated power" (Hence the diplomatic formula found in so many documents: "the Allied and Associated Powers").

From 1914 onwards, Allied strategy and diplomacy towards Russia displayed two characteristics. British and French leaders did not fully grasp or understand the Russian military and political situation during the war. Furthermore, Great Britain and France displayed a pattern of inconsistent policies towards Russia before 1917. This chapter will demonstrate these misunderstandings and inconsistencies. As the war progressed Russia began to falter militarily. Thus this chapter will also investigate Allied and American views of Russia as an ally and belligerent. In contrast to Russia's European allies, Russia's role in American diplomacy before 1917 was that of trading partner. This relationship allowed American influence to enter Russian society, furthering the mirror-imaging and Americanization of Russia discussed by Gordon Levin and Norman E. Saul. Using examples from the *Foreign Relations of the United States* and *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, I will demonstrate how Washington attempted to further its influence in Russia. Finally, this chapter will discuss how the commercial relationship between the United States and Russia changed due to the war and explain the character of the relationship Russia and the United States enjoyed on the eve of 1917.

An initial point to establish is that throughout the war, the British and French governments wanted to obtain their own national objectives on the Western front. To achieve this goal Great Britain and France were interested in exploiting Russia's position as a member of the coalition. Such a policy is neither surprising nor condemnable since we would expect all belligerents to place their own national interests before the interests of their partners in a military alliance.

Although British policy makers understood the need for co-operation with their continental allies in 1914, they wanted that co-operation to be on their own terms. British

policy makers understood there was little concord between British war aims and those of the other members of the Entente, and their suspicions of their allies' ambitions was an influential factor in shaping their own war aims policy.² British suspicions were rooted in the politics of the late nineteenth century, when policy makers perceived Russia and France as enemies rather than allies of Great Britain.³ These traditional perceptions remained fresh in their minds even after Germany took the place of Great Britain's secular enemies. British strategy, as formulated by Lord Kitchener, sought to achieve British objectives in the war through the smallest possible outlay of British military and resources.⁴ Essentially, the objective was first to defeat Germany and then restore a balance of power on the continent at the least cost to Great Britain. Russia and France were to assume the bulk of responsibility for the continental land war. In the meantime, Great Britain would place a stranglehold on the economies of the Central Powers, provide financial assistance to her allies, and offer a token contribution of British boots on the ground in Northern France and Belgium. While the continental powers fought themselves into deadlock, Kitchener would organize and train his New Armies with the expectation that by 1916 the land forces of *all* the continental belligerents, friend and foe alike, would be exhausted and Great Britain's fresh army would be able to decisively intervene in early 1917.⁵ Once the British army had defeated the Central Powers, British leaders would be able to dictate peace terms to their allies as well as their enemies.⁶ In this context, British policy and strategy towards Russia before 1917 was to use Russia as

² David French, *The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition, 1916-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 3

³ French, *Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 4.

⁴ Lord Kitchener was the British Secretary of State for War from the outbreak of the war in 1914 until his sudden death in June 1916.

⁵ The New Army or "Kitchener's Army" was a citizen, volunteer army raised by Kitchener to replace the British Expeditionary Forces on the continent

⁶ French, *Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 4.

an enormous reservoir of unskilled military labour and use up Russian resources to create a Russia that would *have* to be reliant on Great Britain at the eventual peace conference.

In some ways Great Britain was successful in this policy. As early as 1915, American ambassador in Great Britain, Walter Hines Page, believed that “France and Russia and Italy will take the cue from England”.⁷ The problem with Great Britain’s policy was that it assumed the Russian army could and would continuously fight for two years with little support from Great Britain. This was not the reality.⁸

Major-General Alfred Knox, a British liaison officer with the Russian Army on the Eastern front, came to grasp this reality on two separate occasions when Russian performance did not meet British expectations. In December 1915 in Paris, Knox met with Lord Kitchener, British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, Chief of the Imperial General Staff Sir William Robertson, British Minister at Sofia H.J. O’Beirne, and Colonels Fitzgerald and Buckley, for an informal conversation over a game of bridge.⁹ During this meeting Knox was asked when the Russians were expected to take the offensive again; Knox responded that “it was impossible to expect the Russians, who were now outnumbered by two to one, to take the offensive with any chance of success when the Allies in France, who themselves outnumbered the Germans by the same proportion, were unable to break the enemy front.”¹⁰

Later that same week Knox met with General Sir Henry Wilson, liaison officer to the French army, at General Headquarters. Wilson believed that the British and French

⁷ Page to Wilson, autograph letter signed, 23 July 1915, Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 34:22.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Alfred Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917* (New York: Anro Press Inc., 1971), 363. The units or positions within the general staff of Colonels Fitzgerald and Buckley are not provided.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* The military context of this conversation, though not specified in Knox’s book, is most likely the Russian retreat from Russian Poland in mid-1915.

armies could not break through until Russia had forced the Germans to transfer at least thirty divisions of the German army from the Western front. Wilson asked Knox when he believed such a feat could be accomplished. Knox wrote in his memoirs that Wilson's comment caused him to think about the dispatches he had sent to the Allies. Knox worried that he had not made the severity of the situation in Russia apparent enough. Furthermore, he seemed baffled that "competent authorities" in Great Britain and France expected Russia to continue her war effort based solely on the size of her population, without taking into account "the limitations imposed by actual conditions of armament, communications and power of organisation."¹¹

The British were not alone in their misunderstanding of the Russian military situation; the French were as equally confused. For instance, on Saturday 4 December 1915, French Ambassador to Petrograd, Maurice Paléologue wrote of a meeting with Senator Paul Doumer, former Governor General of French Indo-China and colonial minister.¹² The military situation on the Western front was grave; the Allied coalition had suffered enormous losses. Doumer had been sent to Russia in December of 1915 to request the deployment of Russian reserves to offset these losses. Paléologue explained to Doumer that the request was an impractical one, listing problems with travel due to the weather (it was the middle of winter and Russian ports were blocked by ice until the spring thaw), logistics, the fact that manpower was as critical an issue to Russia as it was to France, and the tactical differences between the two fighting forces. There was a large difference between the quality of the reserves available in Russia and the reserves available in France. Although, Russia had a vast "human reservoir" in comparison to the

¹¹ Knox, *With the Russian Army*, 366.

¹² Maurice Paléologue, *An Ambassador's Memoirs*, trans. F.A. Holt, O.B.E. (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924), 2:119.

French, most of these men were untrained. Furthermore, training itself was a relatively slow process because there were few non-commissioned officers available to carry out the training and “nine-tenths of the recruits [could not] read or write.” Tactically, Russians performed quite differently on the battlefield than their Western counterparts, placing less importance on holding ground. A Russian contingent may have been seen voluntarily giving up ground, “although their capacity for resistance [was] still far from exhausted”; after an unsuccessful battle operation it was not uncommon to see regiments retreat hundreds of kilometres. These were the battle tactics that had been employed since the Napoleonic invasion of Russia.¹³ Russia was not wanting in land and space and could afford to give up ground for what was assumed to be a better tactical position. However in France, where at times fighting took place close to major urban centres, including Paris, this kind of battle tactic would not work. Although, Paléologue explained these objections to Doumer, he could not shake the senator’s opinion that Russian reserves needed to be transported to the Western front. These episodes, as reported by Knox and Doumer, are two of several accounts that highlight the misconceptions French and British officials had about Russia and the Russian war effort before 1917.

Great Britain and France also demonstrated a pattern of inconsistency in their diplomacy towards Russia. This is best shown in British and French diplomacy regarding the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and leading up to Italian entry into the war. In November of 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of the Central Powers. In an effort to create balance among the alliances after Turkey’s entrance, British politicians, specifically Winston Churchill, pushed the British government to

¹³ Paléologue, *An Ambassador’s Memoirs*, 2:119-21.

lobby Bulgaria, Rumania, and Greece to enter the war.¹⁴ Churchill lobbied the British Cabinet to back these states' entrance into the Allied coalition by discarding the British policy of supporting the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and promising Bulgaria territory it had lost to Turkey in the Second Balkan War. However, even after the Cabinet abandoned its support for the integrity of the Ottoman Empire in August 1914, there was still vacillation among these Balkan states as to whether to enter the conflict. The failure of London to persuade these states to enter the war can be blamed on the lack of influence the British had in the region as opposed to the considerable influence Russia enjoyed in the Balkans. On the same day that Great Britain abandoned its traditional support of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazanov made a diplomatic blunder when he offered the Rumanian government essentially the same terms to stay neutral as it might have expected if it had joined the Entente, throwing a proverbial wrench in the hopes of the British government to have Rumania join the Allies.¹⁵ Sazanov mistakenly offered these terms without first consulting British Foreign Minister, Sir Edward Grey. Although Grey was obviously displeased with the Russian offer, one of Grey's first priorities was to ensure Great Britain's loyalty to her existing allies. Grey believed gaining Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania would benefit Great Britain little if in the process Russia was alienated. In other words, the solidarity of the Entente coalition remained the priority of the Foreign Office.¹⁶

Yet, in Allied negotiations over Italian entry into the war Great Britain and France seemed to operate under completely different assumptions. Russia, their existing ally, was no longer prioritized ahead of Italy, a *potential* ally. In these negotiations, Italy

¹⁴ David French, *British Strategy and War Aims, 1914-1916* (London: Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1986), 43.

¹⁵ Luckily, Sazanov's blunder was overcome and Rumania joined the Allies in 1916.

¹⁶ French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, 43.

continually vacillated, stalled, and played hard to get with the Allies, hoping to gain the most territorial concessions from the Allied or Central Power camp. Italian claims along the Adriatic coast came into direct conflict with the hopes of Russia's client state Serbia, as well as Russian aspirations for naval bases along the Adriatic.¹⁷ In March of 1915, after many months of negotiations with the Allies, Italy put forward a claim limiting Italian participation in the war to only the Turkish front, meaning that Italy wanted a share of the Ottoman Empire without sharing the burden in the European war. The Italian claim infuriated Russian Foreign Minister Sazanov. He dismissed the Italian diplomatic feeler, but the Allies would not. Grey believed that simply rejecting any Italian offers would push the Italians into the arms of the Central Powers. Throughout the Italian negotiations, British and French officials consistently ignored the Russian position and urged their ally to make diplomatic concessions in favour of an opportunistic neutral.¹⁸ In this case, Great Britain and France were prepared to alienate Russia for their own gains, a plan that, in the end, would backfire, since the addition of a million Italian boots did little to turn the tide for the Allies in the European theatre.

This inconsistency continued later in 1916, when the British and French governments returned to a policy of supporting the Russian government in November of that year. On 5 November 1916, German and Austro-Hungarian military authorities intent on gaining Polish recruits "proclaimed that the Russian provinces of Poland would henceforth form a separate state."¹⁹ The Russian Imperial Government proclaimed the

¹⁷ Paul DuQuenoy, "With Allies Like These, Who Needs Enemies?: Russian and the Problem of Italian Entry into World War I," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 45 (September-December 2003): 425.

¹⁸ DuQuenoy, "With Allies Like These, Who Needs Enemies?" 425-6, 437.

¹⁹ Bakhméteff to Lansing, translation, 18 November 1916, United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916. Supplement, The World War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1916), 797. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.d1/FRUS.FRUS1916Supp>. Accessed: 1 November 2010.

act of the Central Powers “null and void” since it was a “violation of the international conventions solemnly vowed by Germany and Austria-Hungary”.²⁰ On this matter, the British and French government worked in unison with Russia and issued a declaration on 18 November 1916, “The Allied powers in holding up to the reprobation of the neutral states these new violations of right, morality, and justice protest against the consequences which the enemy governments expect to derive from such action, and reserve to themselves the right of opposing them by all means in their power.”²¹ These episodes have helped to demonstrate the inconsistent behaviour demonstrated by Great Britain and France towards Russia; Allied policies were affected by what worked best for the Allied coalition and what worked best for each belligerent individually. However, Allied decision-makers did not make policy in a vacuum. Their attitudes and perceptions helped to shape their policies towards Russia.

Allied Perceptions of Russia and Russians before 1917

Longstanding British and French attitudes towards Russia shaped these misconceptions and inconsistencies. Most Britons perceived Russia as an “exotic and mysterious land” and believed Russia to be “somehow barbarous and extra-European.” It was firmly believed by most Britons and by British policy makers that the Russian government was both arbitrary and oriental in nature. The average Russian was understood to be “drunken and boorish”, and kept this way deliberately by the consequences of his repressive government’s policies. And as already noted, at the outbreak of the war, Russia had not been a traditional ally of Great Britain. Russia had in

²⁰ *Ibid.* The conventions in question are the Hague Conventions of 1907, Article 23

²¹ Sharp to Lansing, enclosure – translation, 5 December 1916, USDS, *FRUS, 1916. Supplement, The World War*, 798. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1916Supp>. Accessed: 1 November 2010.

fact been a rival of Great Britain whose imperialism had swallowed Central Asia and threatened India as well.²²

British Ambassador to Russia George Buchanan described “the Russian” as “a curious combination of good and evil. He is full of contradictions – he can be gentle and brutal, religious and vicious.”²³ Never one to shy from a sweeping generalization, French Ambassador Maurice Paléologue also used quite negative terms: “the Russian’s will is always passive and unstable: moral discipline is unknown to him, and he is never happy save in dreamland.”²⁴ King George V, Tsar Nicholas II’s first cousin, told American ambassador, Walter Hines Page, that Russia needed America’s “great influence” as Russia was “yet a very backward nation.”²⁵

Charles Richard Crane, American philanthropist, businessman, and future delegate on the Root Mission to Russia in 1917, described the “Russian people” as “simple in their modes of thought and the most democratic I know of.”²⁶ Crane’s estimation of Russians was both demeaning and confusing. While believing Russians to be “simple in their modes of thought” was an unacceptable judgement by any standard, this example and the many other examples shown here demonstrate a way of thinking about Russians in the early twentieth century that clearly separated Russians from the Western world. Crane’s statement is also quite confusing because he uses the term

²² Keith Neilson, *Strategy and Supply: The Anglo-Russian Alliance, 1914-1917* (London: George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd., 1984) 1-2.

²³ George Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories* (London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1923), 1:240.

²⁴ Paléologue, *An Ambassador’s Memoirs*, 2:111.

²⁵ Page to Wilson, autograph letter signed, 7 July 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 33:483.

²⁶ Crane to Wilson, autograph letter signed, 17 February 1916, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 36:191-2. The Root Mission, or the American Commission to Russia as it is also described, was a political mission to Russia headed by former Secretary of State, Elihu Root. The main purpose of the mission was to assess whether Russia could continue as an active participant in the war after the March Revolution and what the United States could do to help Russia continue fighting the war. See Chapter 4 for further discussion of the Root Mission.

“democratic” to describe a government and society that was – at the time – anything but. There are two possible explanations for this: the first is that perhaps Crane used the word democratic in the sense of a mob, a large unruly populace. The second is that Crane was simply speaking without reflection and actually did not know much about Russia at all – this is the more probable explanation considering Crane called Russians “simple”, an obvious underestimation of the people.

Paléologue went further to describe American opinions of Russians, “in the eyes of the American Russia is simply the iniquities of Tsarism, the atrocities of anti-Semitism and the ignorance and drunkenness of the *moujiks*.”²⁷ Here Paléologue seemed to describe the ordinary Russian; however he had also formed an inaccurate opinion about his Russian colleagues, the men he worked closely with on a day-to-day basis in Petrograd. “The Russians seem to acquiesce straight off in everything proposed to them. It is not duplicity on their part. Far from it! But their first impressions are usually inspired by their feelings of sympathy, their desire to please, the fact that they hardly ever have a strong sense of reality, and the receptivity of their minds which makes them extremely impressionable.”²⁸ These sophomoric opinions of the Russian people came from a man who worked hard for the Russian cause in the three years he held the office of French Ambassador to Petrograd. If these were the perceptions of a man who claimed to support Russian interests, one can only imagine the opinions held by the ministers and policy makers in the Western nations who did not spend every day in the streets of Petrograd.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Paléologue, *An Ambassador's Memoirs*, 2:122.

But, for all of the complaints made about the Russian war effort and people, one must remember that the performances of the British and French armies were not much better than their Eastern counterpart and Knox alluded to this fact when interviewed by his colleagues. Russia was not the only unorganized belligerent. All of the Allies had faltered during the war. In fact about the outbreak of the war, the populations of both belligerent camps had believed that the war would be won by December 1914. After three years of fighting, it had become clear that this estimation of the duration of the war had been quite inaccurate. Before belligerency the United States watched closely the performances of all the belligerents in the war, especially the Allies, keeping in mind that depending on the outcome the United States could have a strong hand in the peace settlement. In May 1915, Colonel House wrote to Wilson that he was “impressed by the lack of coordination between the Allies. They do not seem to altogether know each others (*sic*) plans, sentiments or purposes. This lack of coordination leads me to believe that under favourable circumstances you will be able to largely dominate the peace convention.”²⁹ Throughout 1915, many of the reports on the position of the Allies in the war were the same, no ground had been gained and the death toll was on the rise. Walter Hines Page wrote to House in June 1915, “The position in France is essentially the same as it was in November [1914], only the Germans are much more strongly entrenched. Their great plenty of machine guns enables them to use fewer men and to kill more than the Allies.”³⁰ In November 1916, the situation was grim for Great Britain: British troops had evacuated Gallipoli, “a hard blow to the pride of Great Britain.”³¹ Other defeats took

²⁹ House to Wilson, typed letter signed, 7 May 1915, Link, ed , *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 33:123

³⁰ Page to House, typed copy of letter, 30 June 1915, Link, ed , *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 33:522

³¹ Constantine Nabokov, *The Ordeal of a Diplomat* (Salisbury, North Carolina: Documentary Publications, 1921), 38

place in Mesopotamia, while domestically unrest and disturbances were on the rise. On the bright side the British Army continued to grow “in numbers and efficiency” and munitions productions were also on the rise; but trench warfare continued the attrition on the Western front where no spectacular victories had been achieved.³²

At the beginning of 1916, the one favourable event for the Allied camp had been the capture of Erzeroum by the Russian army.³³ Russian popularity was – according to Russian Chargé in Great Britain, Constantine Nabokov – “at its zenith.” Nabokov claimed there seemed to be a great need amongst the British public to forget the adversarial relationship Great Britain and Russia had once shared. Lord Kitchener was, according to Nabokov, Russia’s staunchest supporter. Kitchener credited the Russian front with much strategic importance and, Nabokov believed, Kitchener would make every sacrifice in the hopes of strengthening that front.³⁴

Members of the diplomatic service of Great Britain and France perceived Imperial Russia through a lens that was coloured by their misconceptions and misunderstandings of Russia and the Russian people. Viewing their ally through such a lens made it difficult to make a sound and rational judgement about Imperial Russia. These perceptions make it easier to understand why Great Britain and France had concluded, so early in the war that Imperial Russia was not pulling its weight as a war partner, and provides a context for understanding Allied reactions to and their subsequent (partial) shift towards the new, democratic regime in Russia in 1917. After viewing Imperial Russia in such a negative light, Allied diplomats were more inclined to – at the beginning at least – view the

³² Nabokov, *The Ordeal of a Diplomat*, 38-9.

³³ Erzeroum was a city in North Eastern Turkey.

³⁴ Nabokov, *Ordeal of a Diplomat*, 38-41.

Provisional Government as a positive change since it was so very different from the previous regime.

American Diplomacy towards Russia before American Intervention

Now we will shift our focus from what has been mainly an overview of British and French diplomacy towards and perceptions about Russia to a discussion of American attitudes. Russia's role in American diplomacy before 1917 was vastly different from that of Great Britain and France since the United States did not enter the war until April of that year.

Before 1917, Russia was an American business partner and the war had a significant impact on the economic relations of the United States and Russia. Imports and exports that passed through Germany and other European countries were cut off, train routes through Scandinavian countries were restricted to mostly passenger travel, Russian sea ports required "considerable reorientation and expense", and the deterioration of the Trans-Siberian Railroad greatly affected any trade through Vladivostok. However, American businesses already established in Russia before the war began at first fared well. Reduced competition from Russia's traditional trading partners allowed for higher profits and sales and production actually increased at the beginning of war.³⁵

As the war continued, however, some companies felt the impact of the war on production due mostly to the Russian population's frustrations from the continuation of the war. Many American businesses in Russia found themselves targeted by the Russian population; for instance, Singer (the sewing machine company), though officially an

³⁵ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 12. See Appendix 1 on p. 162 for a table of trade figures between the United States and Imperial Russia before 1917.

American company was seen in the Russian public eye as having a German affiliation because of “the unfortunate spelling of the Russian affiliate’s name, ‘Kompaniia Zinger’,” and because many of Singer’s administrators were German or of German origin. As well, a series of riots caused by further war weariness in Moscow in May and June of 1915 targeted other foreign businesses.³⁶

Many Russians and Americans realized the opportunity presented by the war for commercial expansion. The most successfully exported Russian commodity was sausage casings due to their large demand by immigrant populations in the United States. Other exported Russian commodities included “vetch, mustard, and beet seeds, furs, licorice root, and goatskins”. Unfortunately due to Russian export policies which prohibited the export of many items, Americans became frustrated with their Russian business partners. Trade outlets closed and government edicts – considered both fickle and inconsistent, “sheepskins could not be sent out, but horse manes could” – prohibited the shipment of many goods American companies had in stock.³⁷

The United States attempted to rectify the problem of the trade embargo put in place by the Imperial Government by creating a protocol between the two governments regarding the exportation of embargoed goods from Russia.³⁸ The two governments agreed upon a set of nine conditions by which American citizens or companies could secure the release of shipments by special permission from the Russian government.³⁹

The articles of this agreement show that the Russians placed an embargo on certain items

³⁶ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 13, 12, 14.

³⁷ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 14-5.

³⁸ “Protocol of Agreement between the United States and Russia Concerning the Exportation of Embargoed Goods from Russia to the United States,” Treaty Series No. 618, USDS, *FRUS with the Address of the President to Congress December 7, 1915* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1915), 1285. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.d1/FRUS.FRUS1915>. Accessed: 11 January 2011.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

in order to protect Russian raw materials and products from being re-exported to other countries after they had arrived in the United States. Although this was not explicitly stated, the Russian government may have been concerned that Russian products were being exported to Germany or other enemy markets.⁴⁰

With regard to the war, American and Russian relations were on good terms in the years leading up to American entry. The United States, like Russia's European allies, practiced a policy of serving American interests. One such interest was an offer of mediation sent by President Wilson to the leaders of all the great powers involved in the war. On 4 August 1914 the President offered to act as mediator "in a spirit of most earnest friendship...[and] in the interest of European peace".⁴¹ The Tsar's response, like that of all the belligerents, was to extend his sincere thanks but to claim that Russia had not wanted war and had done "everything to avoid it" but that the war had been imposed on Russia.⁴²

Wilson was aware that no matter what the outcome, the war would create a shift in the balance of power in Europe, one with "no good outcome to look forward to."⁴³ In a letter to Wilson written by Colonel House on 22 August 1914, House stated his belief that if Germany were to win, it meant "the unspeakable tyranny of militarism for generations to come" but if the Allies were to win, it meant "largely the domination of

⁴⁰ "Protocol of Agreement between the United States and Russia Concerning the Exportation of Embargoed Goods from Russia to the United States," Treaty Series No. 618, USDS, *FRUS with the Address of the President to Congress December 7, 1915*, 1286. Available from:

<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1915>. Accessed: 11 January 2011. Article 2 states that a bond would be filed for the amount of the values of the goods being imported and that the bond guaranteed that the products would not be exported from the US to any other country unless explicit permission was given by the Russian government. Furthermore, Article 6 states that if the terms of the bond were violated and the goods in questions were exported from the United States the bond would be forfeited by the Imperial Government.

⁴¹ Wilson to House, typed manuscript, 4 August 1914, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 30:342.

⁴² Bryan to Wilson, typed letter signed, 28 August 1914, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 30:456.

⁴³ House to Wilson, typed letter signed, 22 August 1914, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 30:432.

Russia on the Continent of Europe”.⁴⁴ However, it is clear that between the two, Russia was the lesser of two evils. In the same letter, House stated that, “Germany’s success will ultimately mean trouble for us. We will have to abandon the path which you are blazing..., with permanent peace as its goal and a new international ethical code as its guiding star, and build up a military machine of vast proportions.”⁴⁵

In an interview with *New York Times* reporter Herbert Bruce Brougham, Wilson stated that he could not help but to sympathize with Russia’s aims in the war, “to secure natural outlets for its trade with the world”.⁴⁶ Wilson was making reference to Russia’s claims to the Dardanelles and Constantinople; Wilson believed “Russia’s ambitions [were] legitimate,” and that when Russia received “the outlets she needs her development will go on and the world will be benefited.”⁴⁷ Wilson’s statement demonstrated his eagerness to help Russia and his reference to the Straits implied his eagerness to continue the trade partnership between Russia and the United States.

Although uninterested in Wilson’s offer of mediation in August 1914, on 1 October 1914 (NS)/18 September 1914 (OS) the Russian Imperial Government and the United States signed a treaty (ratified 22 March 1915 (NS)/7 March 1915 (OS)) for the advancement of general peace.⁴⁸ The treaty aimed to strengthen friendly relations between the two countries and served the “cause of general peace”.⁴⁹ The United States also signed treaties for the advancement of general peace with France on 15 September

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ House to Wilson, typed letter signed, 22 August 1914, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 30:433.

⁴⁶ Memorandum by Herbert Bruce Brougham, typed manuscript, 14 December 1914, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 31:459.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ “Treaty for the Advancement of General Peace, Concluded between the United States and Russia,” Treaty Series No. 616, USDS, *FRUS with the Address of the President to Congress December 7, 1915*, 1283. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.d1/FRUS.FRUS1915>. Accessed: 10 January 2011.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

1914 (ratified 14 January 1915) and a similar treaty with Great Britain on 3 November 1915.⁵⁰ However, there is no evidence to suggest that the United States signed a similar treaty with Germany, the leader of the Central Powers coalition, or any of Germany's allies. Although, in 1914 Wilson had not the slightest idea that the United States would be destined for war in 1917, these treaties could signify his natural inclination to side with the Allied coalition as opposed to the Central Powers, a behaviour consistently exhibited by the Wilson administration before American entry into the war as well as the reason for Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan's resignation in 1915.⁵¹

The war provided the United States with opportunities to advance its influence in Russia. In May 1915, in anticipation of Italian entry into the war, the Russian Government requested the consular care of Russian interests be transferred from the Italian representative in Constantinople to the American representative, Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, Sr.⁵² When Morgenthau declined the responsibility of Russian interests in Turkey, then Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan requested he reconsider in light of the fact that American representation of Russian interests in Constantinople would increase "the influence that we can exert in behalf of peace when

⁵⁰ "Treaty for the Advancement of General Peace, Concluded between the United States and France." Treaty Series No. 609, USDS, *FRUS with the Address of the President to Congress December 7, 1915*, 380. "Agreement between the United States and Great Britain Extending Time for Appointment of the Commission Under Article 2 of the Treaty of September 15, 1914. Effected by Exchange of Notes Signed November 3, 1915." Treaty Series No. 602-A, USDS, *FRUS with the Address of the President to Congress December 7, 1915*, 413. Both Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1915>. Both Accessed: 27 January 2011.

⁵¹ All of these treaties were "Bryan treaties", intended for arbitration and probably represent more Bryan's outlook than they do Wilson's.

⁵² Bryan to Morgenthau, telegram, 24 May 1915, USDS, *FRUS, 1915 Supplement, The World War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1915), 36. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1915Supp>. Accessed: 1 November 2010.

the time comes.”⁵³ Furthermore, Bryan’s request demonstrates his preoccupation with peace; by that time Bryan and President Wilson were about to part ways because Bryan did not agree with how the President handled the issue of American neutrality in the war.

As a neutral the American government was also able to act as an intermediary between belligerents. In March 1915, Wilson wrote to Tsar Nicholas II requesting his permission to allow “the Government of the United States and the American Red Cross Society to be of service whenever and wherever it is possible to render service which can have no colour of partisanship or of officious suggestion. The field that seems most open for this purpose is the care and support of prisoners.”⁵⁴ The President’s suggestion had come at the behest of “several belligerent nations” whose interests he represented in compliance with a general plan for prisoner relief.⁵⁵ This plan came to fruition in Russia when in 1915, American Ambassador to Russia, George T. Mayre wrote to the State Department, “I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the Department’s telegram...directing the Embassy to bring to the attention of the Russian Foreign Office that the Austro-Hungarian Government desires to make an agreement with the Russian Government for the inspection of prisoners’ camps.”⁵⁶ Both the Russian and Austro-Hungarian governments agreed to allow for the inspection and the distribution of supplies

⁵³ Morgenthau to Bryan, telegram, 25 May 1915, USDS, *FRUS, 1915. Supplement, The World War*, 40. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1915Supp>. Accessed: 1 November 2010.

⁵⁴ Wilson to Tsar Nicholas II, typed letter signed, 18 March 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 32:397.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Marye to Bryan, 27 March 1915, USDS, *FRUS, 1915. Supplement, The World War*, 1017. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1915Supp>. Accessed: 2 November 2010.

in their respective camps, with the American Red Cross commissioned to oversee the arrangements.⁵⁷

On 31 March 1915 Colonel House extended the reach of the American Red Cross even further when he cabled Wilson concerning the treatment of German prisoners in Russia, "Zimmerman [German Foreign Minister in the United States] says their reports indicate that German prisoners in Russia are being badly treated. He said that Germany would greatly appreciate your asking American Embassy at St. Petersburg to give the matter attention."⁵⁸ Tsar Nicholas II acquiesced to the President's requests to have the American Red Cross oversee the distribution of gifts and care to Austro-Hungarian and German prisoners in April 1915 when he instructed his Minister of Foreign Affairs "to enter into negotiations with the Ambassador of the United States of America and to communicate to him the conditions on which a distribution of gifts among Austro-Hungarian and German prisoners in Russia can take place."⁵⁹ The United States was now also able to facilitate agreements between warring belligerents, similar to what the Vatican had done in the past. However, German and Austro-Hungarian authorities became frustrated with the American handling of their prisoners of war in Russia. In February 1916, Colonel House wrote to Wilson explaining that the German government was "seriously thinking of taking their affairs out of our hands. They claim that more German and Austrian prisoners are dying in Russia from bad treatment than are now

⁵⁷ Marye to Lansing, telegram, 23 July 1915, USDS, *FRUS, 1915. Supplement, The World War*, 1022. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1915Supp>. Accessed: 2 November 2010.

⁵⁸ House to Wilson, transcript of Woodrow Wilson shorthand decode, 31 March 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 32:458.

⁵⁹ Tsar Nicholas II to Wilson, typed translations, 15 April 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 32:525-6.

being lost on the battlefields, and they attribute it largely to the lack of interest our representatives are giving the matter.”⁶⁰

President Wilson was not only interested in acting as a mediator between belligerents; he also showed an interest in the general performance of the combatants. News of Russia’s performance in the war reached Wilson and the negative reports increased as the war continued and Russia began to falter under the strain. Russia was not high in the esteem of British popular opinion in July 1915, American ambassador Walter Hines Page reported to Wilson that

Certain rumours will curiously break out all over London at about the same hour on the same day. Most of them are nonsense or mare’s nests, but now and then a profound secret slips out as naïfly as a child sometimes reveals a family skeleton. The story got loose several days ago that Warsaw had already been taken (it isn’t quite taken yet), that the retreating Russians suffered a nervous breakdown and killed a lot of English and French who were trying to leave Warsaw for Moscow. Why? Because the Russians had the notion that the English and the French were doing nothing in the war.⁶¹

In the summer of 1915, Colonel House reported that “the Russians have been utterly unable to withstand the German onslaught for the reasons that they have neither sufficient arms nor ammunition.”⁶² Wilson wrote in a letter to Colonel House that it had been reported to him that “Russia was listening to suggestions of peace and that Germany was willing to obtain for her the outlet she desires at the Dardanelles”. If this report was true, Russia would have been in breach of one of the conditions of the Pact of London of September 1914. It was also reported to Wilson that Russian soldiers were so unhappy with the war that they surrendered “by the thousands...whenever they got a chance.” However, we must call into question the credibility and accuracy of official reporting

⁶⁰ House to Wilson, typed letter signed, 3 February 1916, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 36:125-6.

⁶¹ Page to Wilson, autograph letter signed, 23 July 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 34:17-8.

⁶² House to Wilson, typed letter signed, 16 June 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 33:406.

from or about Russia. We must consider the sources of these reports which were often more telling as to their accuracy and credibility than the reports themselves and this report is a prime example of why we must question the validity and credibility of these reports. Wilson identified his informant as an “intimate friend”; it is only in the footnote provided by the editor of this document, Arthur S. Link, that we discover that this friend was Melvin A. Rice. Rice was a Democratic political figure from Brooklyn and – obviously – a good friend of Wilson. But he was by no means an expert on the military situation in Russia in 1915. Furthermore, Rice admitted that he had received this information from none other than the German Foreign Minister, another reason to question the credibility of the claim.⁶³

Another case of questionable reporting to Wilson about Russia came in August 1915, when an “alarming despatch” came from Moscow in which American Consul General at Moscow J.H. Snodgrass reported that “the Russian defence [had] gone to pieces and the Russian government itself [was] thinking of taking refuge in Siberia!”⁶⁴ Snodgrass further reported that ten million refugees were moving through Russia and many of them “were dying from starvation and exposure, and that people expected St. Petersburg and perhaps Moscow to fall before the year’s end.”⁶⁵ This kind of reporting was obviously exaggerated but Wilson was quick to recognize it as such when he

⁶³ Wilson to House, typed transcript of Woodrow Wilson shorthand telegram, 1 March 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 32:300-1. Rice’s report ended up having some validity to it. In his book, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia During World War I*, Peter Gatrell reports that by the spring and summer of 1915 the Russian army suffered losses of around one million dead and wounded, while a further one million were taken prisoner. However, nowhere in Gatrell’s book is there evidence that these one million prisoners surrendered – “whenever they got a chance” – because they were unhappy with the war.

⁶⁴ Wilson to Edith Bolling Galt, autograph letter signed, 24 August 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 34:306.

⁶⁵ J.H. Snodgrass to Lansing, typed telegram, 23 August 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 34:306n2.

commented that Snodgrass's report was "surely panicky (*sic*) and greatly exaggerated – 10 millions!"⁶⁶

Throughout the war, there were also reports and accusations of corruption within the Russian government and military. Ambassador Page reported in July 1915 that "Tales multiply of graft in the Russian army and among contractors – high and low."⁶⁷ However, Page recognized that these tales of corruption were not isolated to the Russian example, "There are stories even of English corruption in the army here, among contractors and ammunition makers."⁶⁸ In the same month, James Bryce wrote to Colonel House that he "gather[ed]" there was "a good deal of mismanagement (and some say of graft also) in civilian military administration," but that regardless the Russian people were "absolutely united in their purpose to prosecute the war".⁶⁹

Another example of this "mismanagement" came in July 1916 with the resignation of Russian Foreign Minister Sazanov and his pro-German replacement, Boris Sturmer, who took over the office of Foreign Minister.⁷⁰ American Ambassador to Russia, David Francis, alleged that Tsarina Alexandra may have had a hand in Sazanov's "resignation". The Tsarina was believed to be "very desirous for peace" and had "long been suspected of German sympathies." Francis reported that when Sazanov was ordered to "submit to Russia's allies proposals of peace suggested by Germany, he refused to do so, whereupon Mr. Sturmer, President of the Council of Ministers, said he would submit such proposals if the Foreign Minister declined...". Francis believed that this Ministry

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Page to Wilson, autograph letter signed, 23 July 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 34:18.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Bryce to Wilson, typed copy of letter, 30 July 1915, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 34:188. James Bryce was an American engineer and inventor.

⁷⁰ Sturmer was the Minister of the Interior and Prime Minister (President of the Council).

change indicated that “the court party of the Empire [was] preparing to counteract what they fear will be a liberal movement on the part of the people after the close of the war.” What indicated this to Francis was the fact that Sturmer was “looked upon as reactionary” and as an “opportunist and with no convictions.” Furthermore, Francis believed Sturmer “to be safe and in nobody’s way”, implying Sturmer would be complicit in any policies the conservative and reactionary Russian monarchy planned to implement in the future. Finally, Francis believed that Sazanov’s resignation was “forced and that the promotion of Sturmer [was] a triumph for the party of reaction and for the champions of absolute monarchy in Russia.” Francis qualified his report with the admonition that “the rumors outlined in the reports narrated above are given for what they are worth and that their truth is not vouched for in any degree.” Francis did confirm that these reports and rumours originated from Russian sources “who [were] men of substance and of representative character, whose loyalty to their country [was] unquestionable”, so while we cannot verify the truth of the reports we can be assured of the credibility of the source itself.⁷¹

These accusations of corruption and mismanagement served to discredit in Washington’s eyes the Imperial Government’s prosecution of the war and its ability to run the country. Similar to the negative perceptions held by some of the European ambassadors and ministers working within Russia, these allegations of corruption influenced and helped to form the diplomacy by the United States towards Russia. These accusations made the Russian government seem disorganized, unreliable, and even untrustworthy considering a new foreign minister rumoured to have German sympathies

⁷¹ David Rowland Francis to Lansing, typed letter signed, 25 July 1916, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 38:67-8, 70.

was now in power. Needless to say, such accusations were not helpful in the formation of Allied and American perceptions and diplomacy towards Russia.

Pulling these strands together, we can recapitulate by saying that Allied strategy and diplomacy towards Russia was at best inconsistent; this inconsistency stemmed mostly from British and French misconceptions and misunderstandings about Russia and Russia's role in the war. Unfortunately, these misunderstandings would not be rectified in 1917, making the task of consolidating power internally and implementing a peace program externally difficult on the Russian Provisional Government.

Meanwhile, Americans continued to see Russia as a country that needed American guidance and influence. The attempted Americanization of Russia continued as Americans perceived the opportunities the war created for business endeavours and humanitarian aid as a way of making Russia – hopefully – more American.

With this as our background we must now turn towards 1917 and the Russian Provisional Government's peace program. The next chapter will explore the Petrograd Soviet's contribution to the peace program in the form of an international socialist conference, the Stockholm Conference.

Chapter 2: The Stockholm Conference Proposal and the Allied Response

The Russian Provisional Government's peace program can be seen as the coming together of what Arno Mayer has called the 'parties of order' and 'parties of movement'. Such a union was not unprecedented. At the beginning of the war loyalty to the nation had brought about the union of all elements of the political spectrum behind the common cause of national defence, as evidenced in the *Burgfrieden* and *union sacrée*. But in 1914 the chief beneficiaries of the politics of national unity were the parties of movement, whose legitimate place in the politics of the nation was recognized. The Russian Provisional Government's peace program was a startling union of these "two parties"; the creation of the Petrograd Soviet changed the dynamics of this union and made the Provisional Government (a product of the revolution) a representative for the desire for post-revolutionary stability. This peace program called for a democratic, negotiated peace based on the democratic principles of the so-called Petrograd Formula: no annexations, no indemnities, and the right to self-determination. The peace program constituted a two-pronged strategy. The Petrograd Soviet's role in that strategy was to rally popular support in the Allied countries for a negotiated peace through the convening of an international socialist conference. This aim was to be realized through the Soviet's campaign for what would soon be called "the Stockholm Conference". This chapter will discuss the goal of the socialist conference at Stockholm and the Allied response to it.

Previous Attempts to Convene an International Socialist Conference

To begin we must first ask how the Petrograd Soviet reached the decision to issue invitations to an international socialist conference that would allow participants to discuss "across enemy lines" the possibility of negotiating an end to the war. Where did the idea

for an international socialist conference originate from? How did the Petrograd Soviet reach the decision to sponsor such a conference, and who influenced that decision? The following section will trace the attempts to convene international socialist conferences throughout the war – a pattern that was to culminate in the Stockholm Conference envisaged by the Petrograd Soviet.

The International Socialist Bureau (ISB) – which was the permanent organization of the Second International charged with administrative and secretarial functions – had been paralyzed by the outbreak of the war.¹ It was only in two countries – Russia and Serbia – that socialists had united in opposition to the war after war had been declared. After the German invasion compromised Belgian neutrality the Executive of the ISB moved the headquarters from Brussels to The Hague in the neighbouring Netherlands. However, a full meeting of the ISB could not be summoned because members from the belligerent states refused to sit down with “enemy” socialists. Within a year the extreme socialist Left, led by Vladimir Il’ich Lenin, a combative but still marginal figure in the international socialist movement, was working to convince other anti-war socialists that the Second International had collapsed.²

Throughout the war, European socialists who had not adhered to their parties’ political truces with their respective governments had convened conferences to discuss peace. The first of these was held between Italian and Swiss socialists in Lugano, Switzerland on 27 September 1914. This conference produced a resolution that was influenced by Lenin and his theses on the war. The resolution condemned the war, called

¹ Merle Fainsod, *International Socialism and the World War* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966), 44. The Second International was an organization of European socialist and labour parties. Founded in 1899 it continued the work of the dissolved First International (International Workingmen’s Association).

² Fainsod, *International Socialism*, 38, 44-5.

upon socialists to uphold the true anti-war principles of the pre-1914 International, and fight against the continuation of the war by exerting pressure on their governments. Although Russian socialists attended the conference, the majority of delegates were not from belligerent nations. Efforts to convene a conference involving belligerent delegates continued to encounter greater obstacles.³

On 11 October 1914, socialists from three Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands decided to convoke a socialist conference to which they invited both belligerent and neutral representatives. Unfortunately, the French socialists proved unwilling to participate so the organizers decided that a conference of only neutrals had a better chance of success. The Dutch and Scandinavian socialists also decided to rule out any discussion of the controversial issue of which country or group of countries was responsible for causing the war. The sole task of the conference would be to find a way to secure peace. Because of this decision, Spanish socialists also refused to attend the conference, Italian and Swiss socialists decided not to participate; and an American socialist, Morris Hillquit, who at first decided to attend, subsequently changed his mind when he realized the conference would be made up of only Dutch and Scandinavian socialists. Hillquit apparently believed that an American socialist would be out of place at a conference of only Dutch and Scandinavian delegates.⁴ When the conference finally managed to assemble on 16-17 January 1915, in Copenhagen the only delegates in attendance were from the countries that had issued the invitation. The resolution adopted

³ Fainsod, *International Socialism*, 45-6.

⁴ Morris Hillquit was a prominent member of the American Socialist Party. For further discussion of Hillquit, please see Chapter 4.

by the conference protested the violations committed against Belgium and urged socialist parties to push their governments towards peace.⁵

The next conferences to be held were not attended by neutrals but by belligerent representatives exclusively, as socialists from the Allied countries and the Central Powers held separate conferences.⁶ Socialists from the Allied camp met in February 1915 in London. The French socialists came to the London Conference with very specific terms in mind: there could be no talk of peace until “German imperialism” had been destroyed and it was the duty of socialists who wished to protect the future from further aggression to “pursue the war to the bitter end.” The British representatives were uncomfortable with the harsh language of the French declaration but agreed on a resolution that demanded the liberation of Belgium and the self-determination of all European peoples who had been “forcibly annexed.” The resolution went on to state that the Allied socialists had no choice but to continue fighting because the victory of German imperialism would spell the defeat of democracy in Europe.⁷ Meanwhile, the socialist parties of the Central Powers held a separate conference in Vienna in April of 1915. There they committed themselves to the principle of the right of all peoples to self-determination and pledged to continue the war in their countries’ cause. The London and Vienna Conferences illustrated in spades the fundamental problem: socialists from the opposing sides could not reach an agreement on a peace policy as long as they continued to work with their national ruling classes for the defeat of the other side.⁸

⁵ Fainsod, *International Socialism*, 45-7.

⁶ Julius Braunthal, *History of the International, 1914-1943*, trans. John Clark (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967), 2:38.

⁷ Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2:38-9.

⁸ Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2:39.

In March 1915 the International Conference of Socialist Women was held in Berne, Switzerland to protest the war.⁹ This conference had originally been scheduled for August 1914 but had been postponed by the outbreak of the war.¹⁰ In January 1915, German socialist Klara Zetkin announced the decision to convene the postponed International Conference of Socialist Women, which was to be attended by representatives from Germany, Russia, England, France, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, Poland, and Lithuania.¹¹ Although no proposal for mediation was made, these delegates, who came from the Left element of their respective socialist parties, released a resolution that called upon the socialist parties of every nation to struggle for peace and stated that women had to be the ones to set the example as the “forerunner[s] of a general movement of the working masses designed to terminate the fratricidal slaughter.”¹²

A week after the women’s conference an International Socialist Youth Conference began in Berne. Like the women’s conference the International Socialist Youth Conference had originally been scheduled to be held in the summer of 1914 in Vienna, but when the war made this impossible, members of a youth socialist group took it upon themselves to re-schedule the conference in April 1915. The meeting, unlike the women’s conference, was not exclusively made up of the Left elements but was a meeting of the opposition elements of the international youth movement. In attendance were German and Russian delegates, a delegate from Poland, Holland, Bulgaria, Italy, Denmark, one delegate represented Norway and Sweden, and two from Switzerland. The

⁹ David S. Patterson, *The Search for a Negotiated Peace: Women’s Activism and Citizen Diplomacy in World War I* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 67.

¹⁰ Olga Hess Gankin and H. H. Fisher, *The Bolsheviks and the World War: The Origin of the Third International* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1960), 286.

¹¹ Patterson, *Search for a Negotiated Peace*, 67.

¹² Patterson, *Search for a Negotiated Peace*, 67-8; Gankin and Fisher, *Bolsheviks and the World War*, 300.

resolution adopted by the youth conference called for an immediate end to the war and declared it the duty of the young men and women throughout the belligerent countries to support what they called the growing peace movement.¹³

It is probably not surprising that none of the conferences mentioned above (save the London and Vienna Conferences) gained much support or even notice in belligerent countries. The conferences' failure arose from the mutual hostility and suspicion that had been generated between socialists by the war. These conferences did not convince Majority socialists to break with the civil truce created in 1914 and did not overcome the deadlock the international socialist movement faced.¹⁴ However, the conferences created an outlet for neutral sentiment and pacific propaganda in Europe and showed, albeit in a mostly symbolic manner, that the internationalist aims of prewar socialism were not entirely dead.¹⁵

The Zimmerwald Movement

The next conference to be organized took a step forward from the previous efforts. In May 1915, Italian and Swiss socialists once again made it their mission to convene an international socialist conference, this time in Zimmerwald, Switzerland. The aim of the Zimmerwald Conference was to "call on the proletariat to wage a common struggle for peace, and to provide a rallying-point for this purpose." Organizers rejected the idea of a wartime political truce and honoured the principles of the International by issuing invitations to all parties and labour organizations and excluding only the majority

¹³ Gankin and Fisher, *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, 301-2, 308

¹⁴ The terms Majority and Minority socialists refers to the factions that national socialist parties split into during the political truce on 1914. The Majority socialists were the large group of socialists who adhered to that political truce – these socialists were in the majority. The Minority socialists were the smaller group of socialists who did not adhere to their parties' political truce with its government.

¹⁵ Fainsod, *International Socialism*, 60

parties within belligerent countries which supported their governments in the war – which, of course, excluded the most politically significant parties. The conference was scheduled for 5-8 September and it was to be a true international conference: other than the women’s conference and youth conference, both of minor importance, the Zimmerwald Conference would be the first occasion since the outbreak of the war on which figures in the political and trade union movements from the warring camps were to meet to seek ways to adopt “a common campaign for peace.”¹⁶

In attendance were Italian, Russian, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Polish, German, French, Swedish, and Dutch delegates; British delegates from the Independent Labour party and the British Socialist Party had tried to attend but had been refused passports by their government. The number of delegates at the Zimmerwald Conference was small (only 38, some of whom were simply observers but could not vote in any decisions or resolutions made at the conference) and most of the parties or factions represented at Zimmerwald were marginal.¹⁷ One of those marginal representatives in attendance at the Zimmerwald Conference was Lenin.

While at the conference, Lenin presented an alternative to the resolution eventually adopted by the Zimmerwald Conference. Lenin and his followers of the radical Left wanted the conference’s manifesto to condemn war credits and invoke revolutionary civil war, or the transformation of an imperialist war into a civil war in each belligerent state.¹⁸ Lenin’s small minority of radicals within the Zimmerwald Conference criticized the Zimmerwald Manifesto (as the adopted resolution was called)

¹⁶ Brauntal, *History of the International*, 2:41-2.

¹⁷ Gankin and Fisher, *Bolsheviks and the World War*, 320.

¹⁸ R. Craig Nation, *War on War: Lenin, the Zimmerwald Left, and the Origins of the Communist International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 90.

for the absence of “tactical guidelines” of which to incite class war.¹⁹ However, Lenin’s minority was just that, a minority, and the Zimmerwald Manifesto that was published did not fall in line with the radicalism that Lenin espoused. Lenin believed the significance of the Zimmerwald Conference was that it was the first step towards building a new International, while most of the other delegates in attendance believed the conference had a much more limited meaning. French trade unionist Alphonse Merrheim, who was a key leader of the majority against Lenin’s faction, included himself in this group.²⁰ Merrheim and the majority at the Zimmerwald Conference simply saw the conference as the first blow in the struggle against the war.²¹

Though organized by those socialists who had not adhered to the civil truce, the outcome of the Zimmerwald Conference was by no means representative of the extreme Left. The manifesto produced by the Zimmerwald Conference represented the views of the centre groups of the socialist parties of the belligerent countries: it rejected the party truce, called for a general campaign against the belligerent governments to oblige them to end the war, but did not aim to cause a split in the existing International, or establish a new one in its place. The Zimmerwald Manifesto adopted what would later come to be known as the Petrograd Formula, “a peace settlement with no annexations and no reparations...The right of nations to self-determination must be an inviolable principle in the ordering of national affairs.” The conference also set up an ‘International Socialist Commission’ (ISC), created because the International’s ISB was unable to further the “peace campaign of the working classes or maintain the necessary links among the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Robert Wohl, *French Communism in the Making, 1914-1924* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1966), 66.

²¹ *Ibid.*

socialist parties.” The ISC was not meant to replace the Bureau, and once the Bureau was able to fulfill its role the ISC was meant to be dissolved.²²

As with previous international conferences, the ISB and the majority socialist parties ignored the Zimmerwald Manifesto. The Zimmerwald Conference, though successful in bringing together three dozen socialists from both sides of the trenches, came nowhere close to uniting European socialists and failed to bring an end to the war. However, as if in response to this failure, a second conference was organized by the Zimmerwald Committee, in the Swiss village of Kienthal for 24-30 April 1916.²³ In attendance were 44 delegates, representing roughly the same groups and organizations as at the first Zimmerwald Conference.²⁴ The Kienthal resolution went one step further than the Zimmerwald Manifesto in that it demanded that socialist representatives refuse to support war policies and refuse to vote for war credits in the parliaments of their countries. Once again, the majority of delegates decided that the Kienthal Conference would not seek to break with the Second International, although the delegates at Kienthal were highly critical of the Executive Committee of the Second International, asserting that it had failed in its duty and “had become an accomplice in the policy of betraying principles, political truce and so-called defence of the Fatherland”.²⁵ The Kienthal Conference showed that the Zimmerwaldists, as they were now being called, had moved somewhat to the Left but were by no means extremists. A majority of delegates from these two conferences – the Zimmerwald majority – demonstrated that they had given up

²² Braunal, *History of the International*, 2:46-9.

²³ The Zimmerwald Committee was a standing committee of socialists who had attended the first Zimmerwald Conference and adhered to the Zimmerwald Manifesto.

²⁴ There was some variation, Swiss Social Democrats were represented at Kienthal, while they had been absent at Zimmerwald and a Serbian deputy was also in attendance.

²⁵ Braunal, *History of the International*, 2:49, 51.

hope of bringing the ISB back to internationalist principles and there was willingness to support a separate organization, but this majority was nonetheless unwilling to take the stand Lenin wanted and cause an actual split and attempt to set up a “Third” International.²⁶

The ISC, created by the Zimmerwald Conference, kept its headquarters in Berne until 1917. After the Russian Revolution it moved to Stockholm to be “nearer Russian events.”²⁷ It was at the ISC’s new headquarters where a third conference of Zimmerwaldists would be held and where the Petrograd Soviet now planned to hold their own international conference to discuss peace.

Stockholm: A Conference with Many Origins

The origins of the Petrograd Soviet’s Stockholm Conference are complex and at times confusing. In the spring of 1917, three separate socialist bodies attempted to convene an international socialist conference at Stockholm. The first attempt to call a conference was undertaken by Dutch and Scandinavian socialists. They had decided that as the Executive of the ISB was unable or unwilling to work for an international conference, a conference had to take place *without* the ISB. The dissatisfied Dutch members of the Executive of the ISB moved to Stockholm and sent out invitations to an international socialist conference to all member parties of the International. At the behest of the Dutch socialists, a Dutch-Scandinavian Committee was set up, with the Swedish socialist Hjalmar Branting as chairman, to act as the organizing body for the conference.²⁸

²⁶ Gankin and Fisher, *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, 376-7.

²⁷ Gankin and Fisher, *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, 377.

²⁸ Braunthal, *History of the International*, 2:69. Hjalmar Branting was a Swedish politician and leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party from 1907 to 1925.

The British Labour Party and the majority wing of the French Socialist Party (SFIO) rejected the invitation to this conference.²⁹ German socialists (SPD) gave the conference careful support, something that only served to increase the suspicion of the Allied socialist parties that the conference was a German ruse. The Dutch-Scandinavian Committee concluded that to overcome the opposition to their conference they needed to enlist the help and prestige of the Russian Revolution in the specific form of the socialist leaders of the Petrograd Soviet. The leader of the Danish Social Democracy party, Frederik Borgbjerg, was sent to Petrograd to this end.³⁰

The Zimmerwaldists' ISC made the second attempt to convene an international socialist conference at Stockholm in the spring of 1917. The ISC called upon all socialist groups which adhered to the Zimmerwald position to meet in Stockholm at a conference to be held just prior to the conference already called by the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee. Since the Zimmerwaldists were a small minority within the socialist parties of Europe, the ISC considered this third Zimmerwald Conference to be more of a supplementary rather than a competing conference with that of the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee.³¹

Thus the Petrograd Soviet was faced with two "separate but related messages" upon Borgbjerg's arrival in Petrograd. When he was officially received there on 6 May 1917 (NS)/23 April 1917 (OS), he invited the Petrograd Soviet to participate in an international conference in conjunction with the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee. The Executive Committee of the Soviet reacted positively to this invitation.³² Borgbjerg's

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 53.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 54.

second message was on behalf of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). The German message came to Borgbjerg in the form of the SPD's reply to the Petrograd Soviet's "Appeal to the People's of All the World," of 27 March 1917 (NS)/14 March 1917 (OS).³³ In that reply the SPD stated that Germany was willing to work for a negotiated peace and that in the meantime no offensive would be undertaken by German troops against the New Russia.³⁴ The Soviet's Executive Committee received the German message with much less enthusiasm; Soviet leaders saw the German proposal as equivalent to an invitation to a separate peace.³⁵ As a result, of his delivery of two different messages scepticism arose over Borgbjerg's credibility. Some members of the Soviet, mainly Bolsheviki, accused Borgbjerg of being a German agent. Furthermore, the members of the Soviet's Executive Committee felt that the point of Borgbjerg's visit had been clouded by his message from the SPD. The members of the Petrograd Soviet were left with the impression that the conveners had taken no practical steps to organize the proposed conference.³⁶

A decision on the invitation of the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee was postponed until a later meeting of the Executive Committee; at that meeting Theodor Dan, a Menshevik member of the Petrograd Soviet, suggested that the Soviet hold a socialist conference of its own.³⁷ The Petrograd Soviet was aware that the Stockholm Conference (under Dutch-Scandinavian origins) had run into difficulties when the SFIO refused to participate.³⁸ The unwillingness of western socialists to participate, the confusion that

³³ David Kirby, *War, Peace, and Revolution: International Socialism at the Crossroads, 1914-1918* (Great Britain: Gower Publishing Company Limited, 1986), 105.

³⁴ Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 54.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Kirby, *War and Peace, and Revolution*, 108.

³⁷ Braunal, *History of the International*, 2:69.

³⁸ Kirby, *War, Peace, and Revolution*, 108.

Borgbjerg's visit had caused after he delivered the message from the SPD, and the fact that Russia was in the midst of a governmental crisis after Foreign Minister Miliukov's unwillingness to accept the Soviet peace formula convinced the Executive Committee of the Soviet to accept Dan's suggestion and organize their own conference.³⁹ This idea did not come from out of the blue. In the "Soviet Appeal to the Peoples of All the World," of the 27 March the Petrograd Soviet implied the need for a socialist conference but did not provide the structure and principles necessary for the convening of such a conference. Instead "The Soviet Appeal" issued a more general call to "all people destroyed and ruined in the monstrous war," to begin the "decisive struggle against the acquisitive ambitions of the governments of all countries; the time has come for the peoples to take into their own hands the decision of the question of war and peace."⁴⁰ In arguing for popular participation to end the war, the Petrograd Soviet was well aware of the prestige that the Russian Revolution had bestowed upon Russian socialists. They now used this to their advantage. The leaders of the Petrograd Soviet believed the best way to ensure popular involvement in war and peace was through socialist representation.

The Petrograd Soviet announced its plan to convene an international socialist conference of its own devising in a new manifesto, the "Appeal by the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to the Socialists of All Countries," (15 May 1917 (NS)/2 May 1917 (OS)):

the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies has decided to take the initiative in calling for an international conference of all Socialist parties

³⁹ *Ibid.* This governmental crisis will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

⁴⁰ "Soviet Appeal to the Peoples of All the World," in Robert Paul Browder and Alexander Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government, 1917: Documents* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1961), 2:1077. Browder and Kerensky, and many other editors, have dated the Soviet Appeal to the Peoples of All the World from March 14, 1917. As previously stated, I am using the New Style Calendar throughout this work and therefore refer to the original publication of this work as March 27, 1917 as it is 13 days ahead of the Old Style which these editors adhere to.

and factions in every country. Whatever the differences of opinion which have disrupted Socialism for a period of three years of war may be, not a single faction of the Proletariat should refuse to participate in the general struggle for peace, which is on the program of the Russian Revolution.⁴¹

The scope of the Soviet's invitation appealed to a bigger audience than that of the Dutch-Scandinavian and International Socialist Committee's proposals, which it plausibly claimed were "too narrow and were therefore unacceptable to various groups...since the Soviet contained within itself a wide spectrum of socialist views, it was in the best position to appeal to all groups."⁴² What separated the Petrograd Soviet's call for an international socialist conference was the fact that this proposal was not coming from a marginalized, or a Leftist organization like the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee or the ISC. The Petrograd Soviet's proposal for an international socialist conference came from an organization that had been created from below and made legitimate by the Russian Revolution and an organization that had influence and power with the Russian Provisional Government.⁴³

Allied Reaction to the Call for an International Socialist Conference and the Allied Missions to Russia

How did Russia's allies react to the Petrograd Soviet's initiative? Allied governments and many of their majority socialist parties made less than enthusiastic responses to this call for peace. As we have seen, when it received the first invitation to a conference at Stockholm from the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee, the executive of the

⁴¹ "Appeal by the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to the Socialists of All Countries," in Frank Golder, *Documents of Russian History, 1914-1917*, trans. Emanuel Aronsberg (New York: The Century Company, 1927), 342.

⁴² Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 55.

⁴³ This summary of the origins of the Stockholm Conference is, just that, a summary. For a more detailed account, the best treatment of the topic is by Hildamarie Meynell, "The Stockholm Conference of 1917," *International Review of Social History* 5, no. 1 (1960); also Kirby, "International Socialism and the Question of Peace: The Stockholm Conference of 1917," *Historical Journal* 25, no. 3 (September 1982).

French Socialist Party refused to attend Stockholm and the Council of Ministers within the French government agreed that if passports were requested to go to Stockholm, they would be withheld.⁴⁴ However, when the Petrograd Soviet made its own appeal for a conference the SFIO chose to revisit the question.⁴⁵ Why the change?

At the end of March three French socialists who were members of the Chamber of Deputies, Marcel Cachin, Ernest Lafont, and Marius Moutet, were sent to Russia. A fourth French socialist, the Minister of Munitions in Prime Minister Ribot's government, Albert Thomas, followed in April. All were sent to encourage the New Russia to continue the common struggle against Germany. However, Thomas, unlike the others, was delivering this message on behalf of the French government. Cachin, Lafont, and Moutet came as fellow socialists interested in reviving the commitment of their Russian socialist comrades in the pursuit of the war.⁴⁶ While in Petrograd Cachin, Moutet, and Lafont found they had to defend themselves against attacks made in the Petrograd Soviet, where they were in effect accused of being "agents of French imperialism." It was at this point that Alexander Kerensky, the Provisional Government's Minister of War and member of the Petrograd Soviet, convinced them that the only way to revive the morale of the Russian army would be for the French to demonstrate their desire for peace by attending the proposed Stockholm Conference.⁴⁷

There was another factor that came into play. While in Petrograd, the French socialists were also made aware of the secret treaties between Russia and the Allies

⁴⁴ D. Stevenson, *French War Aims Against Germany, 1914-1919* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 68.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 89-90.

⁴⁷ Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 90.

which promised Russia control of the Straits and Constantinople after the war.⁴⁸ They also learned of the “Doumergue Treaty” with the Imperial Government, a document that showed the extent of French territorial war aims against Germany.⁴⁹ “Imperialism”, it now seemed, was not an exclusively German failing, a discovery that affected the outlook of the three SFIO delegates. They had gone to Russia as French patriots, but they returned home with a much different mindset. Cachin and Moutet returned to Paris on 27 May 1917 at a time when mutinies in the army and strikes in Paris were a critical preoccupation of the government. They arrived at the Hôtel Moderne, where the SFIO’s National Council was holding its meeting, in the midst of hundreds of people crying “Peace!”, “To Stockholm!” and “Bring our boys home!” Cachin and Moutet arrived on the afternoon of May 27 and were immediately ushered into the afternoon session of the council’s meeting and given the floor. There they made the case that the French must accept the invitation to Stockholm. Doing so, they argued would help revive the morale of the Russian army. Even more importantly, it would prevent the Russians from meeting with German socialists alone. The SFIO’s council agreed and reversed their earlier decision.⁵⁰

French Prime Minister Alexandre Ribot had at first been sceptical about allowing French socialists to attend the projected conference in Stockholm, but the news that the SFIO wanted to allow their socialists to attend made him rethink his opinion. Ribot had to consider how a continued refusal might put the political consensus of the *union sacrée* at risk. However, his ministers were not swayed by the SFIO’s new decision. Ribot’s eventual decision was doubtless most strongly influenced by the unambiguous warning

⁴⁸ Stevenson, *French War Aims*, 68.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 90-1.

that General Henri-Phillipe Pétain had given him in a session of the *Comité de guerre*. Pétain had said that he could not guarantee the discipline of the French army if French socialists were allowed to go to Stockholm. On 1 June 1917, Ribot told the Chamber of Deputies, with the backing of his Council of Ministers, that passports would be refused to any French socialists planning to attend the Stockholm Conference.⁵¹

In the case of Great Britain, the March Revolution in Russia had pushed the British leadership towards the idea of a revision of war aims, but this was more a consequence of their desire to keep Russia in the war rather than to appease “the revolution’s admirers among their own citizens.”⁵² In May 1917, when the Petrograd Soviet called for an international socialist conference to work for a negotiated peace, the War Cabinet at first looked favourably upon the idea, on the grounds that an affirmative response would do just that – help to keep Russia in the war.⁵³ On 11 June 1917, the War Cabinet agreed with the Russian request for an international socialist conference but added the qualification that existing Allied agreements were “perfectly consonant” with the goals of the Petrograd Formula espoused by the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet. In plain English, the British had no intention of abandoning their war aims.⁵⁴

Like the French, the British also sent an important pro-war socialist to Russia, in a capacity similar to that of Albert Thomas: the Secretary of the Labour Party, Minister without Portfolio, and member of the War Cabinet Arthur Henderson. He reached

⁵¹ Stevenson, *French War Aims*, 68-9. It is worthwhile to recall that there was an additional factor behind Ribot’s decision. The long-anticipated “Nivelle Offensive” had just proved a costly failure. It sparked a wave of mutinies that continued into the summer, ultimately touching half of the divisions in the French army. This is the context in which Pétain’s explicit warning took on a gravity that Ribot could not ignore. The authoritative account of this crisis remains Guy Pedroncini, *Les mutineries de 1917* (Paris: PUF, 1967).

⁵² V.H. Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 98.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ French, *Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 139-140.

Petrograd in June on an official mission to revive the Russian interest in continuing the war.⁵⁵ While he was in Petrograd, Henderson, along with British Ambassador George Buchanan, became convinced that Allied socialists should take part in the Stockholm Conference – and that meant British participation as well.⁵⁶ On 2 August 1917, Buchanan wrote in his journal that he believed “it would be a mistake to leave the Germans a clear field at Stockholm, more especially as it would render our attitude open to misconstruction here. As we have no intention of being bound by the conference’s decisions, I do not see how the attendance of British Socialists can prejudice our interests.”⁵⁷ Henderson had originally been opposed to the Stockholm Conference because he did not believe the Allied socialists should meet German socialists at the negotiating table without prior agreement on issues such as Alsace-Lorraine and reparations.⁵⁸ Agreements Henderson knew the German socialists could never accept.⁵⁹ However, the failure of the Russian army’s July offensive convinced him that participation in the Stockholm project was now the only way to keep Russia in the war.⁶⁰ The offensive had been planned in the belief that it would boost the dwindling morale and discipline within the Russian army created by war weariness and the process of democratization of the army after the March Revolution. Unfortunately, the offensive

⁵⁵ Richard H Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921 Intervention and the War* (Princeton, New Jersey. Princeton University Press, 1961), 1 8

⁵⁶ Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 1 10.

⁵⁷ Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia*, 2 161.

⁵⁸ J M Winter, “Arthur Henderson, the Russian Revolution, and the Reconstruction of the Labour Party,” *The Historical Journal* 15, no 4 (December 1972): 765

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰ French, *Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 141 The July offensive is also known as the Kerensky Offensive, because it was ordered by and strongly advocated by Alexander Kerensky, Minister of War The offensive was ordered since it was hoped that a victory would boost army morale and show Russia’s allies that Russia was capable of contributing something to the war effort after the March Revolution After some initial strong successes against the Austro-Hungarian army, the Russian army was pushed back by the addition of German reserves to the enemy front The July Offensive proved to be a grand failure and led to a series of protests and unrest within the capital and weakened military morale.

not only failed to raise morale and discipline, but the defeat of the Russian army and failure of the offensive was especially devastating. Although the number of casualties was relatively small, those who were lost came from the most valuable and disciplined units available. The failure of the offensive led to a further split between the officers and soldiers within the army and damaged any remaining authority held by the officer corps in the eyes of the soldiers. The offensive lowered the prestige of the Russian army in the eyes of Russia's allies. This is best demonstrated by the fact that General Foch of the French army sent a memorandum to Allied representatives meeting in Paris, outlining the distinct possibility of Russia's defection from the war and the consequent transfer of German troops to the Anglo-French front.⁶¹

Upon his return to London Henderson asked the Labour Party's National Executive Committee (NEC) on 25 July 1917 to hold a special conference on 10 August to recommend the Labour party send representatives to the Stockholm Conference.⁶² Soon afterwards Henderson, accompanied by Ramsay MacDonald, travelled to Paris to consult the French socialists, who had, as we have seen, already declared their support for Stockholm.⁶³ His choice of companion was significant. MacDonald was not just a Labour member of Parliament; he had been the party's General Secretary before the war and had resigned in opposition to the party's support for entry into the war in August 1914. He had since become one of the most prominent politicians speaking out in favour of a negotiated end to the fighting. Thus by associating himself with MacDonald,

⁶¹ Robert S. Feldman, "The Russian General Staff and the June 1917 Offensive," *Soviet Studies* 19, no. 4 (April 1968): 542-3.

⁶² Winter, "Arthur Henderson," *The Historical Journal*, 767-8.

⁶³ French, *Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 141-2.

Henderson was in effect sending a signal that went beyond the immediate question of Stockholm.

On 10 August 1917, Henderson spoke to the special conference of the Labour Party and explained why he believed it should send delegates to Stockholm. Henderson said that when he first went to Russia he had no intention of allowing members to attend the conference, but after seeing how desperate the situation in Russia really was, he realized that members of the British Labour Party had to go to Stockholm. He emphasized, however, that the conference should be consultative in nature. The resolution to go to Stockholm was passed by a majority of more than three to one.⁶⁴

Henderson's actions had far reaching political consequences. Henderson's colleagues in the War Cabinet were disappointed that he had gone to Paris with MacDonald and the message that it sent, mere hours after the vote was taken at the Labour Party's special conference the War Cabinet decided not to permit British representatives to attend the Stockholm Conference and that Henderson had to go. The next morning Henderson's resignation was tendered and accepted.⁶⁵

The British government's decision not to allow British representatives to attend the conference came not just from Henderson's actions but also from pressure from Great Britain's allies. Both the French and Italian governments feared further discussion of war aims would call into question the legitimacy of their claims for the return of Alsace-Lorraine and against Austria-Hungary and Turkey respectively.⁶⁶ However, as the summer progressed it became clear that there were also members within the Provisional Government who no longer wanted to see the idea of an international socialist conference

⁶⁴ Winter, "Arthur Henderson," *The Historical Journal*, 768.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ French, *Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 142.

come to fruition. On 9 August 1917, the Russian Chargé d’Affaires in Great Britain, Constantine Nabokov, received a telegram from the Russian Foreign Minister, Mikhail Tereshchenko, stating that “although the Russian Government does not deem it possible to prevent Russian delegates from taking part in the Stockholm Conference, they regard this Conference as a part concern and its decisions in no [way] binding upon the liberty of action of the Government.”⁶⁷ Nabokov forwarded this message to British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour. On 10 August, Nabokov was invited to 10 Downing Street where Prime Minister Lloyd George, who had seen Tereshchenko’s note to Nabokov, showed the Russian Chargé a telegram sent from Paris by Albert Thomas, “Kerensky ne veut pas de Conférence.” Kerensky had in effect made an about face from the position he took on Stockholm just four months earlier and for the British Prime Minister to know that both the Russian Foreign Minister and Prime Minister no longer supported the socialist conference made the decision not to allow British socialists and Labour party members to attend the Stockholm Conference much easier.⁶⁸

Now that we have established the origins of the Stockholm Conference as well as Allied reactions to socialist attendance to the Stockholm Conference, the next chapter will discuss American reaction to the international socialist peace conference. It will also discuss American perceptions about the war, peace, Russia, and socialism and how these attitudes and perceptions shaped American diplomacy towards the Stockholm Conference.

⁶⁷ Tereshchenko to Nabokov, telegram, 9 August 1917, in Nabokov, *The Ordeal of a Diplomat*, 137.

⁶⁸ Thomas to Lloyd George, telegram, 10 August 1917, in Nabokov, *The Ordeal of a Diplomat*, 139. Translation: Kerensky does not want the Conference.

Chapter 3: The United States and the Stockholm Conference

As we have learned in the previous chapter, by August 1917 the Provisional Government's leadership no longer supported the idea of an international socialist conference. However, that does not explain why President Wilson decided, three months earlier, that is in May 1917 not to allow American socialists to attend the Stockholm Conference. Before the United States entered the war, Woodrow Wilson had spoken tirelessly of peace; yet now that the projected Stockholm Conference offered a potential and perhaps practicable road to peace, the Wilson administration turned it down flat. It is impossible to measure yet still important to consider whether President Wilson's support for the Stockholm project could have instilled enough confidence in Tereshchenko and Kerensky, so that they would not have been so quick to abandon it. How and why did Washington decide so quickly that socialist attendance at the proposed Stockholm Conference constituted a danger and not an opportunity? Who participated in the decision to deny American socialists passports, and who tried to influence that decision? Did Paris and London give the question of allowing their national socialists to attend the conference more serious consideration than Washington did? Was Washington influenced at all by the views of its European allies? Did President Wilson himself make the decision not to allow American socialists to go to Stockholm? If so, did his decision arise from his political judgement as leader of the American war effort, or did it stem from personal pique, in that a negotiated peace à la Stockholm would have no connection to his own earlier peace efforts?

American Reaction to the Call for an International Socialist Conference

When first confronted with the question of allowing socialists to attend the Stockholm Conference, American diplomats erred on the side of caution and the State Department received little help from those in the field as demonstrated by the “advice” of the American Minister to Sweden, Ira Nelson Morris. Morris believed the conference had the potential to “have effect upon public opinion in Russia and Germany.”¹ That hardly constitutes an acute analysis: What “effect” he had in mind exactly, was left unclear.

American newspapers reported that before making a decision about the possible participation of American socialists in the Stockholm Conference, Wilson wanted to “investigate the character” of the proposed conference.² In making the investigation, Wilson found himself confronted with two conflicting accounts of the character of the proposed conference: one view of the Stockholm Conference was that it was a German ruse while the rival view denied the allegation.

The assertion that the Stockholm Conference was the result of a German plot against the Allied war effort came in the form of a letter written by William English Walling to Wilson’s Secretary of Labour, William Bauchop Wilson.³ In the postscript of this letter, Walling informed Secretary Wilson that J.G. Phelps Stokes, an American

¹ Morris to Lansing, telegram, 14 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1917. Supplement 2, The World War*, 1:738. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1917Supp02v01>. Accessed: 23 November 2010.

² Hillquit to Wilson, with enclosure Hillquit to Lansing, typed letter signed, 10 May 1917, Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:268. In Hillquit’s letters to both Wilson and Lansing, Hillquit cites that “the newspapers” reported that Wilson was investigating the character of the Stockholm Conference. However I have been unable to find any report, at least within the *New York Times* that states that Wilson was “investigating the character of the Stockholm Conference.” The tone of a majority of the articles about the Stockholm Conference in the *Times* (there are only 19) suggest that at least that newspaper’s opinion was against American socialist attendance to Stockholm. The *Times* seemed to have fallen victim to the same tale that the Wilson administration had: that Stockholm was engineered by Berlin.

³ William English Walling was an American labour reformer and socialist. In 1917, he left the American Socialist Party because of the party’s stand against American entry into the First World War. William Bauchop Wilson was President Wilson’s Secretary of Labour from 1913-1921.

millionaire and socialist who had left the American Socialist Party because of the party's opposition to American entry into the war, had written a letter to Frank Lyon Polk, a counsellor in the State Department.⁴ In that letter Stokes explained "at length the most urgent reasons why Hillquit and Berger" should not be permitted to attend "the so-called "international" Socialist conference at Stockholm" because it was "engineered by Berlin."⁵ The fact that an American socialist believed the Stockholm project to be a German plot did not help the case of those socialists who wanted an American delegation to attend the conference. President Wilson read Stokes' letter after it was forwarded to him by Secretary Wilson on 3 May 1917.⁶ President Wilson must have thought it worth consideration, for he forwarded the letter to Secretary of State Lansing.⁷ Unfortunately, there is no indication – other than Stokes' opposition to the American Socialist Party – as to why Stokes came to this conclusion and acted upon it.⁸

Charles Edward Russell, an American journalist, politician, and socialist who had also distanced himself from the American Socialist Party after the St. Louis Proclamation, and was subsequently appointed as the socialist representative to the Root Mission to Russia, wrote to Lansing on 15 May 1917 claiming that he had observed "strong denials that this [the Stockholm Conference] is of either proGerman (*sic*) origin or proGerman (*sic*) significance, but my [Russell's] long acquaintance with controlling influences in the Socialist movement enables me to judge of these with accuracy and I am

⁴ Walling to Wilson, typed letter signed, 2 May 1917, Link, ed , *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:199.

⁵ *Ibid* Victor Berger was a founding member of the American Socialist Party and held a seat in the House of Representatives twice, from 1911-1913 and 1922-1929

⁶ Wilson to Wilson, typed letter signed, 3 May 1917, Link, ed , *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:197.

⁷ Wilson to Lansing, typed letter signed, 3 May 1917, Link, ed , *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:196. In the forwarding letter to Lansing, Wilson wrote that he believed Lansing would find the letter of some interest and that Mr Walling was "the man we want." Wilson was referring to Walling being the potential pro-war socialist to be appointed as a delegate to the American Mission to Russia

⁸ The editor, Link, does not provide any further information on Stokes.

perfectly certain that the entire conception of the Stockholm conference is of the most sinister nature.”⁹ Russell further claimed that in addition to its pro-German origins, the Stockholm Conference would also make more difficult the work of the Root Mission. Finally, he argued that pro-German sympathy at the Stockholm Conference would mean that the gathering was bound to “endorse a policy that would mean the defeat of the Allies’ cause and the triumph of the basic principles of German imperialism.”¹⁰

This admittedly small collection of letters suggests that at least some American socialists were now ready to follow the well-travelled road that European socialists had been on since 1914. That is, they were dividing into two factions: those who put their “Socialism before their Americanism”, and those who reversed the formula.¹¹ In other words they were dividing into Majority and Minority factions – though to a less clear extent in Europe.

In any case, President Wilson started out with a dislike of the idea of allowing American socialists to attend the Stockholm Conference. In a note to Secretary of State Lansing on 11 May 1917, Wilson wrote that he did not like “the movement among the Socialists to confer about international affairs.”¹² Wilson believed the American people would resent any encouragement by the United States government that could be seen as support for the attendance of American socialists at such a conference. But that is as far

⁹ The St. Louis Proclamation was drawn up at the National Convention of the Socialist Party of the United States in April 1917. The proclamation illustrated the party’s opposition to the war, treated the war in terms of class warfare, and opposed outright American participation in the First World War.

¹⁰ The Root Mission has been discussed previously in Chapter 1 and will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

¹¹ Russell to Lansing, typed letter signed, 15 May 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:351. John Thompson includes in his book, *Reformers and War*, a short discussion of other American socialists who placed their Americanism before their Socialism. Thompson concludes that “passion”, and not philosophy seems to have accounted for the wartime attitudes of American socialists like Charles Edward Russell, William English Walling, and John Spargo. See Thompson, *Reformers and War*, 179-80.

¹² Wilson to Lansing, 11 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, The Lansing Papers, 1914-1920*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1914-1920), 2:17. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS19141920v2>. Accessed: 23 November 2010.

as he went for the moment, for he took the position that the government should “neither give them leave nor seek to restrain them. My own view is, that they will make themselves either hated or ridiculous.”¹³

On the other side of the argument, American socialist Morris Hillquit wrote to President Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing on 10 May 1917 and attempted to explain that as a member of the International Socialist Bureau he was “thoroughly familiar” with the character and objectives of the proposed conference. He assured the President and Secretary of State that “the idea of the Conference did not emanate from German or pro-German interests”. Hillquit claimed to possess facts, correspondence, and documents which he believed would prove his claim; and he requested a meeting with Wilson and Lansing so as to present his case directly.¹⁴ Although Hillquit’s view was factually correct, the source was wholly unreliable in the opinion of Lansing and President Wilson. At the American Socialist Party Convention held in St. Louis, from 7 April to 14 April 1917, Hillquit had worked with the left wing of the party to draw up the proclamation that bore the city’s name. This proclamation was the party’s official position on the war.¹⁵ The St. Louis Proclamation opposed any legislation for military or industrial conscription and advocated working for the repeal of such laws. It also recommended public opposition to the war and resistance to the imposition of censorship, freedom of speech, assembly, or organization.¹⁶ Wilson believed the Proclamation to be “almost treasonable”, making Hillquit’s association with it a black mark against him.¹⁷

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Hillquit to Lansing, typed copy of letter, 10 May 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:268-9.

¹⁵ Norma Fain Pratt, *Morris Hillquit: A Political History of an American Jewish Socialist* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc. 1979), 125.

¹⁶ Pratt, *Morris Hillquit*, 125-6.

¹⁷ Wilson to Lansing, Woodrow Wilson typed letter initialled, 11 May 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:274.

Meanwhile Wilson seemed to look more favourably upon those American socialists, like Walling and Stokes who had quit the American Socialist Party over the issue of participation in the war, since their actions were in support of American entrance into the war.

Lansing's opinion of socialists like Morris Hillquit was no better than the president's. To him, Hillquit was "a natural intriguer and utterly unreliable; that in spite of his profession of sympathy with the cause which we support in the war, he would favour any means to aid in forcing peace." As for the main issue, Lansing vacillated on the question of American socialist participation at Stockholm. He believed issuing passports to American socialists would do more harm than good, but he also feared that refusing passports would make men who wished to attend the conference into martyrs. Issuing passports could have encouraged "a dangerous pro-German movement and [permitted] agitators near Russia who [were] frankly hostile to the Commission to Russia [the Root Mission] and will seek every means to discredit it and weaken their influence with the socialistic and labor element." Lansing then pressed the president for his opinion on what action the government needed to take in dealing with the Stockholm Conference.¹⁸ Wilson did not give Lansing a written answer, but he did speak with him on the matter sometime between 19 May 1917 and 23 May 1917.¹⁹ There can be no doubt that his oral answer was hostile to the project for on 23 May the State Department

¹⁸ Lansing to Wilson, typed letter signed, 19 May 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:350.

¹⁹ Lansing to Wilson, typed letter signed, 19 May 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:350, n1; Lansing to Page, circular telegram, 22 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1917. Supplement 2, The World War*, 1:739. Available at: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1917Supp02v01>. Accessed: 24 November 2010. It should be noted that there is a slight discrepancy between Link and *FRUS* as to when it was announced that the State Department would not release passports to American socialists intending to attend Stockholm. *FRUS* cites 22 May 1917, while Link cites 23 May 1917. There was also little coverage in the press regarding Wilson's decision not to allow American socialists to attend the Stockholm Conference. It seems that before Wilson made a decision, between 19 and 23 May, the *Times* – at the very least – had taken for granted that the answer would be no.

announced to its official American posts abroad, “strong disapproval of the peace propaganda of the European socialists,” and announced it would deny passports to any American socialists intending to travel to Stockholm for the international socialist conference. The State Department warned that anyone intending to take part in the conference could be subject to “severe punishment” under the Logan Act, which forbade American citizens from negotiating with foreign governments without the authorization of the United States government.²⁰

Socialists outside the United States reacted with disbelief and dismay. The chairman and the secretary of the Dutch-Scandinavian Socialist Committee, the ad hoc body that had put forward one of the many ideas for a socialist peace conference, sent a direct communication to President Wilson stating their hope that the refusal of passports to American socialists was “only [a] misunderstanding” given that the principles upon which the conference was being convened were exactly the same principles that Wilson himself had laid down in his Senate speech (this was no doubt a reference to Wilson’s “Peace Without Victory” speech to the Senate of 22 January 1917).²¹ There is nothing in the documentary record to indicate whether Wilson read this telegram. If he did read the telegram, however, his reaction was one of silence. By 12 June 1917 the socialist delegates who had already begun to assemble in Stockholm were “wholly cut off from communication with American Socialists, receiving no answers to cablegrams or letters

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Dutch-Scandinavian Socialist Committee (Branting, Chairman; Huysmans, Secretary) to Wilson, telegram, 29 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1917. Supplement 2, The World War*, 1:739-40. Available at: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1917Supp02v01>. Accessed: 24 November 2010; Senate, “Peace Without Victory,” 64th Cong., 2^d sess., 22 January 1917, S. Doc. 685, “A League for Peace,” as posted by Professor Vincent Ferraro of Mount Holyoke College. Available at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ww15.htm>. Accessed: 24 November 2010.

nor any answer to [the] May 29 message in which Branting and Huysmans cabled Wilson on behalf [of the] conference”.²²

Why Did Wilson Reject the Idea of the Stockholm Conference So Quickly?

The slim evidence that is available suggests that the President’s decision was influenced by the American socialists who had made their own political truce with the American government, since in their opinion the Stockholm Conference could be nothing but a scheme engineered by Germany. Though, he had also been made aware of the alternative view, that Stockholm was a legitimate attempt to work out possible peace terms and not a German-inspired stratagem, Wilson decided in the end not to allow American socialists to attend the conference. That being said it is important to make clear that this must remain a supposition, for there is no evidence *proving* that Wilson’s decision was based upon his negative views of Hillquit or other anti-war American socialists.

Of one thing, however, we can be certain, and that is that President Wilson made his decision about Stockholm much faster than his allies in London and Paris did. Though it was by no means a snap decision, the Stockholm project did not get the airing that it was given in Great Britain and France. Doubtless the fact that the Labour Party and the SFIO had ministers in the British and French coalition cabinets made a more deliberate and thoughtful decision essential, for the domestic political stakes were high. In contrast, the American Socialist Party had no place in Wilson’s administration or influence with its members. The fact that by the end of May Wilson had decided that American socialists could not attend the Stockholm Conference demonstrates that Paris

²² McCormick, Editor of Chicago Tribune to Lansing, telegram with enclosure, 12 June 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1917. Supplement 2, The World War*, 1:742. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1917Supp02v01>. Accessed: 26 January 2011.

and London had no influence over Washington in the decision to allow socialists to attend. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Prime Minister Ribot announced on 1 June that French socialists would be denied passports to Stockholm while the British government would not come to a decision about Stockholm until August. In so far as we can say, Wilson looks to have made his decision about Stockholm largely because of his irritation with socialist opposition to American entry into the war – the entry that he had determined on in mid-March. The weeks leading up to American entry into the war had obviously been a time of “supreme crisis” for antiwar activists. The extreme Left of the American Socialist Party had called for a general strike if war was declared. More moderate spokesmen for peace had petitioned the president against American entry.²³ Pacifists such as Amos Pinchot and Owen R. Lovejoy created the American Committee on War Finance, which agitated for higher income taxes and the confiscation of all net incomes exceeding \$100,000 a year if the United States entered the war, with the conviction that “rich men would stop demanding war if they knew they would have to pay for it.”²⁴ The American Union Against Militarism took out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* on 29 March 1917 which demanded the continuance of armed neutrality and advocated further efforts to end the war; it warned that participation in the war would mean the end of democracy in America.²⁵ Public opinion, though hard to measure especially in a “period of crisis and stimulated hysteria”, demonstrated an outpouring of peace sentiment.²⁶

²³ Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1910-1917* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1954), 275.

²⁴ Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: Campaigns for Progressivism and Peace* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965) 5:418.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Link, *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era*, 275.

Wilson's impressions of Hillquit demonstrate that the idea of sending American delegates to the Stockholm Conference was condemned in the President's eyes through "guilt by association". The actions of Hillquit and the American Socialist Party at the St. Louis Conference clearly tainted Wilson's views; and if the American Socialist Party was associated with the Stockholm project, then in his mind the conference question reached his desk with two strikes against it.

Without additional information, Wilson apparently accepted the view that the Stockholm Conference was a German ploy to undermine the allies' war efforts and the delegates to it would do more harm than good in their attempts to bring about peace. Ironically, he failed to recognize that his own peace efforts before 1917 had been judged in much the same way by the governments that were now his allies. In early 1915 British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey spoke to the American Ambassador to Great Britain, Walter Hines Page, equating any peace approaches with a German plot. Grey made clear to Page that he regarded the United States as a source from which Germans carried on the war in spite of American neutrality and "the sympathy of most Americans for the Allies." Page, who was a notorious Anglophile, hardly needed convincing. He explained that although Germans could not purchase weapons in the United States to physically fight the war, they used weapons of "organized propaganda in efforts to relieve England's economic pressure on Germany" and it was for these reasons that any peace initiatives that originated from the United States aroused suspicion amongst Britons.²⁷ Thus, at one time the Wilson administration had been, *mutatis mutandis*, in the same position as the Petrograd Soviet in 1917: distrusted because of its supposed (and unfounded) association

²⁷ Page to Bryan, telegram, 19 January 1915, USDS, *FRUS, 1915. Supplement, The World War*, 6-7. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1915Supp>. Accessed: 1 December 2010.

with German intrigue. Wilson ought to have known from experience that there was no valid reason to suppose that a peace initiative had to be, by its very nature, a stratagem to secure a German victory.

Furthermore, Wilson failed to see the similarities between the principles the Stockholm Conference claimed to be based upon and his own principles for a just peace. Wilson's ideas for the future peace settlement were based on the application of democratic principles to foreign policy. In a circular note of December 1916 to all belligerents, in which he had asked for statements of their war aims, Wilson alluded to the principle of no annexations when he suggested that "each [belligerent] deems it necessary first to settle the issues of the present war upon terms which will certainly safeguard the independence, the territorial integrity, and the political, and, commercial freedom of the nations involved."²⁸

In comparison, the principles espoused by the Petrograd Soviet in their call for a socialist conference were compatible with those already announced by Wilson in his call for peace negotiations, "The Russian Revolutionary Democracy desires a general peace on a basis acceptable to the workers of all countries, who do not seek annexations, who do not stand for robberies, who are equally interested in the free expression of the will of all nations, and the crushing of the might of international imperialism."²⁹ Furthermore, the Petrograd Soviet assured the Allies that the socialist conference was not intended to favour the cause of Imperial Germany, and they reiterated their rejection of the idea of a separate peace in which Russia would abandon the Allied coalition, "The Russian

²⁸ Lansing to Ambassadors and Ministers in belligerent countries, circular telegram, 18 December 1916, USDS, *FRUS, 1916. Supplement, The World War*, 98. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1916Supp>. Accessed: 1 December 2010.

²⁹ "Appeal by the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to the Socialists of All Countries," Golder, *Documents of Russian History*, 341.

Revolutionary Democracy does not want a separate peace, which would free the hands of the Austro-German Alliance...it knows that such a peace might lead to the military destruction of other countries, and thus strengthen chauvinistic and *revanche* ideas in Europe”.³⁰

Wilson wanted a democratic peace. The Petrograd Soviet wanted a democratic peace. However, Wilson would not support a democratic peace led by the Petrograd Soviet in tandem with the Russian Provisional Government. Why not? I believe that part of the answer to this question may well lie in Wilson’s personality, and in his 22 January 1917 speech to the Senate. Woodrow Wilson was intolerant to any opposition or challenges to his views; he tended to equate such opposition with disloyalty and ill intentions. This was not an isolated case, for throughout his life Wilson had a propensity to meet any opposition with resentment and anger. And once someone had made an enemy of Wilson, they remained an enemy for life.

In a medical biography of Wilson, Edwin A. Weinstein argues that Woodrow Wilson suffered from a variety of “neurological, medical, and psychologically induced illnesses” ranging from dyslexia as a child, depression, psychosomatic complaints, progressive cerebral vascular disease, and a series of small strokes starting at age 39, while he was a professor at Princeton University.³¹ Weinstein’s book makes the case that Wilson’s health, personality, and illnesses had an effect on his affairs as President of Princeton University and on his later political career.³²

It is the Princeton episode that is often seen as most revealing in this regard. During his tenure as President of Princeton University from 1902-1910, Wilson made

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson*, ix.

³² *Ibid.*

more than one enemy due to his supreme confidence in his own intuition. One Princeton contemporary wrote that “He [Wilson] once said to me, ‘I am so sorry for those who disagree with me.’ When I asked why, he replied, “Because I know that they are wrong’.”³³

Two examples from Wilson’s tenure at Princeton University can be drawn upon to demonstrate Wilson’s exceptional resentment towards those who opposed his views. The first example is known as the quadrangle controversy. In 1907, Wilson attempted to reform the social make up of the university by abolishing the traditional eating clubs and replacing them with residential quadrangles.³⁴ Although the Princeton Board of Trustees adopted Wilson’s plans, he met opposition from Princeton faculty members and alumni. Throughout the summer of 1907 Wilson campaigned to have his quadrangle plan accepted by both faculty and alumni but was unsuccessful. Supporters of the “quad system” among board members – and even the bitterest opponents of the quad system – agreed that a general reform of the university’s clubs was necessary; but they would not accept Wilson’s quadrangle plan without the support of the faculty and the alumni. But Wilson’s stubbornness obliged him to accept nothing but the plan he had proposed, and he became obsessed with the necessity of completing the quadrangle plan, to the absurd point of characterizing the controversy as “a struggle upon which depended the future of higher education in the United States.”³⁵ Wilson went to great lengths to win over the

³³ Arthur S. Link, *Wilson The New Freedom* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1956), 2.68

³⁴ Arthur S. Link, *Wilson The Road to the White House* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), 1. 46-7. Eating clubs were social clubs found throughout American universities in the 19th and early 20th centuries – the predecessors to fraternities and sororities – where students could gather, dine, and engage in discussion

³⁵ Link, *Wilson The Road to the White House*, 1.51-6

faculty and alumni, his appeals failed and his quadrangle plan was never implemented.³⁶ This episode can be taken as an illustration of his tendency towards intolerance of opponents and difficulty in seeking compromise. The perceived arrogance of his apparent conviction that *his* ideas alone were the best ones for the university alienated many who otherwise might have helped him.³⁷

The second controversy at Princeton in which we can discern the often stubborn and emotional character of Woodrow Wilson arose over the location and control of the graduate college that Princeton was preparing to construct.³⁸ The construction of a new residential graduate college was one of the priorities of his administration. He and the dean of Princeton's graduate school, Andrew F. West, agreed on a quadrangle layout, with conference rooms and a resident master who would live in one section of each quadrangle. However, Wilson could not come to an agreement with West over precisely where on the Princeton campus the new graduate college ought to be located. Their disagreement continued for many years until 1906 West told Wilson and the Board of Trustees that he wanted to leave the university for a professorship at MIT because he was fed up with the quarrel over the location of the graduate college. At the same time he accused Wilson of unfair conduct during their disagreement. However, Wilson refused to release West from his contract, an action that West and members of the board regarded

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ Link, *Wilson The Road to the White House*, 1.57.

³⁸ Link, *Wilson The Road to the White House*, 1.59. The graduate college controversy is an event in Wilson's life that spanned his Presidency at Princeton. It has been dealt with in detail by both Link, in Volume 1 of the *Wilson* series, and Weinstein, in his medical biography of Wilson which I will be relying on for the purpose of this chapter. For our purposes, I have tried to give an overview of the controversy in order to demonstrate the qualities of Wilson's character that I have described above. I will not go into as much detail as Link or Weinstein, but for a more detailed account of the graduate college controversy please see Link, *Wilson The Road to the White House*, 1.59-90; Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson A Medical and Psychological Biography*, 195-216

as a vindication of West's position as dean of the graduate school. But their disagreement continued.³⁹

Weinstein argues that Wilson experienced intense anger at having been embarrassed in front of the board, and that he may therefore have tried to avoid an outright showdown with West for fear of losing control of his outraged emotions. Furthermore, Weinstein believes that a recent stroke had affected Wilson's behaviour, leaving him depressed, frightened, and ashamed of his inabilities. In such a state, Wilson might have felt that he could not afford the loss of prestige that an admission of the truth of West's accusations would have caused. In any event the fight over the location of the graduate school waged on between West and Wilson until 1910. In December of that year, in one of the board's final meetings over the site of the college, Wilson argued that the real issue was not one of location but one of ideals, and that a graduate school based on West's *ideals* could not succeed.⁴⁰ In summary, it appears that Wilson's patent dislike of West stemmed from the fact that West would not drop his opposition, and that this dislike informed Wilson's attitudes throughout the long struggle – a struggle that ended with Wilson's defeat.⁴¹

It is perhaps possible to make too much of these incidents. After all, in his subsequent career as Governor of New Jersey and President of the United States, Wilson would be no stranger to political compromise. Yet the Princeton episodes do *suggest* that Wilson harboured a personality trait that made it challenging for him to accept both opposition to his ideas and to credit that those who gave voice to such opposition were acting in good faith and with a rational purpose. Therefore when we return to the issue of

³⁹ Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson*, 199-201.

⁴⁰ Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson*, 210.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

American socialist attendance at the Stockholm Conference, the opposition of American socialists to the president's decision to enter the war may well have provoked not just a political response, but a personal reaction grounded in anger and resentment.⁴² Their "disloyalty" to the United States was "disloyalty" to the president and his righteous cause. All of this remains supposition of course. I cannot prove that Wilson's emotions and ego were the decisive factor in the Stockholm question. But his past actions do provide examples of how Wilson's personal make-up *could* influence his decisions.

The second factor which I believe explains why Wilson could not support the prospect of a democratic peace led by the Petrograd Soviet in tandem with the Provisional Government is President Wilson's 22 January 1917 speech to the United States Senate. Just two months before the United States entered the war Wilson addressed the Senate and described the type of peace he hoped the United States would forge. He spoke of the peace offer he sent to all the belligerent nations in December 1916 which none of the belligerents accepted. In his 'Peace without Victory' speech to the Senate on 22 January 1917 Wilson outlined his ideas for the future peace settlement in great detail. First, Wilson referenced his idea for what would eventually become the League of Nations: "In every discussion of peace that must end this war, it is taken for granted that the peace must be followed by some definite concert of power which will make it virtually impossible that any such catastrophe should ever overwhelm us again." Second, he advocated the right of all nations to self-determination; a principle that also appeared in the Petrograd Soviet's "Petrograd Formula". In the President's words, "No peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the government, and that no

⁴² Link, *Wilson: The New Freedom*, 2:69.

right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property.” In his speech he also advocated freedom of the seas and the limitation of naval armaments as well as the limitation of armies and the military. Wilson suggested the nations of the world adopt an American position towards foreign policy based on the Monroe Doctrine, “I am proposing that all nations henceforth avoid entangling alliances which would draw them into competitions of power; catch them in a net of intrigue and selfish rivalry, and disturb their own affairs with influences intruded from without...I am proposing government by the consent of the governed”. But most importantly Wilson vigorously advocated American participation in the future peace settlement,

It is inconceivable that the people of the United States should play no part in that great enterprise. To take part in such a service will be the opportunity for which they have sought to prepare themselves by the very principles and purposes of their polity and the approved practices of their government ever since the days when they set up a new nation in the high and honourable hope that it might, in all that it was and did, show mankind the way to liberty.

Wilson called the principles he espoused in his speech, “American principles, American policies”, and stated that these were “the principles and policies of forward looking men and women everywhere” implying any nation that chose not to adhere to these principles was a backward and repressive nation.⁴³

Wilson wanted his administration to lead the world to peace: *his* democratic peace based on *his* democratic principles. When faced with the opportunity to move towards a possible democratic peace negotiated through the mechanism of an international socialist conference, Wilson spurned the opportunity because it would not bring about an *American* peace – that is, a peace arising from an American (indeed, a Wilsonian) peace initiative.

⁴³ Senate, “Peace Without Victory,” 64th Cong., 2^d sess., 22 January 1917, S.Doc. 685, “A League for Peace”. Available from: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ww15.htm>. Accessed: 1 December 2010.

Having reached this point it is time to leave the Stockholm project and turn to the Provisional Government's contribution to the possibility of a negotiated peace: the revision of war aims through an inter-Allied conference. The issue of war aims proved to be an important and at times dangerous issue for the Provisional Government. The members of the Provisional Government would find that the issue of war aims was as divisive in Russia as it was within the Allied coalition.

Chapter 4: The Miliukov Affair and the War Aims Question

As the Petrograd Soviet continued to press for an international socialist conference to discuss a negotiated peace, the Russian Provisional Government attempted to pursue the revision of war aims through an inter-Allied conference. The intent was to revise the war aims of each major partner within the Allied coalition, with a view to lessening their annexationist and imperialistic character. The Provisional Government hoped that a revision of war aims would improve the chances for peace talks because it would demonstrate to the Central Powers that compromise was possible. Just as importantly, a revision along these lines would be bound to improve the morale of the Russian army, for it would show Russian soldiers that their European and American allies were now fighting for the same democratic principles that the New Russia had adopted.¹ And it would hopefully pay domestic political dividends by showing that the Provisional Government was truly working to extricate Russia from the war.

As a new associate in the war against the Central Powers, how would President Wilson's administration respond to Russia's call for an Allied revision of war aims that would bring them fully into line with the Petrograd Soviet's and Provisional Government's peace formula: no annexations, no indemnities, and the right of all peoples to self-determination.

The Miliukov Affair

When the Petrograd Soviet's "Appeal to the Peoples of All the World," broached the issue of war aims, the Provisional Government's first Foreign Minister, Paul Miliukov, responded with a distinct absence of enthusiasm. Miliukov chose to stigmatize the concept of a peace without territorial annexations as a German formula, as if that was

¹ Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 74.

sufficient grounds to dismiss the idea out of hand.² The rest of the government, however, was divided in its reaction to the Soviet's ideas about peace policy. Some ministers wanted to reach a compromise with the Soviet, and these government members eventually won the day against Miliukov. The Provisional Government decided to issue a statement to the Russian people (but not a note to Russia's allies) renouncing the annexation of foreign territory as a war aim. This statement was released on 10 April 1917 (NS)/28 March 1917 (OS).³ In this document the Provisional Government declared that "the purpose of free Russia [was] not the domination over other nations, or seizure of their national possessions, or forcible occupation of foreign territories, but the establishment of stable peace on the basis of the self-determination of peoples."⁴ The Provisional Government assured the Russian people that renunciation of an annexationist policy in the war did *not* mean that Russia would simply stop fighting. "The defense of our own inheritance by every means, and the liberation of our country from the invading enemy, constitute the foremost and most urgent task of our fighters, defending the nation's liberty." This position was the core of the doctrine that would soon be called "revolutionary defencism".⁵ Finally, the note stated that "These principles will be made the basis of the foreign policy of the Provisional Government, which is unswervingly executing the will of the people and defending the rights of our fatherland, fully observing at the same time all obligations assumed towards our Allies."⁶ The reference to "obligations" was most likely a nod to the agreement between the Allies not to make a separate peace. This document can best be seen as the Provisional Government's first

² "Press Interview with Miliukov," in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1044.

³ Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 27-8.

⁴ "The Provisional Government and War Aims," in Golder, *Documents in Russian History*, 330.

⁵ A discussion of Revolutionary-Defencism is given in Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 9, n23.

⁶ "The Provisional Government and War Aims," in Golder, *Documents in Russian History*, 330.

attempt to square the circle by showing its willingness to accommodate the desires of the Petrograd Soviet while at the same time continuing the war and recognizing existing commitments made to the Allies.

The Petrograd Soviet's next step was to insist that the government formally communicate its statement on war aims of 10 April 1917 to the other Allied governments, putting them on notice through an official diplomatic note that it was requesting the revision of imperialist war aims. The Petrograd Soviet came to this decision through a resolution submitted by Irakli Tsereteli to the Executive Committee.⁷ Tsereteli's resolution made it clear that the Soviet leaders were not satisfied with Provisional Government's statement of 10 April to the Russian people, and compelled the government to take a further step and enter into negotiations with the Allies for the purpose of creating a general agreement on war aims.⁸ Once again, Foreign Minister Miliukov resisted the Soviet's request. Soviet leaders and the Russian socialist press reacted in kind. The Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet published a document proposing a joint Soviet-Provisional Government commission that would control Russian foreign affairs. This commission, which would allow the Soviet a direct hand in the formulation of foreign policy, would be especially concerned with the question of

⁷ Irakli Tsereteli was a Georgian Social Democrat who had risen to prominence as the leader of that party in the second Duma. Upon the dissolution of the Duma in 1907 he was exiled to Siberia. Tsereteli organized and led the Siberian Zimmerwaldists, a small group of Russian socialists who, from their exile in Siberia, joined the debate on the correct socialist attitude towards war. Tsereteli returned to Petrograd after the March Revolution and became a prominent leader within the Petrograd Soviet, giving him further influence within socialist circles and making him a liaison between the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government.

⁸ Tsereteli's resolution to the Executive Committee can be found in Browder and Kerensky, *The Russian Provisional Government, 1917*, 2:1083-85, Doc. No. 948.

moving towards peace. Meanwhile, the socialist press lambasted Miliukov, calling for his resignation if he would not agree to accept the new view on foreign policy.⁹

Miliukov strongly discouraged the Provisional Government from reaching out to its allies for the revision of war aims because he considered it to be impossible to influence official Allied policy.¹⁰ But Miliukov also believed it politically impractical to refuse all of the concessions brought forward by the Petrograd Soviet, so he consented to its pressure and agreed to send a note to the Allies raising the possibility of a revision of Allied war aims.¹¹ However, Miliukov insisted that he be allowed to send a covering letter with this request, “which would eliminate the possibility of interpreting the Declaration to our detriment.”¹² The ministers of the Provisional Government approved Miliukov’s request for a covering letter, including the Provisional Government’s only socialist and member of the Petrograd Soviet, Minister of Justice Alexander Kerensky.¹³ The diplomatic note, accompanied by Miliukov’s letter, was sent to Russia’s allies on 1 May 1917 (NS)/18 April 1917 (OS). Miliukov’s covering letter began by assuring the Allies that the Russian government had no intention of making a separate peace, a policy that was in accordance with the position of both the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet, “Our enemies have lately been endeavouring to sow dissension among the Allies by propagating inane reports about the alleged intention of Russia to conclude a separate peace with the Central Monarchies. The text of the enclosed document will best refute such fabrications.” Within that very same paragraph, however, Miliukov

⁹ Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 30-3.

¹⁰ Paul Miliukov, *Political Memoirs, 1905-1917*, ed. Arthur P. Mendel., trans. Carl Goldberg (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1967), 434.

¹¹ Miliukov, *Political Memoirs*, 445.

¹² “Miliukov’s Contemporary Account of the Origins of the Note,” in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1097.

¹³ Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 38.

began to alter the meaning of the Provisional Government's document through intentionally "coded" language that would easily be understood by the recipients. In exalted language Miliukov's letter emphasized Russia's overall accord with Allied war aims. "The general principles therein enunciated by the Provisional Government are in entire agreement with the lofty ideas that have constantly been proclaimed to the most recent hour by eminent statesmen in the Allied countries." Although the note did not overtly commit the New Russia to the annexations of Constantinople and the Dardanelles, it did not refute the claim; indeed, it used a cryptic formula that could allow the Allies to infer that nothing had really changed. "The Provisional Government's declarations cannot of course afford the slightest ground for the deduction that the collapse of the old edifice means a lesser share taken by Russia in the common struggle of all the Allies." The implication was that in the event of an Allied victory, Russia would also not want a "lesser share" in the spoils of war than her participation in the "common struggle" entitled her to. Thus, the annexation of territory and the payment of reparations were not excluded. Furthermore, the note held out the prospect of arriving at peace through an Allied victory instead of through a negotiated agreement. "The national will to carry on the World War to a decisive victory has been still further accentuated by that sense of responsibility which now rests upon all jointly and severally." Above all, while appearing to merely affirm the Provisional Government's adherence to obligations agreed by the Imperial Government with the Allies in the Treaty of London of September 1914, Miliukov's language in effect stipulated that the New Russia fully expected what had been promised to the old Russia: "The Provisional Government, *while safeguarding the rights acquired by its country*, will continue the strict observance of the engagements

assumed towards Russia's allies.”¹⁴ Agreeing to adhere to the old regime's treaty obligations called into question what would be expected of Russia in the future if those obligations were to go against the principles of the peace program. Finally, the note repeated Russia's goal of a victorious rather than negotiated peace settlement,

Firmly convinced of the victorious outcome of the present war, and in perfect accord with its allies, the Provisional Government is equally sure that the problems arising out of this war will be solved by means of a firm basis of a lasting peace and that, inspired by identical sentiments, the allied democracies will find means of obtaining the *guarantees and sanctions* needed to prevent a recurrence of sanguinary conflicts in the future.¹⁵

The “guarantees and sanctions” necessary to prevent future wars was an all too obvious reference to the implementation of annexations and imposition of indemnities by the Allies upon the Central Powers after a victorious conclusion to the war. Here as before the note left open to the Allies the inference that annexations and indemnities would be the way to secure the future peace settlement.

The fact of the matter is that the formal diplomatic note for which Milikov wrote this covering letter – in other words, the “Proclamation of the Provisional Government,” – conveyed a very different message. In the note, the Provisional Government declared its allegiance to the principles of no annexations and the right to self-determination of peoples: “free Russia does not aim to dominate other peoples and deprive them of their national patrimony, to occupy foreign territories by force, but to establish a firm peace on the foundation of the right of peoples to determine their own destiny.” The note went on to state that the Provisional Government had committed itself to such principles in its foreign policy and assured its allies that its commitment not to conclude a separate peace

¹⁴ My emphasis.

¹⁵ Onou to Lansing, translation, 3 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1917. Supplement 2, The World War*, 1:53. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1917Supp02v01>. First Accessed: 18 January 2011. My emphasis.

would not be affected by this new foreign policy. “These principles will form the basis of the foreign policy of the Provisional Government, which unfailingly carries out the will of the people and safeguards the rights of our country, while abiding by the pledges given to our allies”.¹⁶ It is hardly surprising that these two conflicting yet associated diplomatic documents (the “Proclamation” and Miliukov’s covering letter) gave Russia’s allies more than a hint of the disorganization and disunity that prevailed in Petrograd.¹⁷

Miliukov’s covering letter quickly produced dramatic consequences that eventually led to his resignation. The message was made public after it had been dispatched to Allied foreign offices.¹⁸ Again, Miliukov was berated in the socialist segment of the Russian press. The Bolshevik Central Committee predictably exploited the Provisional Government’s discomfiture after the revelation of what was now being called the “Miliukov Letter”. It called upon the Petrograd Soviet to take power from the government and declared the Provisional Government to be completely imperialist.¹⁹ Large groups of demonstrators took to the streets, carrying signs demanding Miliukov’s resignation – and, in some cases, an end to the war. The Petrograd Soviet reacted with surprise. The Central Executive Committee had not seen a copy of Miliukov’s covering note until it appeared in the press. The left wing of the Petrograd Soviet called for street demonstrations but it upped the ante by demanding Miliukov’s resignation as well. Irakli

¹⁶ Onou to Lansing, translation, 3 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1917. Supplement 2, The World War*, 1:53-5. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1917Supp02v01>. Accessed: 18 January 2011. The telegram was received on 3 May 1917 but the date on which the note was sent by Miliukov was actually 1 May 1917 and the note is generally referred to as of that date in most historical accounts and records.

¹⁷ This is demonstrated by the fact that, as we shall see, the Allied responses to the Provisional Government’s Proclamation on War Aims were really a response to Miliukov’s covering letter. The Allies chose to use the confusion created by the two opposing notes and answer the note that best suited their needs at the time. The result was that the new Foreign Minister, Mikhail Tereshchenko, had to ask that the Allied responses be revised, in some cases multiple times, before they could be published in Russia.

¹⁸ Warth, *The Allies and the Russian Revolution*, 56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Tsereteli, now a leader within the Petrograd Soviet, disagreed with this course of action and suggested instead that the Soviet try to negotiate a settlement of the controversy with the government. Tsereteli met with the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government, Prince Lvov, and suggested, on behalf of the Soviet's Central Executive Committee, that the crisis be resolved by sending a *new* note, annulling Miliukov's previous one. Yet he also suggested that Miliukov's resignation would help to relieve some of the pressure the Provisional Government was feeling. However, Lvov was not persuaded, for he feared Miliukov's resignation would lead to the resignations of ministers loyal to him, and by that mechanism, to the collapse of the government.

As an alternative, Tseretli suggested a joint meeting be held of the Provisional Government and the Executive Committee of the Soviet.²⁰ At this joint meeting a prominent Soviet member, Victor Chernov, suggested that Miliukov be shifted from the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs to Minister of Education.²¹ Tsereteli revived his earlier idea that a new note be sent to Russia's allies. Miliukov stood firmly against both suggestions.²² The Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government eventually came to a compromise, whereby the government agreed to draft a new diplomatic note to "explain" the allegedly vague points of Miliukov's covering letter; this new note would be published within Russia and later abroad.²³ Tsereteli and the Minister of Transport Nikolai Nekrasov drafted the explanatory note. It was then approved by both the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet with some minor amendments, over

²⁰ Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 38-40.

²¹ Warth, *The Allies and the Russian Revolution*, 58.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*; Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 42.

the objections of Miliukov on the one side and the Bolsheviks on the other.²⁴ Published on 5 May 1917 (NS)/22 April 1917 (OS), the compromise “explanatory note” clarified the point that any reference to decisive victory in Miliukov’s covering letter was a reference to the “aims set forth by” the Provisional Government’s Declaration of 10 April/28 March, in which the need to defend Russia against invasion was discussed.²⁵ The specific passage in question, which came from the statement of 10 April/28 March, was “the Russian people will not permit their fatherland to emerge from this great struggle humiliated and sapped in its vital forces.”²⁶ The Provisional Government’s explanatory note added that the controversial “guarantees and sanctions” in Miliukov’s covering letter were merely a reference to “limitations of armaments, international tribunals, etc.”²⁷

The explanatory note calmed public indignation in Petrograd, but the crisis that had been set off by Miliukov’s covering letter had made many members of the Provisional Government aware of the power the Petrograd Soviet held and of the need to both accept and work with the Soviet as opposed to challenging it. In other words, they drew the conclusion that “the formal authority of the government and the effective power of the Soviet had to be meshed”.²⁸ The ineluctable consequence of such co-operation was that Miliukov would have to go – at the very least to leave his post as the Provisional Government’s Foreign Minister. Moreover, additional members of the Petrograd Soviet (beyond just Minister of Justice Alexander Kerensky) would have to be welcomed into

²⁴ Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 42

²⁵ “The Government’s Explanatory Note of April 22,” (OS), in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1100; Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 42

²⁶ “The Provisional Government’s Declaration of March 27 on War Aims,” (OS) in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1046

²⁷ “The Government’s Explanatory Note of April 22,” (OS), in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1100; Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 42

²⁸ Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 44

the government. The Provisional Government therefore extended an invitation to the Petrograd Soviet to join the government on 9 May 1917 (NS)/26 April 1917 (OS). This invitation split the Petrograd Soviet almost down the middle. However, on 12 May 1917 (NS)/29 April 1917 (OS) Minister of War, Alexander Guchkov, resigned from the government, out of his alarm at the growing socialist influence within the Provisional Government and his unhappiness with the direction the government's affairs were headed. Guchkov's resignation, which removed a staunch supporter of Miliukov from the Provisional Government, put pressure on those Soviet members who were against joining the government to reconsider their position. Again, Prince Lvov offered to create a coalition with the Soviet; and this time, if the proposal was rejected, he threatened to dissolve the government, leaving the country without any formal leadership.

Miliukov believed that throughout this whole affair he had been sandbagged by his colleague Kerensky. Miliukov and Kerensky opposed each other on almost every issue and policy and both have accused the other of such actions in their memoirs. In his political memoirs, Miliukov portrays Kerensky as a conniver, a conspirator and as a man who worked solely for his own political advancement. Miliukov claims that Kerensky promised in the press that the Provisional Government would publish a note to the Allied powers in which the government's views on war aims would be developed further than had been done in the Provisional Government's Note on War Aims of 10 April (NS)/28 March (OS). Miliukov asserts that he was preparing "no note whatsoever" at that time. In his memoirs, Miliukov states that the question of an address to the Allies about war aims had been raised within the Provisional Government *by Kerensky* at the supposed urging of an Allied representative, British Ambassador George Buchanan. Miliukov

accused Kerensky of attempting to advance his career when, in meetings with Buchanan, Prince Lvov, Tsereteli, and Tereshchenko, it was decided that a change in the government was necessary. Miliukov asserts that well before the governmental crisis which saw the resignation of both Guchkov and Miliukov, it had been decided that Kerensky would replace Guchkov and Tereshchenko would replace Miliukov.²⁹

Kerensky's portrait of Miliukov is that of an arrogant, stubborn man with a combative temperament. Kerensky claims in his own memoirs that Miliukov created a crisis of confidence within the government even before the "covering letter" crisis which led to his down fall, because of his stubbornness and because his repeated public statements of his personal views were being interpreted in democratic and socialist circles as evidence of bad faith on the part of the Provisional Government. Kerensky defends himself against Miliukov's accusations that he had "promised" the press that the Provisional Government would publish a note on war aims by stating that he felt at that time that he was in closer touch with the mood of the people than anyone else in the Provisional Government. Kerensky claims that on the evening of 25 April he informed the press that the government was "about to consider the question of dispatching a note to the Allies informing them of Russia's revised war aims." According to Kerensky, the press confused his statement and announced that the government was already discussing a note to the Allies on war aims – a confusion (if "confusion" there was) that the language of Kerensky's statement encouraged. He makes no mention of Miliukov's accusation that Kerensky had plotted with Buchanan, Lvov, Tseretli, and Tereshchenko, of Guchkov's and Miliukov's resignations and replacements. Kerensky states that Miliukov was justified in demanding that the government publish an official denial of

²⁹ Miliukov, *Political Memoirs*, 441-2.

Kerensky's alleged statement. However, this denial provoked a "storm of indignation", forcing Miliukov to agree to an immediate dispatch to the Allies of a note on war aims. Kerensky states that the note was drafted by the entire cabinet and that "theoretically" it should have satisfied Miliukov's most extreme critics. Kerensky blames the public's misunderstanding of the note and irrationality as the reason why the note was met with such sharp protest. "[T]hings had by now gone so far, and hostility to Miliukov in the Soviet and left-wing circles in general was so great, that they were no longer capable of making a rational judgement, or even of understanding the sense of our note. The atmosphere became hysterical." After the government published a statement explaining Miliukov's note (4 May 1917 (NS)), Kerensky asserts that all within the Provisional Government now agreed that Miliukov needed to be replaced by "someone who would be able to conduct the nation's foreign policy with greater flexibility."³⁰

On 15 May 1917 (NS)/2 May 1917 (OS), the Central Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet finally bit the bullet and voted in favour of a coalition government. On the same day it met with the Provisional Government to draw up a new governmental program. The Provisional Government adopted the main lines of the Petrograd Soviet's foreign policy, with the addition of stronger language to assure the Allies that Russia did not intend make a separate peace with Germany. Upon the adoption of the new direction in foreign policy Miliukov resigned. He was replaced by a young businessman, not affiliated with any party, Mikhail Tereshchenko.³¹ His first task in office was to receive and publish the Allied replies to the note sent to the Allies on 1 May 1917 (NS)/18 April

³⁰ Alexander Kerensky, *The Kerensky Memoirs: Russia and History's Turning Point* (London: Cassel & Company, Ltd., 1965), 245-7.

³¹ Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 43-9. Tereshchenko was chosen because he was "of a background that would almost certainly reassure the Allies". He was recommended to Soviet leaders by Kerensky and Nekrasov as an adherent to democratic methods in foreign policy.

1917 (OS) (the Provisional Government's Proclamation on War Aims which had as its covering letter, Miliukov's note).

British and French Reaction to the Provisional Government's Proposal to Revise War Aims

The British and French replies, to the Provisional Government's communications, as they will be summarized below, were actually the product of bilateral negotiations. As the American Ambassador put it in notable diplomatic understatement, Tereshchenko feared that the references to annexations in the Allied responses would "probably affect injuriously [the] work [the] Minister of War [was] performing at [the] front".³² In fact Tereshchenko must have feared a potential replay of the Miliukov Affair.

The French government's reply to the Provisional Government's Proclamation on War Aims of 1 May 1917 (NS) was not what the Provisional Government had hoped. The first draft of the French reply was judged so unfavourably by Tereshchenko that Albert Thomas, who had replaced French Ambassador Maurice Paléologue in early May, had to revise the text several times.³³ The final version of the French reply was accepted by Tereshchenko and officially received on 26 May 1917 (NS).³⁴ The text of the reply claimed that France had been forced into the war for the purpose of defending French "liberty" and the "national patrimony". The note commended the restoration of Poland to Russia and used this to introduce the reassertion of its claims to the return of Alsace-Lorraine. If Alsace-Lorraine were to become a part of France after the war it would

³² Francis to Lansing, telegram, 31 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1918), 1:86. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 1 February 2011.

³³ Thomas to Tereshchenko, 26 May 1917, "The French Reply," in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1107. I have been unable to find the date that this first reply was sent to Tereshchenko.

³⁴ Though apparently this final French reply was still seen as less acceptable to the Russians than the British reply.

mean that the territory had been annexed – or rather re-annexed – by France from Germany. Technically this would be a violation of the first principle of the Petrograd Formula, though to the French such a judgement would inevitably be seen as a sterile legalism. A more realistic reading of the French position would point to the fact that Paris did not mention the holding of a plebiscite to give popular sanction to the “return” of the lost province. That would have been the way to use the principle of “self-determination” to get around the intended prohibition of annexations. It would also be a way of delegitimizing the German annexation of these provinces in 1871, for Berlin had shocked public opinion at the time by refusing any form of consultation with the affected population. In any event the French note went on to declare that France would fight “until victory” so that the Allies and France would be assured of the “complete restoration of their territorial rights and their political and economic independence, as well as of reparatory indemnities”. The claims laid out in the French reply declared two things: the liberation of all national territory from German occupation plus an indemnity (in the form of “restoration”). The latter violated the Petrograd Formula. The French reply to the Provisional Government’s Proclamation of War Aims had ignored the Petrograd Formula but made a gesture in the direction of the Provisional Government’s demand for the revision of war aims with its final words, “the French Government desires to come to an understanding with it [the Provisional Government] not only regarding the means for continuing the struggle, but also regarding the means for ending it, by examining and determining, by common agreement, the conditions in which they may hope to reach a final settlement in accordance with the ideas by which their conduct in this war is directed.”³⁵

³⁵ Thomas to Tereshchenko, 26 May 1917, “The French Reply,” in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian*

In regards to the British reply, the Provisional Government refused to publish the first one, which was written by Lord Robert Cecil and handed to the Russian Chargé d’Affaires Constantine Nabokov on 9 May 1917 (NS), until some of the terms were altered to be more acceptable to Russian public opinion.³⁶ British Ambassador Buchanan and Arthur Henderson, member of the War Cabinet and in Petrograd on a special mission, had to revise the note three times over the next few weeks before a version was found acceptable by both the British government and Tereshchenko.³⁷ The British government felt it had a number of reasons to be wary of the pressure to revise war aims.³⁸ Cecil feared that if Great Britain and the Allies agreed not to make any territorial changes without the consent of the affected populations, Germany would take advantage of this. For example, Germany could expel some French inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine before a plebiscite took place. Cecil also believed that “moderate elements” in Russia might have been looking to Great Britain for “guidance and support” and would be discouraged if the allies yielded to “extremists” on war aims. Meanwhile, British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, feared that an inter-Allied discussion of war aims would weaken the “war will” of some allies (he had Rumania and Italy in mind). Furthermore, the Foreign Secretary believed that a revision of war aims – or anything else for that matter – would not guarantee that Russia would stay in the war.³⁹

Provisional Government, 2:1107-8.

³⁶ Buchanan to Tereshchenko, 8 June 1917, “The British Reply,” in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1106; Rothwell, *British War Aims*, 100. Following the formation of the coalition government in 1915, Lord Robert Cecil was appointed the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and also served as Minister of the Blockade from 1916-1918.

³⁷ Buchanan to Tereshchenko, 8 June 1917, “The British Reply,” in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1106; Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 78.

³⁸ Rothwell, *British War Aims*, 100.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

The final British reply, sent on 8 June 1917, supported Russia's commitment to the principles of no annexations and the right to self-determination of peoples. "In the proclamation to the Russian people, enclosed in the note, it is said 'free Russia does not propose to dominate other peoples, or to take from them their national patrimony, or forcibly to occupy their territory.' In this sentiment the British Government heartily concur." The British note went on to explain that the British government had not entered the war for "conquest" and was not continuing the war for that purpose. It also commended the Provisional Government's "intention of liberating Poland – not only the Poland ruled by the old Russian autocracy, but equally that within the dominion of the Germanic empires." This was a none too subtle way of associating the Provisional Government with the goal of fighting on to final victory, for Berlin would never allow Posen, Germany's portion of the Polish partitions and now considered "German" territory and a province of Prussia, to be removed from the Reich without a military defeat. The British government joined Russia in its "acceptance and approval of the principles laid down by President Wilson in his historic message to the American Congress", and claimed that those were the principles from which British war policy was also formed.⁴⁰ Finally, the note stated that the British government believed the agreements made between Great Britain and her allies conformed to the standards outlined by President Wilson in his 22 January 1917 speech but that it would, if necessary, be prepared to consider a revision of war aims: "if the Russian Government so desire, they [the British

⁴⁰ The "historic message" in question is Wilson's 'Peace Without Victory' Speech of 22 January 1917, Senate, "Peace Without Victory," 64th Cong., 2^d Sess., 22 January 1917, Senate Doc. 685. Available from: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ww15.html>.

government] are quite ready with their allies to examine and, if need be, to revise these agreements.”⁴¹

American Reaction to the Provisional Government’s Proposal to Revise War Aims

The Provisional Government considered the American response to the war aims appeal to be the most important because they believed that, given the tenor of his past statements and speeches, Wilson would be the leader most likely to support the Russian position on war aims.⁴² Tereshchenko received what he interpreted as President Wilson’s reply to the Provisional Government’s Proclamation on War Aims on 22 May 1917. In his reply, President Wilson spoke of America’s reasons for entering the war, specifically mentioning that the United States fought for “the liberty, the self-government, and the undictated development of all peoples,” adding that the future peace must be achieved for such purposes.⁴³ The note referenced the principle of the self-determination, emphasizing that “No people must be forced under a sovereignty under which it does not wish to live.”⁴⁴ It also stated Wilson’s dislike for the practice of territorial annexation and the imposition of reparation or indemnity payments by the victor upon the defeated. “No territory must change hands except for the purpose of

⁴¹ House of Commons, “Note from the Russian Provisional Govt. and the British Reply respecting the Allied War Aims,” *Command Papers*, 1917, misc. 8587, no. 10, 5. Available from: http://parlipapers.chadwyck.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/fulltext/fulltext.do?area=hcpp&id=1917-020736&pagenum=1&resultNum=10&entries=12&source=config.cfg&queryId=..session/1309728622_25722&backto-RESULTS. Accessed: 1 February 2011.

⁴² Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 79.

⁴³ Wilson to Francis, 9 May 1917 (OS), “President Wilson’s Message,” in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1109.

⁴⁴ Wilson to Francis, 9 May 1917 (OS), “President Wilson’s Message,” in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1109-1110.

securing those who inhabit it a fair chance of life and liberty. No indemnities must be insisted on except those that constitute payment for manifest wrongs done.”⁴⁵

Foreign Minister Tereshchenko was generally pleased by the American reply, but he did ask American Ambassador Francis if certain changes could be made to the note.⁴⁶ Wilson’s first passage had stated that “The war has begun to go against Germany.” An overly sensitive Tereshchenko wanted this passage revised because he feared the Russian public would read it as a sign that the offensive the new Minister of War, Alexander Kerensky, was planning for July was unnecessary. He claimed that it could then become difficult to keep order and discipline in the army if preparations for the offensive did not continue.⁴⁷ The second passage Tereshchenko wished to change read as follows in Wilson’s original note:

The Imperial German Government and those whom it is using for their own undoing are seeking to obtain pledges that the war will end in the restoration of the *status quo ante*. It was the *status quo ante* out of which this iniquitous war issued forth...That *status* must be altered...⁴⁸

Tereshchenko worried this passage could be construed to mean “conquest or dismemberment”, and again he worried, with reference to the preparations for an offensive then underway, that any “suspicious” wording – rather a stretch in this passage, admittedly – had the potential to arouse unruly “political discussions, especially in the army”.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Wilson to Francis, 9 May 1917 (OS), “President Wilson’s Message,” in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1110.

⁴⁶ Wilson to Francis, 9 May 1917 (OS), “President Wilson’s Message,” in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1109.

⁴⁷ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 4 June 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:91. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 1 February 2011.

⁴⁸ Wilson to Francis, 9 May 1917 (OS), “President Wilson’s Message,” in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1109.

⁴⁹ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 4 June 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:91. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 1 February 2011.

On 3 June Ambassador Francis forwarded Tereshchenko's requests for modification of the note's text to Secretary of State Lansing. His cable crossed with one from Lansing in which the Secretary of State informed Francis that the American note, which Tereshchenko had taken as constituting Washington's reply to Russia's call for a revision of war aims, was in fact nothing of the kind. The American note, Lansing said, was actually a "wholly spontaneous and independent communication" that had not been sent as a response to Petrograd's war aims initiative.⁵⁰ Instead the President's note had been intended to announce to the Provisional Government the coming of a special American mission to Russia.⁵¹ Given that the President's note was not a reply to any prior Russian communication, Secretary of State Lansing stipulated that the text of the American note was not subject to any changes along the lines that Tereshchenko was suggesting. Lansing therefore requested that the American note be made public as is, which the Provisional Government did on 10 June 1917 (NS)/28 May 1917 (OS).⁵² Thus the fact of the matter was that the Provisional Government did not yet have in hand an American reply to its inquiry about revising Allied war aims, even though it had spent some time believing that it did.

As the Miliukov episode demonstrated, war aims had the potential to be a very dangerous issue in the politics of New Russia. However, the idea of a revision of war

⁵⁰ Lansing to Francis, telegram, 3 June 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:88. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011. Although this communication was sent before Francis forwarded Tereshchenko's requests for revisions to the State Department, Francis did not read this telegram until afterwards.

⁵¹ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 5 June 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:92. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011. The American Mission to Russia or the Root Mission will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

⁵² Lansing to Francis, telegram, 3 June 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:88. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 1 February 2011; Wilson to Francis, 9 May 1917 (OS), "President Wilson's Message," in Browder and Kerensky, *Russian Provisional Government*, 2:1109.

aims was, at this stage, still very ambiguous and vague. Allied responses to this embryonic idea of war aims revision proved to be uncooperative and likely convinced Tereshchenko of the lengths he would have to go to in order to achieve an acceptable response to the question of war aims revision. Furthermore, the response that the Russian Foreign Minister looked upon as the most important and influential, the American response to the idea of a revision of war aims, was not a response at all. However, before we can consider the diplomacy of war aims revision further, we need to examine the effort by the United States government to gain a better understanding of what was happening in Russia at the time.

Chapter 5: The American Mission to Russia and the Shift in American Views of Russia

At the same time that the Petrograd Soviet was calling for a socialist conference and the Provisional Government was moving towards seeking a revision of war aims, Great Britain, France, and the United States sent a number of diplomatic missions to Russia. Both the British and French cabinets decided to staff these missions with socialist politicians, on the grounds that they would best be able to appeal to the strong socialist element in the New Russia. During their stay in Russia, the views of the representatives of these missions changed. They had come to Russia as national patriots intent on seeing the war through to a victorious conclusion. But the revolutionary zeal of Russian socialists, coupled with their first-hand look at the military and political situation in Russia, caused them to change their minds. British representative Arthur Henderson and French representatives Marcel Cachin, Ernest Lafont, Marius Moutet, and Albert Thomas all returned to their respective countries with a new mission: to convince their own socialist parties that it was necessary to accommodate the aspirations of Russian socialists, not view them solely as allies who had to be manipulated and cajoled into continuing the struggle against the Central Powers. In practice they advocated two things: that their government should agree to participate in an international socialist conference to discuss possible terms for a negotiated peace (as we saw in Chapter 3); and that they should also agree to renegotiate Allied war aims to bring them into conformity with the Petrograd formula (as we saw in Chapter 5). Both steps, they argued, were necessary to keep Russia committed to the war.

In Chapter 3 we examined the British and French missions to Russia, therefore in this chapter our first task is to outline the impressions that the American mission

developed with regard to the political and military situation in Russia. One of the mission's purposes was to answer the question as to what would be the best way to get the Provisional Government to stay in the war. War weariness was evident in Russia, as it was throughout Europe, and this sentiment had been exacerbated by the March Revolution. Although the Russian Provisional Government had promised not to make a separate peace with the Central Powers, the Allied and Associated Powers needed more than a passive ally. They needed Russia to continue to engage the Central Powers with a genuine military effort on the Eastern front, for without that engagement the strategic advantage that the Allies had held since 1914 – Germany's requirement to fight a two-front war – would be lost. Furthermore, the members of the Root Mission needed to decide whether revolutionary Russia was a continuing military asset, or if morale had eroded to the point that the old empire's vaunted military power was being transferred into a liability? As stated previously, the European Allies and the United States not only needed Russia to continue fighting in the war but also to continue fighting successfully. The American evaluation of Russia's current fighting ability would also contribute to the decision on how to respond to the Provisional Government's call for a coalition-wide revision of war aims.

The second task of this chapter is to determine if the Root Mission's impressions of Russia were similar to those of the other Allied missions and those held by the American diplomats at the embassy in Petrograd. Furthermore, to what extent would the American decision to either support or oppose the Provisional Government in its peace program be influenced by the American mission to Russia? And finally, what role did domestic

pressure groups within the United States play in influencing the American decision to either support or oppose the Provisional Government's peace program?

The Root Mission

In contrast to the British and French missions to Russia, the composition of the American mission was quite different. The official members of the "Root Mission" (as it came to be called) were drawn predominantly from the world of business. Elihu Root, the eponymous head of the mission, was a former Republican Secretary of State under President Theodore Roosevelt and Secretary of War under Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. Charles R. Crane was a philanthropist and retired manufacturer of bathroom fixtures, who in 1917 happened to be residing in Russia. Samuel R. Berton was a New York Banker, while Cyrus McCormick, president of International Harvester Company, was the most well known businessman in the group (his firm was an important exporter to Russia before the war). The American military was represented by Major-General Hugh L. Scott, chief of staff of the United States Army, and Rear Admiral James H. Glennon, who was a weapons and artillery expert. The other members represented mildly left-of-centre opinion. John R. Mott was the general secretary of the international committee of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), James Duncan was second vice-president of the American Federation of Labour (AFL), and Charles Edward Russell was a journalist and socialist who had distanced himself from the American Socialist Party after its opposition to American entry into the war.¹ Wilson and Lansing chose these men, so Lansing stated, "with the special purpose of giving representation to the various elements which make up the American people" – an interesting commentary

¹ Lansing to Francis, telegram, 11 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:109. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011.

on Lansing's view of the makeup of "the people". No single political party dominated the mission, whose members, Lansing continued, had been chosen "from various groups into which the American electorate is divided."²

The appointment of these men, particularly of Root as head of the mission, did not go unopposed. Rabbi Stephen Samuel Wise wrote to the President in April voicing his concerns over the rumoured appointment of Root as head of the mission. Rabbi Wise described Root as a man who "[stood] out before the American people as the most eminent and powerful representative of those theories of government and political life to which you as the leader of the American democracy are opposed...I must say to you in utmost frankness that I do not believe you have seriously considered naming Mr. Root for that post."³ Wise hoped that the President would consider other men, "who could be named as your representatives in connection with the Embassy to Russia, men who would speak out of the heart of the American people, men who by reason on innate convictions, not improvised views, would be fitted to voice your own will to further the hopes of democracy throughout the world."⁴

The other man that "some voices" in Washington supported was former Republican President Theodore Roosevelt.⁵ Florence Harriman, a prominent Washington socialite, suffragist, and social reformer, was asked to intercede with Colonel House and Root, to obtain Root's withdrawal and his replacement by Roosevelt.⁶ According to Harriman, the appointment of Root was very unpopular in Washington but President Wilson would

² Lansing to Francis, telegram, 22 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:111. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.d1/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011.

³ Stephen Samuel Wise to Wilson, typed letter signed, 24 April 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:124-5.

⁴ Stephen Samuel Wise to Wilson, typed letter signed, 24 April 1917, *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42:125.

⁵ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 107.

⁶ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 108.

not consider Harriman's suggestion and was, allegedly, deeply disturbed by the suggestion. According to John Hays Hammond, another Washington insider, it was Wilson's hatred of Roosevelt that offended him and not the validity of Roosevelt as a candidate for the head of the mission – this judgement is already familiar to us from Wilson's controversies at Princeton and his opinions about American socialists like Morris Hillquit.⁷ Wilson and Roosevelt were polar opposites and it was well known that the two hated each other. Roosevelt was bellicose, “flamboyant and impulsive” while Wilson was “deliberate and controlled.”⁸

Wilson did not acknowledge the opposing views in Washington and kept the composition of the Root Mission as it was. The Root Mission arrived in the Far Eastern Russian port of Vladivostok on 3 June 1917.⁹ Its principal purpose was to discuss how the American and Russian governments could continue to cooperate effectively in the conduct of the war against Germany.¹⁰ According to George Kennan, Sr. and Oscar Straus, who were some of the first to suggest that the United States send a mission to Russia (Straus first proposed a commission to Russia on 9 April 1917) the mission was “deliberately designed to throw cold water on the [Petrograd Soviet's] campaign for a revision of war aims”.¹¹ If the composition of the Root Mission is any indication of

⁷ Hammond was an American mining engineer who made a large fortune in the mining industry in South Africa. Upon his return to the United States, Hammond became a friend and supporter to political figures such as William Howard Taft, Theodore Roosevelt, and Calvin Coolidge. I have been unable to find any evidence within House's diary that corroborate this story by Hammond.

⁸ Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson*, 240. Although, it would be useful to know Link's thought's on the composition of the Root Mission, I have been unable to find his opinions about the men chosen for it.

⁹ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 5 June 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918*, 1:114. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 1917.

¹⁰ Lansing to Francis, telegram, 22 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:111. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011.

¹¹ Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 42. Straus was a Republican politician who had served as Secretary of Commerce and Labour under President Theodore Roosevelt. He was also the American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1909-10.

President Wilson's motives, than this was also the purpose of his administration. The Root Mission was the American answer to the Stockholm Conference.¹²

While in Russia the members of the mission met with members of the Provisional Government in order to ascertain what exactly needed to be done to keep Russia in the war.¹³ Major-General Scott met with the Russian General Staff and inspected the Russian front from Tarnapol to Rumania and witnessed Russian troops in action at Tarnapol.¹⁴ Rear Admiral Glennon met with Russian naval authorities and toured the Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol, the Baltic Fleet at Helsingfors and Revel, as well as the port of Archangel in the far north.¹⁵ Bertron and McCormick held a series of interviews with officials from the Russian Department of Finance to develop a picture of Russia's financial needs. The State Department claimed that all the members of the mission met with "people of all occupations and political and business relations" as well as members of all the political parties to obtain a "correct understanding of actual conditions in Russia" from varied perspectives and opinions. How extensive this consultation was is difficult to establish. But the meetings with different departments of the Russian government and interviews with individual officials made the members of the Root Mission aware that the "fundamental material need of Russia for the prosecution of the war was the need of improved transportation."¹⁶

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ "Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia to the Secretary of State," USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:131. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011.

¹⁴ Tarnapol was in Russian Poland.

¹⁵ Sevastopol, Ukraine; Helsingfors or Helsinki, Finland; Revel, Estonia.

¹⁶ "Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia to the Secretary of State," USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:134-5. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011.

First and foremost, throughout the war Russia had suffered from a deficiency in imported goods caused by the destruction of ships through submarine warfare; this was a problem experienced by all of the Allies throughout the war. More important, however, were the deficiencies of the transportation network within the country. The Russian railroad system suffered from three major problems: an absence of system-wide organization and coordination; the wearing down of tracks and roadbeds due to wartime overuse and infrequent repair; and the deterioration of rolling stock for the same reason. The railroads had been organized under the “ordinary easy conditions of peace” and were thus ill equipped for war usage. The mission charged the Imperial Government with mismanagement and inefficient organization of the Russian railroads, leaving the “system”, such as it was, a mess for the Provisional Government to deal with. Furthermore, the Mission’s report estimated that “40 per cent of the locomotives in the country” sat idle in repair depots awaiting repair, and this number they believed was on the rise without an end in sight. The overall effect of these problems on internal transportation was very serious because providing adequate supplies of food and other important materials like coal to the larger cities and the front became both difficult and unpredictable, especially during the winter when river transportation was impossible. The Russian General Staff made urgent appeals for assistance with transportation. For their part, mission members Russell and Duncan had established good relations with the workers and moderate socialists of the Petrograd Soviet. Together with members of the Soviet, they spoke to the workers in the railroad repair shops about the necessity of speeding up their vital work. Russell and Duncan also received permission from the

Council of Workmens' and Soldiers' Deputies to speak to workers in munitions factories and other war industries about the necessity of speeding up their essential work as well.¹⁷

In addition to the problems of supply and transportation, the members of the Root Mission focused on the problem of German influence and propaganda in Russia. The Root Mission claimed in its final report (August 1917 (NS)) that after the March Revolution, German agents had entered Russia and established newspapers, published mass amounts of literature, sent public speakers out into the crowds, and "sought to make the simple-minded peasants believe that they had only to stop fighting and take possession of all the land in Russia to live in affluence forever after". The Root Mission's final report (August 1917) stated that acting under orders German troops fraternized with Russian soldiers and supposedly brought "a new sense of freedom among the soldiers of the Russian Army" which contributed to the war weariness felt by Russian citizens and soldiers alike.¹⁸

Conditions in Russia made it clear to the representatives of the Root Mission that the problems of supply were just one part of a bigger problem of finding a way to keep Russia fighting. They did not fear that Russia would make a separate peace but questioned whether the government would have the capability to continue the war. The members of the mission believed that it would be necessary to make American aid and assistance to the Russian Provisional Government part of United States policy in order to "encourage hope and faith in the success of the effort...to create and maintain adequate

¹⁷ "Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia to the Secretary of State," USDS, *FRUS*, 1918. *Russia*, 1:134-7. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011.

¹⁸ "Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia to the Secretary of State," USDS, *FRUS*, 1918. *Russia*, 1:140. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011. There is no exact date given for the Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia in *FRUS*. It is dated August 1917.

free self government; to inspire confidence in the Provisional Government” and to promote the fact that “*the effective continuation of the war was the only way by which the opportunity for Russia to work out the conditions of her own freedom could be preserved from destruction by German domination.*”¹⁹

Based on their first hand experience of the conditions in Russia, the members of the Root Mission made specific recommendations as to what steps Washington should now take. The first of these recommendations was to mount an information campaign since they believed that “the people of Russia, particularly the soldiers, [were] going to decide whether Russia [stayed] in the war and we [the United States] need to get at them in some way.” They believed that the dissemination of information needed to be taken up on a large scale, and that the best way to do this was through newspapers, the printing and distribution of pamphlets, posters, and leaflets, as well as lectures and “moving pictures” at the front. The mission requested \$100,000 to start this information project and estimated that at least \$5,000,000 would be needed to complete it – a startling amount which they justified by pointing out that \$5,000,000 would be less than it would cost to maintain five American regiments in the field. They also recommended the establishment of YMCA stations at the front (unsurprising considering Motts’ presence on the mission). Similar stations had been set up for both British and French troops on the Western front, others were being set up on the Italian fronts, and there were plans to do the same in Mesopotamia. These stations had reading rooms, lecture rooms, temporary accommodations for projecting moving pictures, along with the necessary “provisions for reading aloud to illiterate soldiers,” (whatever those provisions were).

¹⁹ “Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia to the Secretary of State,” USDS, *FRUS*, 1918. *Russia*, 1:138-9, 144. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011. My emphasis.

Thus these stations afforded “opportunities for access to the minds of the soldiers.” If Russian soldiers could be shown American preparations for war, American battleships, troops marching, factories making munitions, then they would see with their own eyes that America was “doing something” – an important goal because the mission felt that Russian troops had been led to believe that no one else was really fighting except for the Russian soldiers. The mission believed that this kind of educational campaign in Russia would offset the extensive and dangerous German propaganda being disseminated throughout the country. The mission reported to Lansing that Germany was “spending millions, at least a million dollars monthly” on propaganda in Russia.²⁰

The Root Mission’s main thesis was that with aid from the United States, Russia would persevere in prosecuting the war. The Root Mission feared, or at the very least was anxious, about the influence of far Left socialists and the Bolsheviks but the mission chose to highlight the progress that had been made towards establishing and consolidating control by the Provisional Government throughout the country. Finally, the Root Mission believed that Russia’s future in the war had two possible outcomes: the first was that the “Russian Army may be restored to its former effectiveness as an active striking force and may be able to take its full part in the general strategic cooperation of the Allies, driving at the eastern front of the Central Powers”. The second possibility was that the Russian Army would be able only to continue holding its defensive positions, thereby requiring the Central Powers to maintain a considerable force on their eastern front. The members of the Root Mission believed that “If only the second of these possibilities is accomplished, the advantage of the United States and its Allies would be

²⁰ Root to Lansing, telegram, 2 July 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:121-2, 128-9. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 2 February 2011.

so great as to justify the expenditure by the United States of the largest sums which it can possibly devote to that purpose.”²¹

The Root Mission left Petrograd on 9 July 1917 (NS)/26 June 1917 (OS) after a little more than a month in the New Russia. They claimed that they had contributed to strengthening the Provisional Government and the morale of the army and the citizens and that the situation in Russia was “much more hopeful and stable” than it was when they arrived.²² It is revealing to note that the Root Mission did not dwell upon the unstable and confusing political situation prevailing in Russia, nor the dangers this might pose to the Provisional Government, whose precarious hold in power was not addressed at all.²³ We have only to recall that the episode of the “July Days” was to bring violence back to the streets of Petrograd just a week after the Root Mission left the city. Was this surprising oversight due to a blinkered view on the part of the commission members, or did they take their remit to be entirely “functional”? It is hard to accept the latter explanation given that the Root Mission insisted on seeing the big picture when it analyzed the fundamental challenge that the United States and its allies faced in Russia.

In contrast to the British and French missions, the Root Mission did not believe that Washington needed to consider revising its war aims in order to keep Russia in the war. All three missions witnessed the problems Russia dealt with but they reacted to those problems in different ways. Arthur Henderson returned from his mission to Russia to

²¹ “Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia to the Secretary of State,” USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:139-41, 144-6. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 9 February 2011.

²² Root to Lansing, telegram, 10 July 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:129. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 3 February 2011.

²³ In fact, in the report, the Mission speaks of the lengths gone to by both the Provisional Government the Petrograd Soviet to work together, and the “positive functions” the Petrograd Soviet was beginning to play. Furthermore, the report went on to explain that the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet had successfully satisfied the moderate socialists within the Council of Deputies and separated the Bolsheviks and other extremists from the group.

persuade the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party of the necessity to send representatives to the Stockholm Conference; Albert Thomas (who was still a member of Ribot's war cabinet) concluded that the Allies must "jettison" their war aims if they were to expect an "upsurge of 'revolutionary patriotism' like that of 1792".²⁴ Instead, the members of the Root Mission called for an information and publicity campaign to boost morale among ordinary Russian soldiers and citizens, which would have the added effect of keeping Russia in the war and helping to secure an Allied victory. As to the question of revising war aims, the Root Mission reacted by simply ignoring the question. The Root Mission's reaction can be explained by American policy and the mission's composition. Unlike the rest of the Allies, the United States did not have any war aims – a point that Wilson emphasized in his war speech to Congress on 2 April. As the United States sought "nothing for" themselves in the war, it was easy for the Root Mission to show no interest in the issue.²⁵ Furthermore, whether or not one accepts Lansing's rather tenuous assertion that the Root Mission was organized to include a cross-section of American society, it is evident that it differed from the other Allied missions in that its "socialist" element consisted of a single pro-war socialist, whose presence was hardly sufficient to offset the military and business appearance of the delegation.

The Root Mission sent its reports and recommendations to the State Department and they were received by the President on 27 August 1917; but its recommendations went unanswered.²⁶ When Root had sent his request on 17 June 1917 for an advance of

²⁴ French, *Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 141; Stevenson, *French War Aims*, 66. The historical reference is to the inspiring defeat of the Prussian and Austrian armies by the French Revolutionary troops in 1792.

²⁵ Woodrow Wilson's Address to a Joint Session of Congress, printed reading copy, 2 April 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 41:525

²⁶ The Root Mission's Report and supplementary material are undated in *FRUS*. However, they were enclosed as part of a printed circular in a letter on 27 August 1917, from Lansing to Wilson

\$100,000 to begin the information and publicity campaign that the mission had recommended, he received after ten days a classical bureaucratic brush-off. "The matter of establishing an efficient agency for publicity is receiving careful consideration in view of your recommendations as to its desirability."²⁷ Root sent another message to the Secretary of State on 2 July 1917 requesting \$100,000 for the start of the project, accompanied by a rather pointed aside for Lansing - that members of the mission had put forward \$30,000 of their own money to begin funding the publicity campaign.²⁸ This effort to shame the administration met with very limited success. Acting Secretary of State, Frank Polk, informed Ambassador Francis on 7 July 1917 that President Wilson had approved an allocation of \$30,000 for this purpose; however, the mission was to know that the question of further planning and expenditure for the education and publicity campaign was receiving the "careful attention of the Department".²⁹

On 3 August 1917, Root, Mott, and McCormick met with Wilson at the White House to officially discuss the recommendations made in the Root Mission's report. At this meeting Root, Mott, and McCormick suggested that funding be provided not only for strengthening the morale of the Russian army but also the French and Italian armies. They argued that the situation in France and Italy was not as critical as in Russia but that "The next few months are the period of greatest strain to which the soldiers of France and Italy are likely to be subjected."³⁰ In October 1917, Secretary of State Lansing cabled Ambassador Francis in Russia to inform him that Washington had decided to establish a

²⁷ Lansing to Francis for Root, telegram, 27 June 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:127. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 3 February 2011.

²⁸ Root to Lansing for McAdoo, telegram, 2 July 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:128. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 3 February 2011.

²⁹ Polk to Francis, telegram, 7 July 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:129. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 3 February 2011.

³⁰ John R. Mott to Wilson, autograph letter signed, 30 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 44:94.

number of measures recommended by the Root Mission and under the direction of the Bureau of Public Information. Finally, Washington had decided to set up a war cable service, from New York to Petrograd, a large scale film service, the “possible encouragement” of a large scale lecture program with the additional help of the distribution of pamphlets, and an extensive YMCA program.³¹

I am unsure as to why it took so long for President Wilson to approve the propaganda campaign recommended by the Root Mission. Perhaps Wilson had been confused by the meeting between Root, Mott, McCormick, and Wilson at the end of August. The fact that members of the mission recommended money should be sent to France and Italy as well as Russia to help boost the morale of their armies might have made the situation in Russia seem less urgent to Wilson. But that is highly unlikely since, in a letter written by Mott to Wilson on the same day of their meeting, Mott stated that the situation in Russia was more critical than it was in France and Italy.³² The propaganda campaign, finally approved by Washington, came far too late however, since nine days after Lansing announced the campaign to Francis (7 November 1917) the first reports of the Bolshevik coup d'état began to arrive in Washington.³³

The Root Mission's recommendations were not the only words of advice to fall on deaf ears in Washington. By the end of August, American Ambassador to Russia, David Francis, was making similar recommendations to the State Department, stating that the American government “should do everything to encourage and strengthen the

³¹ Lansing to Francis, telegram, 29 October 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:214-5. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.d1/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 11 April 2011.

³² Mott to Wilson, autograph letter signed, 30 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 44:94.

³³ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 7 November 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:224. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.d1/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 11 April 2011.

situation here.”³⁴ On 21 August, Francis wrote to the State Department recommending the approval of the export of Russian hides to the United States in exchange for sole leather and shoes. Unfortunately, until the hides could be shipped the Russian government would need a credit of \$5,000,000; an amount the American manufacturers of the leather and shoes declined to secure. Francis reported that leather and shoes were greatly needed in Russia and asked the American government if it was possible to guarantee their shipment since he believed the “moral effect” of guaranteeing “[\$]5,000,000 [in] exports” would be helpful in sustaining the exchange rate of the ruble.³⁵ To Francis, the benefit to morale of this exchange of goods was more important than the financial benefits to either side in this transaction. By 2 November, six days before the Bolshevik coup, the ambassador’s reports had grown more alarming. In his communication to the State Department and the Treasury Department, Francis stated that he believed the Russian government would still be able to pay all of its obligations back to the United States but the issue which was more important at that point in time was Russia’s continuing participation in the war.³⁶ He recommended that another loan of \$100,000,000 be extended to the Russian government because the Russian people were war weary and peace sentiment within the country continued to rise. Francis stated that the American government’s refusal to extend a loan could be dangerous, in that it would make the driving force for peace “irresistible”. Francis also suggested that if the Petrograd Soviet were to take power in Russia, it would not last long in power but would be replaced by a “stronger government which [have] more potential in restoring order and

³⁴ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 21 August 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 3:22. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918Russia>. First Accessed: 17 May 2011.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 2 November 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 3:27. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918Russia>. First Accessed: 17 May 2011.

prosecuting war...”. This estimation was, of course, incorrect but shows a glimmer of optimism on Francis’s part. There is no evidence to suggest that the State Department heeded this advice just as there is no evidence to suggest that anyone within the State Department agreed that the moral and political benefits of continued loans to the Provisional Government outweighed the monetary benefits. This episode, to me, helps to confirm that Russia simply was not at the forefront in the minds of the decision makers in Washington.³⁷

The Shift in American Views on Russia

What accounts for the Wilson administration’s silence on the Root Mission’s and Ambassador Francis’s recommendations? The reason for the President’s and the State Department’s relative silence on their recommendations is unclear, but it does at least pose the possibility that there was a significant change in Washington’s views of the New Russia changed sometime in the summer of 1917. This change was critical, for it stemmed from a fundamental question: was post-revolutionary Russia still a military asset for the Allied coalition, or had it become a military liability? The answer was being provided just as the Root Mission was about to leave the Russian capital. On 1 July 1917 (NS)/18 June 1917 (OS) the general offensive planned by War Minister Kerensky got underway; Kerensky planned the offensive, and the Petrograd Soviet supported it, because Kerensky believed that the offensive would bolster the Russian peace program. Kerensky and the Soviet argued that Russia had to undertake active military operations in order to defend the gains of the revolution because Russian inactivity on the Eastern front could enable Germany to defeat the Allies on the Western Front, then leaving Germany to turn on Russia and destroy the revolution. Furthermore, the Russian army had to be

³⁷ *Ibid.*

restored to its full combative potential to enable the Provisional Government to negotiate with the Allies and the Central Powers, from a position of strength.³⁸ By 23 July 1917 (NS)/10 July 1917 (OS) it was evident that the offensive had failed. The offensive had been mounted when Russia was in the midst of the reconstruction of its army and government.³⁹ But the American Embassy in Petrograd attributed the failure not only to the incomplete preparations: in their eyes anti-war “criminal” propaganda had “seduced” Russian troops at the front, causing them to forget their “duty to the country and facilitate[ing] the enemy piercing our [the Russian] front”.⁴⁰ The outcome was serious. Ambassador Francis reported by the end of July that the Russians had lost 50,000 men in prisoners and many large cannon.⁴¹ The Germans had broken through the Russian southwestern front and there was little sign that the Russian army could push them back.⁴² Yet by the start of August Kerensky was playing down the disaster in the field, telling anyone who would listen that the “psychology of the situation [was] improving” and that the country was “resolved on prosecuting [the] war vigorously.”⁴³ Kerensky even claimed to have detected an increase in army morale after the replacement of General Brusilov with General Kornilov.⁴⁴ Was Washington taken in by Kerensky’s sunny assessment? In his

³⁸ Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 71.

³⁹ Lansing to Wilson, typed letter signed, 15 August 1917, originally Onou to Lansing, typed letter signed, 3 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:474.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 23 July 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:164. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 4 February 2011.

⁴² Francis to Lansing, telegram, 20 July 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:164; Francis to Lansing, telegram, 24 July 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:170. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 4 February 2011.

⁴³ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 1 August 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:171. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 4 February 1917.

⁴⁴ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 1 August 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:171-2. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 4 February 1917. General Aleksei Brusilov was a Russian General in the Imperial Army and later served in the Soviet Army. His innovative and successful offensive tactics made him a hero of the Russian army in 1916. He was replaced by General

own memoirs Kerensky does not corroborate these reports from Francis. Kerensky states that by August 1917, the Russian army was entrenched in new positions after having fallen back from the failed offensive.⁴⁵ Kerensky also writes that “more level-headed commanders, commissars, and army committees” had been able to restore order “of sorts.”⁴⁶ However, he mentions nothing about an increase in morale after the replacement of Brusilov by Kornilov. Nor does he make any mention of the country’s resolve to prosecute the war.

At any event Foreign Minister Tereshchenko echoed Kerensky’s line when he assured the United States that “the retreat of our [the Russian] armies will be only temporary and that it will not prevent them, after being reconstructed and regenerated, to renew, when the hour will strike, their march forward...and that they will victoriously complete the great work for which they were compelled to take up arms.”⁴⁷ Stirring rhetoric to be sure, but more suitable to a Flag Day speech than a diplomatic note and hardly likely to persuade Washington that Russia had merely suffered a minor military setback. Despite these positive reports – or perhaps because of their Polly Anna-like prose – Ambassador Francis reported to Tereshchenko, in a meeting with the Foreign Minister, that “some in America” remained sceptical about the “Russian determination to prosecute the war” – a gentle enough way to state the obvious after the failure of the July Offensive.⁴⁸ Even so Wilson and Lansing displayed a positive outlook in public and

Lavr Kornilov in 1917 because Kornilov commanded the only successful front in the disastrous July Offensive and because of Kornilov’s firmer disciplinary tactics within the army.

⁴⁵ Kerensky, *Kerensky Memoirs*, 296.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Lansing to Wilson, typed letter signed, 15 August 1917, originally Onou to Lansing, typed letter signed, 3 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:475.

⁴⁸ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 1 August 1917, USDS, *FRUS*, 1918. *Russia*, 1:172. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 4 February 2011.

remained supportive of the Provisional Government in what looks like the diplomatic equivalent of a stiff upper lip.⁴⁹

Within Russia the failure of the July Offensive caused an uprising that came to be known as the “July Days”, an abortive attempt by the Bolsheviks to use street demonstrations against the Provisional Government as a springboard to power. It was a complex episode, but its significance for Russo-American relations is what matters here.⁵⁰ The “July Days” not only helped to change American views of Russia as a military asset but also made Washington question whether the Provisional Government exerted genuine domestic control.

On 17 July 1917 (NS), Ambassador Francis reported that demonstrations by armed workers and soldiers, in his opinion instigated by the Bolsheviks, had started the previous evening. Francis claimed that the demonstrators’ target was War Minister Kerensky’s order to demobilize two regiments at the front because they had refused to obey orders. The Menshevik and Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet Nicolai Chkheidze addressed the crowds and called for “moderation” and “disbandment” but the demonstrators proved uninterested in such moderate counsel. In this they were further encouraged by a speech made by Leon Trotsky, a prominent revolutionary activist recently returned from exile,

⁴⁹ Lansing to Bhakmet’ev, carbon copy of letter, 15 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43.476. For an explanation of how the July Offensive effected the disintegration of the Russian Army please see Chapter 3; Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, volumes 1-2 (Princeton University Press, 1980-87); Robert S. Feldman. “The Russian General Staff and the June 1917 Offensive,” *Soviet Studies* 19, no. 4 (April 1968).

⁵⁰ The “July Days” began on 15 July 1917 (NS)/2 July 1917 (OS). Cadet and socialist ministers disagreed (and had for some time) over the issue of the status of nationalities (particularly Ukrainians) and the Cadets resigned as a result of this disagreement. The next day (16 July 1917 (NS)/3 July 1917 (OS) pro-Bolshevik troops led demonstrations, directed more against Menshevik-Socialist Revolutionary leadership in the Soviet than against the government. These demonstrations escalated quickly and threatened to turn into full revolution. Poor leadership, resistance by Soviet leaders, and the accusation that Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders were German agents suppressed the uprising by 18 July 1917 (NS)/5 July 1917 (OS). However, the government crisis continued, made worse by the uprising. The “July Days” led to the resignation of Prince Lvov and Kerensky’s takeover of the government, Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 91-2.

who had now thrown in his lot with the Bolsheviks. Demonstrators allegedly stole cars and attempted to arrest Prime Minister Lvov and War Minister Kerensky. They were unsuccessful because Kerensky was at the front (no further mention was made of the attempts to arrest Lvov).⁵¹

After the resignation of four Cadet Ministers on 16 July 1917 (NS)/3 July 1917 (OS), the remaining ministers within the Provisional Government offered to transfer the government to the Petrograd Soviet – hardly an indication that the Provisional Government felt itself on solid ground.⁵² However, the Soviet declined, expressing its preference for a coalition government. Meanwhile, large crowds composed of disgruntled workers and disloyal soldiers had gathered outside the Tauride Palace, and rumours arose that Cossack troops were to be called in.⁵³ For the American diplomats on the spot, the material point was that the capital of the country had been under the control of workers and soldiers for two days, from the evening of 16 July until 18 July, during which time street fighting had taken place throughout, with one of these fights resulting in the “defeat and complete rout of about one hundred Cossacks”. Francis had a meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Tereshchenko on 18 July 1917 (NS) and he warned Tereshchenko that he would recommend that the American government should extend “no further assistance until [a] stable government [was] formed which would prosecute war and that if the Government fails to suppress this lawlessness with determination and

⁵¹ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 17 July 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:159-60. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 7 February 2011.

⁵² Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 9. Cadet is an abbreviation for the party’s earlier official name, the Constitutional Democratic Party. The party’s name changed again to the Party of the People’s Freedom by 1917. Cadet is most common name for the party.

⁵³ *Ibid.* The Cossacks had aligned themselves with the Tsar in Imperial Russia and remained loyal to the government during the Provisional Government. When in session, the Duma met in the Tauride Palace; the Petrograd Soviet also met there. Before the March Revolution, the Imperial State Duma used the Palace as its seat of government.

with force, if necessary, it will forfeit the respect of the Russian people as well as the Allies.”⁵⁴

Ambassador Francis used a strong hand with the Provisional Government in an attempt to produce a desired result: he wanted the Provisional Government to take control of the domestic situation in Russia. Given that the failure of the July Offensive and the unrest in Petrograd made it almost inevitable that American views of Russia were going to change, the question becomes how “change” can be seen in the Root Mission’s views of Russia as compared with those of Ambassador Francis? How did the two separate diplomatic bodies work together? The purpose of the Root Mission was essentially political: to recommend ways of aiding the Provisional Government to keep the country in the war. As a body with a political mission, the Root Mission came up against “competition” from the American representatives at the embassy in Petrograd, with Ambassador David Francis at their head. How did the mission’s perceptions of Russia conflict or coincide with those of the American ambassador? Were there areas of contention between the two? How did their differing perceptions of Russia and the Russians influence their recommendations as to how the United States should proceed in its relations with Russia? And, of course we need to ask if these perceptions were accurate.

Decision makers in Washington had two “official” sources from which to form opinions of what was happening in Russia: the first hand reports from Ambassador Francis and the career diplomats at the embassy in Petrograd, and the opinions and recommendations of the special mission that had been in Russia in June and early July.

⁵⁴ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 18 July 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:160-1. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 7 February 2011.

The scope of the Root Mission's work could be said to have extended beyond that of Ambassador Francis since the mission contained military and naval experts in the form of Major-General Scott and Admiral Glennon, the financial and business experts Bertron and McCormick, and representatives of American labour and socialist organizations Duncan and Russell – with the last pair also having established relations with the workers and moderate socialists of the Petrograd Soviet.⁵⁵ Surprisingly, perhaps, there appears to have been little conflict between the Root Mission and Ambassador Francis; indeed, Francis welcomed the idea of the mission very quickly provided it stayed clear of international politics, “such [a] commission should be very discreet and give attention first and mainly to successful prosecution of the war, exercising care in giving expression to views concerning internal affairs...Do not understand me as objecting to such a commission. With proper precautions effect would be beneficial.”⁵⁶ The members of the Root Mission, in turn, appreciated the work and cooperation of Ambassador Francis, “We wish to express our most grateful appreciation of the aid, cooperation and friendship of the Ambassador to Russia, Mr. Francis and his entire Embassy staff. The jealousy which so often in a mild form between regular and special missions to the same country was entirely absent in this case.”⁵⁷ Root and Francis reported no overt hostility or criticism towards each other and on the surface the two diplomatic bodies seemed to work well together. However, it must be noted that the surface cordiality displayed by both Root and Francis is typical of any bureaucratic organization. Furthermore, there is no

⁵⁵ “Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia to the Secretary of State,” USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:137. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 8 February 2011.

⁵⁶ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 19 April 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:107-8. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 9 February 2011.

⁵⁷ “Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia to the Secretary of State,” USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:145. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 9 February 2011.

documentation that shows whether Root discussed the tone of the Root Mission's report with Francis.

The only point of contention between the members of the Root Mission and the American Ambassador appears in their respective approaches to dealing with the Russian Provisional Government; in essence, the Root Mission offered carrots while Ambassador Francis was in favour of sticks. As we have seen, the Root Mission had confidence in the capabilities of the Russian government and army, whereas Ambassador Francis was less confident and therefore took a more hard line approach. As an example, we need only recall the stick Francis used when he warned Minister of Foreign Affairs Tereshchenko to get control of the internal situation in Russia following the July Days, or else he would "recommend no further assistance" from the United States.⁵⁸

One explanation for the Root Mission's preference for carrots is that the members of the Root Mission, or at the very least, Elihu Root himself, seemed to view Russia and the Russian people in a filial relationship. For instance, in a note sent by Root to Secretary of State Lansing regarding the progress of the work done by the Root Mission, Root wrote that "we have found here an infant class in the art of being free containing one hundred and seventy million people and they need to be supplied with kindergarten material; they are sincere, kindly, good people but confused and dazed."⁵⁹ In the Special Report of the Root Mission to the Secretary of State, Root described the Russian people as having "natural self-control and kindly consideration and respect for the rights of

⁵⁸ Francis to Lansing, telegram, 18 July 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:161. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 9 February 2011.

⁵⁹ Root to Lansing, telegram, 17 June 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:122. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 9 February 2011.

others”.⁶⁰ However, Root still believed that the Russian people needed to learn to “apply their qualities in the field of national government,” referencing the fact that as of yet, the Provisional Government had been unsuccessful in creating a government that effectively controlled the country.⁶¹ The biggest indicator of the paternalistic quality of the relationship of the Root Mission to Russians was Root’s assessment of Russian soldiers, “At many points the Russian army reminded us quite as much of older boys as of mature men, and these hosts of boys,...can be led anywhere by workers of warm hearts, wise heads, and unselfish spirits. They are most responsive to kindness. Very many of them are eager for self-development and are truly idealistic.”⁶²

Root’s generous if naive paternalism was extended and perhaps a bit exaggerated by the assistant secretary to the Root Mission, Stanley Washburn.⁶³ In a note to Secretary of State Lansing which was also read by President Wilson, Washburn stated that the Russian people were “gentle, kindhearted (*sic*) and docile with the best of instincts but slow of comprehension.”⁶⁴ Washburn also stated that when dealing with Russians, “Americans had to exercise the same patience that they would exercise towards children, with the same optimism as to the ultimate outcome as they had in ‘a child of good instincts’.”⁶⁵ Root and Washburn’s naive and paternalistic assessments are astonishing to find especially in official reporting that could be used to influence

⁶⁰ “Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia to the Secretary of State,” USDS, *FRUS*, 1918. *Russia*, 1:143.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² “Supplementary Report of the Special Diplomatic Mission to Russia to the Secretary of State,” USDS, *FRUS*, 1918. *Russia*, 1:152. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. Accessed: 9 February 2011.

⁶³ Washburn was an American journalist who wrote about the Russian front and revolution. He came from a political family (his own father was a senator) and was independently wealthy from a Minnesota flour-milling empire. Washburn met the Root Mission in Russia as he had been there previously as a correspondent.

⁶⁴ Washburn to Lansing, typed letter signed, 18 June and 29 June 1917, enclosed in Wilson to Lansing, typed letter signed, 14 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:460n1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

American opinions of Russia in Washington; however the presence of such opinions is also understandable considering the paternalistic attitude the people of the United States held towards Imperial Russia before American entry into the war. Before the United States entered the war, Americans saw Russia as a country that needed American guidance, assistance, and influence and these perspectives were clearly not altered by the March Revolution or American entry into the war.

Domestic Pressure Groups

There was another source – than the Root Mission or the American Embassy – that could influence the views of American decision makers' with regard to the New Russia: a domestic group with an interest in, and perhaps knowledge of, what was happening there. This domestic group was the American progressive movement.

In 1917, the progressive movement faced an event that in the end, can be argued to have been the cause of the decline of progressivism in the United States.⁶⁶ The progressive movement divided over American intervention into the First World War. In 1916, Wilson was re-elected as the man who had famously kept America out of the European war. Less than six months after his re-election, Wilson reversed his position. Members of the progressive movement divided into three groups: those who opposed American intervention into the war; those supported American intervention into the war and who had lobbied for American entry since 1914 (primarily the followers of Theodore Roosevelt), and who now advocated fighting on to victory; and, finally, those who found middle ground between the extremes. This centre group of progressives, made up of men like Paul U. Kellogg, Amos Pinchot, and Lincoln Steffens supported American entry into

⁶⁶ John A. Thompson, *Reformers and War: American Progressive Publicists and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1.

the war and also advocated ending the war through a negotiated peace.⁶⁷ This centre group adhered to the goal that President Wilson had given voice to as recently as January 1917 – a peace without victory. These progressives put pressure on the Wilson administration for an explicit commitment to liberal war aims, and Steffens assured Wilson that Russia would continue fighting if it was made clear that Russian soldiers were being asked to fight for idealistic reasons and democracy rather than secret treaties. In the early weeks after American entry into the war, progressives recommended that the White House make a declaration of peace terms based on the peace-without-victory theme of Wilson's Senate address; they received no response from the White House.⁶⁸

The centrists' pressure for a statement on American war aims received a hostile reception both in the American press and from Congress. Why? Historian John Thompson believes it was because a request to *state* war aims apparently seemed much the same as a demand for the *revision* of war aims – and that demand was associated with a negotiated peace.⁶⁹ The problem the centrist progressives faced was that Wilson was now a war president, and in that capacity he had lost his former interest in bringing the conflict to an end through American-mediated negotiations. By the end of 1917 Wilson had signed into law bills that implemented conscription, imposed severe censorship, and formed a new wartime financial system. Moreover, his administration created an expansive propaganda network through the establishment of the Committee of Public

⁶⁷ Paul U. Kellogg was a member of the board of directors for the American Union Against Militarism (AUAM), 1915-1917, an American pacifist organization active during the First World War. Amos Pinchot was an American progressive and member of the AUAM. Lincoln Steffens was an American journalist who had gone to Russia to cover the March Revolution.

⁶⁸ Thompson, *Reformers and War*, 186-7.

⁶⁹ Thompson, *Reformers and War*, 187.

Information (CPI).⁷⁰ The war also generated a wave of patriotic hysteria that saw dissent as equal to treason.⁷¹ This kind of political climate left scant room for centrist progressives interested in advocating a peace based on negotiation.

The “Petrograd Formula” of no territorial annexations, self-determination of national communities, and no punitive war indemnities generated political echoes in the United States as well as in other Allied countries. At the end of May 1917, representatives from a broad segment of socialist, trade union, peace and women’s groups came together in New York in what was called the American Conference for Democracy and Terms of Peace. The conference set up a permanent body, the People’s Council for Democracy and Peace, and gave it the mandate to work for an end to the war, in which the United States was now a belligerent, based on the precepts of the Russian peace program. A national convention of the People’s Council was slated to be held at the end of the summer, but opposition from conservative labour leaders combined with threats and police interference at the state and local level succeeded in keeping the convention out of a number of mid-Western cities.⁷²

The People’s Council also met resistance from the American labour movement. Samuel Gompers, founder of the American Federation of Labour (AFL), denounced the founders of the People’s Council as agents of the Kaiser and began a defamation campaign against the Council based on the charge that the People’s Council was disloyal.⁷³ The People’s Council was also a threat to Gompers and the AFL because the

⁷⁰ Robert David Johnson, *The Peace Progressives and American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 71.

⁷¹ *Ibid*

⁷² Austin van der Slice, *International Labour, Diplomacy, and Peace, 1914-1919* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941), 198-200

⁷³ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here The First World War and American Society*, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 29.

Council had infiltrated and gained support from organized workers, specifically within the New York City garment industry.⁷⁴ The People's Council appealed to dissident elements within the labour movement who were interested in overthrowing the conservative order of the AFL, led by Gompers.⁷⁵ The Council's success in organizing around the labour movement alarmed the AFL leadership because in their eyes the organization seemed intent on obstructing the war effort and challenging the AFL's right to represent American labour. In response, Gompers with the help of New York City union men formed a counter-agency in June and July 1917.⁷⁶

How did the President react to the Peace Council, particularly its mandate to end the war based on the Russian peace program? Throughout the summer of 1917 members of the People's Council had been writing to the President claiming they had been the victims of censorship and protesting against "the assaults on a free press".⁷⁷ In a letter dated 3 August 1917 Allen W. Ricker, the publisher of *Pearson's Magazine*, complained that his mail had been tampered with and that letters addressed to him from the People's Council had reached the offices of *Pearson's Magazine* late or never came.⁷⁸ W.I. Irvine and Paul Hanna of the Philadelphia branch of the People's Council protested in a letter on 4 August 1917 against the banning of newspapers in Philadelphia and other cities "whose only known offense is that of daring to criticize the policies of the government and to

⁷⁴ Frank L. Grubbs, Jr., *The Struggle for Labor Loyalty: Gompers, the A.F. of L. and the Pacifists, 1917-1920* (Durham, North Carolina, 1968), 35-6; Roland C. Marchand, *The American Peace Movement and Social Reform, 1898-1918* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), 297.

⁷⁵ Grubbs, *Struggle for Labor Loyalty*, 56.

⁷⁶ Grubbs, *Struggle for Labor Loyalty*, 35-6.

⁷⁷ Allen W. Ricker to Wilson, typed letter signed, 3 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:382; W.I. Irvine and Paul Hanna to Wilson, telegram, 4 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:383. Irvine cannot be identified. Hanna was a radical journalist who would eventually become the Washington correspondent for the *New York Call*, a socialist newspaper.

⁷⁸ Allen W. Ricker to Wilson, typed letter signed, 3 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:382. The Espionage Act gave Draconian powers to Postmaster General, Albert Sidney Burleson to control the mails, including excluding "subversive" organizations from the right to use the mails to communicate.

demand redress of grievances as provided by the constitution.”⁷⁹ Ricker’s letters were Wilson’s introduction to the existence of the Council and its peace mandate since Wilson wrote to the Postmaster General, Albert Sidney Burleson, on 7 August 1917, stating “I don’t even know what the People’s Council of America is. Perhaps you do.”⁸⁰ On that same day, President Wilson asked Burleson to investigate Ricker’s claims that there had been some sort of illegal interference with his mail.⁸¹ Burleson reported back the next day that the People’s Council was an organization that claimed to be “modeled along the lines of the Workmen’s and Soldiers’ organization in Russia” and that it had been organized “for the purpose of cooperating with that organization and peace organizations throughout the world to bring about a conclusion of the present war.”⁸² Wilson received the results of Burleson’s investigation into Ricker’s complaints on 15 August 1917 from the Chief Inspector of the Post Office Department, George M. Sutton. Sutton reported that the inspectors who investigated Ricker’s claims recommended that the matter be closed since Ricker had destroyed the envelopes of the letters in question and had “no complaint to make with reference to the mail for Pearson’s Magazine.”⁸³

I have not been able to establish whether Wilson obtained additional information, but within the same week that Wilson received the results of the investigation into Ricker’s claims, it had become clear that the President decided that he did not look with favour upon the People’s Council for Democracy and Peace. In a letter of 13 August

⁷⁹ Irvine and Hanna to Wilson, telegram, 4 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:383.

⁸⁰ Wilson to Albert Sidney Burleson, with enclosure, typed letter signed, 7 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:382.

⁸¹ Wilson to Albert Sidney Burleson, typed letter signed, 7 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:381.

⁸² Albert Sidney Burleson to Wilson, typed letter signed, 8 August 1917, with enclosure from William Harmong Lamar to Albert Sidney Burleson, “Memorandum for the Postmaster General”, typed letter signed, 8 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:394.

⁸³ Memorandum by George M. Sutton, typed signed manuscript, 15 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:482-3.

1917 that he wrote to Richard Heath Dabney, the President categorized the People's Council as "for the most part a bad and mischievous lot."⁸⁴ On 31 August 1917 Wilson received one last communication from the People's Council. Council organizers planned to hold a national convention in August but were kept out of a number of cities by both state and local level opposition. Eventually, the Mayor of Chicago, William Hale Thompson, invited the Council to hold their convention, "under his personal protection", in Chicago. The date of the convention was set for 1 September. However Governor of Illinois, Frank Lowden, attempted to stop the meeting when he telephoned Thompson and told him that the pacifists were not allowed to meet in Chicago. Mayor Thompson argued that the People's Council had a constitutional right to assemble wherever they wished. In response, the People's Council sent a telegram to President Wilson bringing his attention to their harassment and asserting their constitutional right to free assembly. No evidence suggests that Wilson took notice of their telegram.⁸⁵ In the absence of further evidence we are left with the supposition that Wilson's poor opinion of the People's Council was shaped by two things. First, as we have seen in Chapter 4, President Wilson's personality did not allow him to accept opposition. Much like those who opposed him at Princeton, and the American socialists who had more recently opposed his decision to bring the United States into the war, the members of the People's Council were bound to seem like a "disloyal opposition" in Wilson's view. Second, Wilson's newly emerging view about the necessity of fighting through to victory in order

⁸⁴ Wilson to Richard Heath Dabney, typed letter signed, 13 August 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43:437. Dabney was a Professor of History and former Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Virginia. I have been unable to ascertain the nature of the relationship between Wilson and Dabney. However, I presume their relationship to have been personal and close friendship since Dabney addressed his letter to "Dear Woodrow", calling the President by his first name and Wilson addressed Dabney as "My dear Heath". There is no entry for Dabney in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, and Link provides no further information on Dabney.

⁸⁵ Grubbs, *Struggle for Labor Loyalty*, 61-2

to obtain the “true” future peace he hoped to create after the war was won would have also shaped his opinion of the People’s Council.

At this point the United States had been a belligerent for only five months. That war had to be won, not resolved inconclusively by some form of peace-without-victory negotiation. Wilson had not made this about-face because of some new-found liking for war. He had become a partisan of “war to final victory” because only that outcome would give him what he wanted: the opportunity to impose an American peace that would reshape international relations forever and thereby eliminate the need for future wars. This goal is most evident in a confession Wilson made to the celebrated social reformer and pacifist Jane Addams and other delegates of the Emergency Peace Federation on 28 February 1917 at a meeting in the White House.⁸⁶ “War had become inevitable” Wilson told the disappointed peace activists. Nevertheless as “head of a nation participating in the war, the President of the United States would have a seat at the Peace Table, [whereas]...if he remained the representative of a neutral country he could at best only ‘call through a crack in the door’.”⁸⁷ As a war president, Wilson could look forward to using that future seat at the table. It is in that sense that he could see no contradictory transformation in his fundamental beliefs. “Peace without Victory” was now out of the question, for it had been replaced by “Peace through Victory”. Yet for Wilson what mattered was that the goal was still the same: a genuine, durable peace grounded in a reconstruction of international relations.

Wilson’s policy towards Russia had naturally been affected by his changed understandings of how the “big peace” he sought could be attained. As a war president

⁸⁶ Patterson, *Search for a Negotiated Peace*, 316.

⁸⁷ Jane Addams, *Peace and Bread in Time of War* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1972), 64.

he could not back a campaign to revise Allied war aims because he no longer supported the only framework in which the Petrograd Formula on war aims currently made sense: the framework of a negotiated peace. Therefore the President's ears would inevitably be closed to appeals that called for accommodating the Provisional Government's precarious hold on power by means of a joint revision of Allied war aims, no matter what the American embassy or the Root Mission reported about Russia. The Root Mission's report stated that Russia was worth keeping in the war, if for no other reason than to occupy German troops on the Eastern front. However, Wilson's decision to act slowly in implementing the Root Mission's recommendations and to ignore the question of war aims brought up by the Provisional Government calls into question whether or not Wilson agreed with the Root Mission's assessments.

In the next chapter we will return to Woodrow Wilson's reaction to the question of war aims revision. This chapter has demonstrated how and why the Root Mission could not – and in the event did not – need to convince Wilson to support the Provisional Government's attempt to revise Allied war aims. However, there were other factors, outside of those reported by the Root Mission that could and should have influenced Wilson's decision to support the Provisional Government on the issue of war aims revision. For that reason the next chapter must investigate further the reason why President Wilson chose not to support the Provisional Government in its endeavour to have Allied war aims revised to be in accordance with the Petrograd Formula.

Chapter 6: The United States and War Aims Revision

In the years leading up to American entry into the war, President Wilson considered the pros and cons of making a formal approach to the belligerent governments with regard to initiating a negotiated peace. Wilson, in the end, decided not to approach the belligerent governments until after his re-election in November 1916. Five weeks later Wilson sent identical diplomatic notes to both the Allied and Central Powers, asking each to state their war aims. The president explicitly denied that by requesting a statement of war aims he was attempting to mediate between the belligerents; however it is almost certain that this was his ultimate goal. President Wilson's apparent strategy was to use the idea of revising war aims "downwards" as a procedural tactic to bring together the representatives of the belligerent nations at a conference in Washington. At this conference the president hoped that, under his mediation, the talk of war aims would morph into full-blown peace negotiations.¹

Nothing came of the president's initiative. The Allied powers were furious at Wilson's actions but sent their statements of war aims so as not to antagonize the great neutral power. Berlin would not even go that far, although Ambassador Bernstorff intimated that Berlin would be more forthcoming provided its desiderata could be kept confidential. Even Secretary of State Lansing attempted to derail Wilson's proposal.

¹ The text of Wilson's note can be found in James Brown Scott, ed., *Official Statements of War Aims and Peace Proposals, December 1916-November 1918* (Washington, D C.: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1921), 20. Link, *Wilson Campaigns for Peace and Progressivism*, volume 5, chapter 6, provides the most detailed account of Wilson's proposal. See also, Count Bernstorff, *My Three Years in America* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1920), 299-392; and for an account of the German ambassador's important role in the episode, please see Rheinhard R. Doerries, *Imperial Challenge Ambassador Bernstorff and German-American Relations, 1908-1917* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), chapter 6. For the British reaction of Wilson's proposal see the excellent summary in Rothwell, *British War Aims*, 61-66, and the more detailed treatment in Sterling J. Kernek, *Distractions of Peace during War the Lloyd George Government's Reactions to Woodrow Wilson, December 1916-November 1918* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1975), 19-31. Wilson's timing was terrible. Berlin had issued its own peace note just six days before the president's proposal was dispatched, so it was natural for the Allied powers to assume collusion.

However, it was the German government that sank the possibility of a diplomatic exchange on war aims. On 9 January 1917 the German leadership made the decision to resume unrestricted submarine warfare in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

Ambassador Bernstorff announced this fateful decision to Washington at the end of January 1917 and the American government reacted by severing diplomatic relations with Berlin. President Wilson set aside his ambitions of mediating the future peace negotiations.

The point of this summary is to show that the concept of using the revision of war aims as a way to start moving the belligerents towards a negotiated peace had been put forward before the Russian Provisional Government took it up in the spring of 1917 – and put forward by none other than President Wilson. Faced with the idea for a revision of war aims from the Provisional Government, President Wilson now had to decide how to respond. One of the questions that Wilson needed to address was: what was the best way to support the Provisional Government (seen as a “fellow” democratic government) so that it would remain in control of the country? As we shall see, the idea for a general revision of Allied war aims would never grow into a clear or full-scale official Russian diplomatic initiative. However, even in the undeveloped form it took, the idea for a revision of war aims represented not just a challenge to the military objectives of the Western powers, but also an opportunity. Revision of war aims held out the possibility for Washington, London and Paris to improve the domestic credibility of the Provisional Government by demonstrating their willingness to seriously consider the Russian initiative on this question. As discussed in the introduction, the Russian Revolution had also created an opportunity in the Allied coalition because it allowed the Allies to argue

that “now” this war was truly a war of democracy (the Allies) versus autocracy (the Central Powers).

Although assistance to the newly democratic Russia was not a reason for American entry into the war, it certainly proved to be a helpful background element when President Wilson asked Congress to declare the existence of a state of war against Germany. Wilson was encouraged by what had happened in Russia and believed that now Russia was a “fit partner for a league of honour”² – or in less exalted language, an ally whose system of government was no longer an embarrassment to the coalition fighting the Central Powers. A reaction in favour of a revision of war aims could have been expected from President Wilson since he, more than any other war leader, might have been expected to understand the potential a revision of war aims had to confirm the good faith of the Allies and bolster the political authority of the Provisional Government.

Furthermore, given what happened to the Provisional Government’s first Foreign Minister, Miliukov, it is more than a little surprising that Washington did not see the advisability of helping the Provisional Government by at least *appearing* supportive of the possibility of revising Allied war aims to bring them into conformity with the Petrograd Formula. Explaining why the Allied leaders, particularly President Wilson, did not seize this opportunity to strengthen the Provisional Government is the purpose of this chapter.

Allied Reaction to War Aims Revision

² “Address of the President to the United States Delivered at a Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress, April 2, 1917,” USDS. *FRUS, 1917. Supplement 1, The World War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1917), 200. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1917Supp01v01>. Accessed: 31 January 2011.

The Allied leadership hoped that the March Revolution would reinvigorate the Russian war effort. Throughout the war, the British and French never lost hope in the “Russian steamroller” while the stalemate on the Western front continued. However, the steamroller, which had seemed so formidable in 1914, had decidedly run out of steam by 1917, even with support from its allies in the form of loans totalling nearly £600 million and material assistance in the form of munitions.

The Allied governments were well informed of the connection between the stability of the Provisional Government and the question of war aims.³ British Ambassador George Buchanan was acutely conscious of the strength of peace sentiment throughout Russia in the spring and summer of 1917. He wrote in his diary on 12 July that peace was “the universal desideratum [in Russia]. It is this fact that renders it essential for us [the British] to do nothing to give the pacifists here a pretext for contending that the Allies are prolonging the war for imperialistic aims.”⁴ Buchanan believed that refusing Foreign Minister Tereshchenko’s proposal for a conference on war aims, which he had submitted to French Ambassador Albert Thomas a month earlier (13 June), would be interpreted in Russia as yet more evidence that the Allies were bent on continuing the war for their own imperialistic ends. “To postpone the discussion of our war aims,” he informed London in July 1917, “will but discourage Russia from continuing her active participation in the war.” It was Buchanan’s expert knowledge of local conditions that made him sympathetic to the war aims gambit, which, it is important to realize, he regarded as more symbolic than real. From his conversations with Tereshchenko, Buchanan had been informed that a war aims conference was not meant to

³ Neilson, *Strategy and Supply*, 249, 261.

⁴ Buchanan, diary entry, 12 July 1917, *My Mission to Russia*, 2:151.

bind the Allies to any “definite peace terms.” Apparently some unspecified earlier time (“as he [Tereshchenko] remarked to me [Buchanan] one day.”)⁵, Tereshchenko had assured Buchanan that any terms reached on war aims would depend on “the course of military operations, and it would, therefore, be difficult to define them with precision so long as the war was in progress.” All of this would have been reassuring news to London; however there is no evidence available to me which suggests that Buchanan ever passed this information along. Buchanan held Tereshchenko in high esteem, believing that Tereshchenko was not an idealist like many of his colleagues in the Provisional Government, and that the British could therefore “count on him doing his best to induce them [Russian socialists] to take a practical view of things.”⁶

Buchanan’s views on Russia stood in stark contrast to that of his French colleague, French Ambassador Maurice Paléologue, who wrote to French Prime Minister Ribot on 3 May that he believed that anarchy had spread all over Russia. He also gave his opinion that replying “to the latest note of the Provisional Government [the Provisional Government’s declaration on war aims of 10 April 1917] was not necessary since “such a reply would to some extent confirm agreements which have become unrealizable through Russia’s fault.”⁷

When the British Foreign Office was confronted with the Provisional Government’s declaration on war aims they concluded, evidently on the basis of Buchanan’s advice that they needed to give the Provisional Government something that would demonstrate at least some notional support on the revision of war aims, even

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Paléologue, *An Ambassador’s Memoirs*, 3:336.

though they had no intention of abandoning their annexationist programme.⁸ Indeed, the British ambassador understood this necessity long before Tereshchenko put forward his suggestion (to Albert Thomas) that a revision of war aims in line with the ideals of New Russia would be a valuable step for the Allies to take. For example, Buchanan wrote to the Foreign Office on 21 May 1917 that “If our reply to Miliukoff’s note is published in its present form there is certain to be friction, and the Soviet will try to force his hands. After discussing the question with Albert Thomas, I think that we ought to forestall any action of this kind by ourselves making some conciliatory but non-committal statement on the subject.”⁹

It is hardly surprising that the British government was more interested in keeping Russia in the war than moving towards a true reappraisal of its war aims. However, like Buchanan, the British leadership also realized that the discussion of war aims, if only for cosmetic purposes, could help to keep Russia in the war and the Provisional Government in power.¹⁰ As has already been demonstrated in Chapter 5, the British government was apprehensive about the issue of war aims. Great Britain and France had seen no recent military success on the Western front; and that coupled with pronounced war weariness at home, made the British War Cabinet feel that it was being backed into a corner.¹¹ It was for these reasons that on 10 May 1917, Lloyd George announced at a secret session of the House of Commons that the War Cabinet decided – as a pre-emptive move and before receiving key advice from Buchanan – to insist that the final decision on the disputed

⁸ Neilson, *Strategy and Supply*, 269-70; French, *Strategy of Lloyd George Coalition*, 139.

⁹ Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia*, 2:129.

¹⁰ Rothwell, *British War Aims*, 98.

¹¹ Rothwell, *British War Aims*, 99-100.

territories, discussed in Allied war aims, would be made at the eventual peace conference – a skilful way to shelve the idea of revision.

At this stage we must also address another piece of the confusing puzzle of war aims revision. As mentioned previously the Russian foreign minister broached the idea by handing Albert Thomas a note proposing an inter-Allied conference on war aims on the night Thomas left Petrograd to return to France. However, a few days later, on 16 June 1917 (OS)/29 June 1917 (NS), the Russian newspaper *Izvestia*, which was the organ of the Petrograd Soviet, published the text of what it called an *invitation* to a conference, with this sentence introducing it: “The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tereshchenko, transmitted to the Allied Governments the following note:...”.¹² This use of the plural certainly makes it appear that Tereshchenko had officially extended an invitation to Russia’s major partners for a conference on war aims. However, two objections need to be raised to this reasonable conclusion.

First, the text of the note published in *Izvestia* shows that it was not an “invitation” to a conference but rather a *suggestion* to hold one while conditions were “favourable”.¹³ Second, on 13 June (OS)/26 June (NS) – that is three days before the *Izvestia* article – British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, replying to questions in the House of Commons, stated that the British government had “as yet received no communication from the Russian government” with regard to an inter-Allied conference to discuss war aims. He refused to be drawn further by follow-up questions and ended the discussion with the broadest possible denial: “His Majesty’s Government have not as

¹² “Note from the Provisional Government to the Allies, published June 16, 1917,” translation in C.K. Cumming and Walter W. Pettit, eds., *Russian-American Relations, March 1917-March 1920. Documents and Papers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920), doc. 15, 26-7.

¹³ *Ibid.*

yet been approached by the Russian Government in the matter [ie. a conference on war aims].”¹⁴ It is hard to believe that the British foreign secretary would have misled the House on this question. Did a formal Russian proposal reach the Foreign Office during the three days after Balfour’s answers in the Commons? Or had Tereshchenko simply led the Petrograd Soviet to believe (and through them *Izvestia*) that a note of “invitation” had been sent to all the Allied governments when in fact he had only given a tentative proposal to Thomas?

The answer is likely found in a cable that Tereshchenko sent on 15 July (OS)/28 July (NS), Tereshchenko reported to the Russian ambassador in the United States, Boris Bakhmet’ev, stating that “up to now we [the Provisional Government] have not approached any country through *diplomatic channels* with an invitation to take part in the conference.”¹⁵ While his use of the word “invitation” does not entirely exclude the possibility of the earlier proposals, Tereshchenko’s admission strongly suggests that the *Izvestia* account was what might politely be called an exaggeration. Nevertheless, the whole episode underlines the fact that Tereshchenko *wanted* the Petrograd Soviet and the Russian public to believe that he had made a definite proposal for a conference on war aims in order to make clear that his position on this crucial issue was far from different from that of his unfortunate predecessor, Paul Miliukov. Miliukov’s covering letter of 1 May to the Provisional Government’s statement of 10 April on Russia’s war aims had

¹⁴ Balfour did acknowledge that he “understood” the Russian government had “informed” Albert Thomas of the intention to suggest a conference on war aims “so soon as circumstances permitted.” The questions put to the foreign secretary were apparently prompted by the tabling in the House on 27 June of the government’s reply to Miliukov’s note on Russian war aims (i.e. his famous covering note of 1 May 1917). See House of Commons, House of Commons Debates (*Hansard*), 95:354, 179-80, 201W (27 June 1917); Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 87, briefly notes Balfour’s denial but does not bring out its categorical character.

¹⁵ Tereshchenko to Bakhmet’ev, telegram, 15 July 1917 (OS)/28 July 1917 (NS), Browder and Kerensky, ed., *The Russian Provisional Government, 1917*, 2:1123. My emphasis.

caused rioting in Petrograd, followed two weeks later by the foreign minister's downfall and the restructuring of the Provisional Government. Miliukov's resignation signalled to London, Paris and the other allies (and to his successor Tereshchenko above all) that the war aims question had the potential to endanger whatever domestic stability and authority the Russian government still possessed. This lesson had obviously not been lost on Miliukov's successor.

The political instability in Russia was matched by the weakening of the all-important *union sacrée* in France – the political truce underpinning the war effort. The Russian Revolution had roused the French Left. Pierre Renaudel, a leader of the SFIO, informed Prime Minister Alexandre Ribot on 21 May 1917 that French socialists could only support a claim to Alsace-Lorraine within the frontiers of 1870 whereas previously the French Left and French government had agreed on the frontiers of 1790. This may seem a minor point, but it signalled the fact that the “no annexations” demand of the Petrograd Formula had found an audience within the SFIO. The point is that it would become harder for Ribot to resist a Russian call for a revision of war aims if he felt that to do so would put the *union sacrée* at risk.¹⁶

Like Prime Minister Lloyd George, Ribot had to question whether France should limit its objectives in the hopes that doing so might strengthen the Russian war effort, now that Petrograd was raising the issue of the revision of war aims. Ribot relied on the differing (though astute) views of the two French representatives in Russia: the outgoing French Ambassador Maurice Paléologue and his replacement, the uncompromisingly patriotic French socialist leader, Albert Thomas.¹⁷ On 7 May 1917, Ribot asked

¹⁶ Stevenson, *French War Aims*, 67.

¹⁷ Stevenson, *French War Aims*, 66-7.

Paléologue and Thomas to give their respective opinions on the domestic situation in Russia.¹⁸ Paléologue reported that anarchy was spreading over Russia and would paralyze Russia for a long time to come. The Russian public displayed its disgust for the war and demonstrated an interest in only domestic problems. Paléologue questioned the Provisional Government's ability to restore order in the country and organize the country to continue the prosecution of the war. Paléologue did not believe that the French government should put its trust in the "[N]ew Russia" because even under the most favourable circumstances, Russia would not be ready to fulfill her obligations to the Allies for many months to come. He predicted that the eventual, complete paralysis of Russia's war effort would oblige the French government to revisit the diplomatic decisions they had made on the "Eastern questions." Furthermore, he suggested that the French government waste no time inducing Turkey – in secrecy – to propose peace, and he dismissed the idea of any reply to the Provisional Government's statement on the war of 10 April 1917.¹⁹

Albert Thomas's assessment was much more optimistic. Thomas agreed that the situation in Russia was "difficult and uncertain" but did not think it was as desperate as Paléologue believed. In traditional diplomatic language he suggested that the French government afford the New Russia the same confidence the old Russia had received. Although Thomas did not oppose the idea of inducing Turkey to propose peace, he believed that announcing a new democratic war aims policy did have the potential to

¹⁸ Paléologue, *An Ambassador's Memoirs*, 3:335.

¹⁹ Paléologue, *An Ambassador's Memoirs*, 3:335-6.

keep Russia in the war. Furthermore, he believed his to be a more prudent policy than Paléologue's.²⁰

On 22 May 1917 Tereshchenko sent Ribot a telegram assuring the French prime minister that Russia would not abandon the Allies and make a separate peace with the Central Powers. On the same day Ribot made a speech to an open session of the Chamber of Deputies. In his wide-ranging address, in which he touched on several aspects of the war and his ministry's policies, he espoused "democratic rhetoric" while sensibly remaining silent on potential annexationist targets like the Saarland and the left bank of the Rhine, an approach that he knew would be unacceptable to the French socialists. He also referenced Tereshchenko's telegram, presenting the Russian Foreign Minister's message as an expression of Russia's thanks for heroic French military efforts on the Western front. Ribot mentioned the Provisional Government's new guidelines for peace: the Petrograd Formula, as adopted and expounded by the Provisional Government in its declaration of 10 April 1917 (NS). While making appropriate sounds, Ribot's implicit message to the Provisional Government was clear-cut: no matter the merits of the Petrograd Formula, this formula would not be applied to the "return" of Alsace-Lorraine to France, nor would it be applied to the question of reparations in the damages caused by Germany in the occupation of northern France. It is interesting to note, that Ribot chose to make this address to a public forum, an open session of the legislature. Ribot intended to send a strong message to the Provisional Government: France's core war aims were non-negotiable.²¹ At the same time, the official French reply to the

²⁰ Paléologue, *An Ambassador's Memoirs*, 3 336-7.

²¹ Alexandre Ribot, ed., *Journal d'Alexandre Ribot et correspondences inédites, 1914-1922* (Paris, 1936), 128-9, Georges Bonnefous, *La Grande Guerre, 1914-1918*, vol. 2 of *Histoire Politique de la Troisième République* (Paris, 1967), 237-8. Information received from Professor E. P. Fitzgerald

Provisional Government's note evaded any real commitments. All of this was more than sufficient to warn Petrograd that France intended to conserve and protect the war aims the French government held out for – and on which it had concluded official accords with the former imperial government.²²

President Wilson's Inaction on the Question of War Aims Revision and Possible Explanations

Ribot's statement to the Chamber of Deputies, which legitimized and re-affirmed French war aims, caused an interesting reaction in Washington. Josephus Daniels, the Secretary of the Navy, noted on 29 May, that in a cabinet meeting the discussion had turned towards whether Wilson should make a "definite declaration of what we are fighting for as differentiated from aims of France and England and others." This idea, that the United States release an American declaration of war aims, was rooted in the recent statements made by Allied statesmen: Ribot's affirmation that France would continue to fight until her lost provinces were returned to her, is one example.²³ The cabinet members at the meeting unanimously judged these statements as "most unfortunate". However, the president disagreed. Wilson told cabinet members that, at that time, nothing should be said about war aims. The president made clear to the cabinet that for the time being Great Britain and France were trusted allies in a common fight with the United States, although they were not states with whom the United States would be making any actual alliances. Wilson admitted to the members of the meeting: "I have not permitted myself to think of plans & policies when the war ends." However, he was confident that the United States would "be ready that the right settlement is made when

²² Stevenson, *French War Aims*, 66-7.

²³ The other example is Lord Cecil's insistence on the imposition of an indemnity a condition for coming to terms with Germany. Cecil was Minister of the Blockade in Lloyd George's ministry.

we all sit at the table.” Wilson concluded that they wanted “nothing for ourselves” in the war. The president struck Secretary Daniels as “confident that America would have its way when it proposed what was right.”²⁴

Wilson’s comments to the cabinet are of interest to us for two reasons. First, the president displayed an almost casual confidence in his ability to achieve the “right settlement” when the time came. Second and more significantly, Wilson was convinced there was no point in discussing war aims until he had achieved the “right settlement”. He remained convinced of this even though all of his cabinet members believed there was value in making an American war aims statement, intended to separate the United States from the other Allied states. Wilson’s position is so significant because he had, in December 1916 and January 1917, believed that a mutual declaration on war aims by both belligerent camps would be the first steps towards pushing the belligerent camps to accepting American-mediated peace negotiations. The contrast to Wilson’s views only four months later is remarkable. How can it be explained?

A second piece of evidence, exemplified in a letter, demonstrates Wilson’s conviction that doing nothing about the question of war aims was, to him, the best route to take. The letter, written on 29 May 1917 – the same day as the Cabinet meeting Daniels refers to – was from a British Member of Parliament who wrote to President Wilson with the purpose of influencing Wilson’s views on war aims, including Wilson’s response to the Provisional Government’s declaration on war aims.

The man in question was the former leader of the Labour Party, Ramsay MacDonald, who had resigned his position when Great Britain entered the war in 1914.

²⁴ Secretary Daniels, diary entry, 29 May 1917, E David Cronon, ed , *The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, 1913-1921* (Lincoln. University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 138-9. I am grateful to Professor E P Fitzgerald for bringing this passage to my attention.

He wrote to President Wilson as a member of the Executive Committee of the Union of Democratic Control (UDC).²⁵ The letter was signed by eleven prominent members of the UDC, so this was more than a personal step on MacDonald's part. In the letter MacDonald argued that the Provisional Government's Petrograd Formula demonstrated a profound divergence from war aims of the previous regime in Russia. The letter emphasized the obvious point that the Provisional Government's ideals, as derived from the Petrograd Formula, closely matched Wilson's own earlier pronouncements. It was this fact that had encouraged MacDonald and the co-authors of the letter to believe that the Allies should soon take up those "sentiments of freedom and nationality, and those methods of democratic diplomacy which have been inaugurated by the Russian Revolution, and now find expression through the Provisional Government's declaration." MacDonald assured the President in this letter that if the United States government secured a general declaration by all the belligerents renouncing aggressive war aims, it would receive "an enormous volume of grateful support" in Great Britain and would have the added, "beneficial", effect of encouraging a democratic resolution to the war and guarantee a lasting peace.²⁶

There is no evidence in the *Papers of Woodrow Wilson* or in the *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* that Wilson responded to MacDonald's letter. Why did the president ignore this cogent request for a statement about war aims along the lines of the Petrograd Formula? There are two possible ways to explain

²⁵ The UDC was a British lobby group formed by dissenting politicians on the "radical" wing of the Liberal party in August 1914. The UDC's purpose was to bring about a negotiated peace and to foster change in international relations and foreign policy in a fundamental way.

²⁶ James Ramsay MacDonald and Others to Wilson, typed letter signed, 29 May 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 42.421-2. The letter was also signed by Norman Angell, Charles Roden Buxton, Irene Cooper Willis, J. A. Hobson, F. W. Jowett, Charles Trevelyan, E. D. Morel, F. W. Pethick Lawrence, Arthur Ponsonby, Philip Snowden, and H. M. Swanwick.

Wilson's silence. First, Ramsay MacDonald had opposed the war in 1914, which was one of the reasons why he, along with other dissident colleagues in the Labour party, had helped to create the UDC. MacDonald remained a leading pacifist within the British labour movement throughout the war.²⁷ It is therefore possible that Wilson viewed MacDonald through the same lens he had used to judge American socialists who had opposed American intervention in the war (such as Morris Hillquit) thereby attributing to MacDonald the same "untrustworthy and disloyal" characteristics he had applied to them.

Perhaps a more likely explanation is that Wilson was simply not interested in responding to any call for a revision of war aims, no matter what the source. As the leader of a neutral country, Wilson had felt at home in his pre-1917 efforts to use the question of war aims as a means to make the case, *his* case, for the requirements to create the future peace settlement along liberal lines. MacDonald and his UDC colleagues had quite correctly seized on the congruence of the president's earlier statements with the Petrograd Formula as a reason for asking Wilson to take the lead on the revision of war aims. But Wilson was no longer the president of a neutral country. When MacDonald's letter reached his desk (if indeed he actually read it) Wilson was a war president committed to victory over Germany. In his new role he saw no reason to discuss war aims or peace terms until the Central Powers were defeated.

All of this brings us back to our starting question.²⁸ In December 1916 the president had used the stratagem of getting the belligerents to state their war aims as a means of moving both hostile camps towards an American-brokered negotiated peace.

²⁷ French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, 22; French, *Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 141-2. It was for this reason that the War Cabinet opposed Arthur Henderson's trip to Paris with MacDonald upon Henderson's return from Petrograd in 1917.

²⁸ See page 145.

Why was he now unwilling to use the issue of revising war aims to warn the Allied coalition that the future peace settlement was not going to proceed from the precepts and practices of the “old diplomacy”?

When presented with the Provisional Government’s declaration on war aims in May, the task of drafting a reply was much easier for Wilson’s administration than it was for the Allies’. While Great Britain, France, and Italy wrote and re-wrote their replies to the Provisional Government,²⁹ Wilson (as we have seen in Chapter 5) wrote a general statement on 22 May 1917 that put him squarely in favour of the Petrograd Formula.³⁰

Wrongs must first be righted and then adequate safeguards must be created to prevent their being committed again...But they must follow a principle, and that principle is plain. No people must be forced under a sovereignty under which it does not wish to live. No territory must change hands except for the purpose of securing those who inhabit it a fair chance of life and liberty. No indemnities must be insisted on except those that constitute a payment for manifest wrongs done. No readjustments of power must be made except such as will tend to secure the future peace of the world and the future welfare and happiness of its peoples.³¹

Wilson was able to express with conviction and eloquence his sympathy for the Provisional Government’s declaration on war aims because, unlike his allies, his hands “were tied by no promises of territorial annexations”.³² Wilson’s intended audience was not just the Provisional Government, but the rest of the Allied coalition as well. Wilson knew that American “war aims” were much different than Allied war aims; indeed his administration did not possess *any* “war aims” in the way that term was commonly

²⁹ Russian Foreign Minister Tereshchenko requested the Allies re-write their replies in order to bring them more in line with the general position of the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviets on war aims. The Allied responses had been prepared in response to the note Miliukov had sent, so it was no wonder Tereshchenko found them objectionable. Please see Rex Wade, *The Russian Search for Peace*, 77-8.

³⁰ Semour, ed., *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 3:130.

³¹ Lansing to Francis, telegram, 22 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1917. Supplement 2, The World War*, 1:73. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1917Supp02v01>. Accessed: 14 April 2011.

³² Seymour, ed., *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 3:130.

understood at the time. Wilson meant to make this difference clear to the Allies in his note to the Provisional Government. Wilson expressed sympathy with the Provisional Government without binding himself to any promises or commitments to action on the subject of war aims. However, in the conclusion of his note Wilson also took the opportunity to advocate that the Allied coalition fight on for victory (a point that the Provisional Government had also emphasized in its statement of 10 April) and to affirm his conviction that German autocracy had to be defeated before a just and lasting peace could be brought into being. “The day has come to conquer or submit. If the forces of autocracy can divide us, they will overcome us; if we stand together, victory is certain and the liberty which victory will secure. We can afford *then* to be generous, but we cannot afford *then or now* to be weak or omit any single guarantee of justice and security.”³³

What have we been able to learn from this brief overview? When the United States entered the war, Colonel House argued that war aims had the potential to be a very divisive issue between the United States and the Allies.³⁴ It is almost certain that the president agreed with his confidant on this matter. President Wilson demonstrated early on in American belligerency that war aims were not up for revision, at least at that time.

Why did Wilson take this line? Here is what he wrote to House on 21 July,

England and France *have not the same views with regard to peace that we have* by any means. When the war is over we can force them 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, and any attempt to speak for them

³³ Lansing to Francis, telegram, 22 May 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1917. Supplement 2, The World War*, 1:73. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1917Supp02v01>. Accessed: 14 April 2011. The phrase “guarantee...of security” would have evoked in Russia an echo of the wording of Miliukov’s controversial note of 1 May, in which the necessity for arrangements to ensure Russia’s future security was taken as a rather transparent code for territorial acquisitions. It is interesting that neither Lansing nor the State Department cautioned the president about his language here.

³⁴ House to Wilson, 22 April 1917, Seymour, ed., *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 3:37.

or to speak our common mind would bring on disagreements which would inevitably come to the surface in public and rob the whole thing of its effect.³⁵

The president's concise summary of his reasoning was clear, logical, and persuasive. Yet it still does not explain why Wilson did not favour making a declaration of American war aims that could have served as an indirect criticism of the Allies' "old diplomacy" war aims. More specifically, why did Wilson not see the Provisional Government's statement on war aims as an *opportunity* allowing him to state outright that the future peace was not going to be "business as usual", and that the Russian position was therefore to be welcomed and endorsed by all members of the Allied coalition? What caused him to believe that he could not say out loud something similar to the eloquent words of the message he sent to the Provisional Government on 22 May?³⁶

The evidence available suggests that President Wilson did not favour a declaration on war aims because he was uninterested in inciting their *discussion* while there was more immediate business to be done: winning the war. Wilson had two roles to play once the United States had entered the war. On the one hand, he wanted to change international relations in a radical way so as to prevent the recurrence of great wars. That was his aim in the longer run, and it was the reason he personally relied on to justify the decision to enter the war. But on the other hand he was now a wartime president, and his immediate goal was to finish what he had begun. After 6 April Wilson

³⁵ Wilson to House, typed letter signed, 21 July 1917, Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 43 238. Italics in the text.

³⁶ There is a broader question involved here. why was there a *general* absence of concern or interest in Washington about the new situation in Russia? The dispatches from Washington printed in *FRUS* simply show little recognition of a need to strengthen the authority of the Provisional Government as a way of ensuring Russia's continued participation in the war. The official reactions to the recommendations of the Root Mission are evidence of a lack of concern about the Provisional Government's shaky position. All of this stands in striking contrast to the attention President Wilson would subsequently give to the situation in Russia in his 14 Points address of 8 January 1918. But by that time the damage had been done. The Bolsheviks were taking Russia out of the war, and statements on war aims could no longer be avoided.

had no interest in an immediate peace based on the Provisional Government's peace formula or any other approach to negotiated settlement short of victory. It is this general attitude that helps to explain his rejection of an American statement on war aims – which, he believed, was bound to lead to the public discussion of war aims. That would inevitably cause a rift in the Allied coalition with which the United States was now associated. Wilson had deliberately refrained from signing the Pact of London of September 1914, making the United States an “associate” rather than an ally of the Entente.³⁷ By casting the United States as an “Associated Power” instead of an Ally, Wilson underlined the “disinterested” character of American objectives, which he had emphasized in the message to Congress on 2 April. This allowed him to set apart the United States and its liberal goals from (what he thought of as) the self-interested ambitions of the Entente.³⁸ But as his words to House demonstrate, clarity over war aims was not the business at hand; winning the war was. That is the prism through which President Wilson saw the Provisional Government's indirect overtures for the revision of war aims. And that is likely the principal reason why he saw no compelling reason to respond.

³⁷ French, *Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 65.

³⁸ Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson*, 317.

Conclusion: A Failed Peace – Or a Peace That Never Had A Chance?

By September 1917 the Russian Provisional Government's peace program was dead in the water. The Provisional Government, led by Alexander Kerensky since July 1917, survived an attempted military coup in September, but its hold on power, never very convincing came to an end two months later, when the Bolsheviks seized control of Petrograd. On 8 November the American minister in Stockholm, Ira Nelson Morris, reported to the State Department that the Bolsheviks had carried out a successful coup d'état.¹ Kerensky managed to escape from the city, but most of his colleagues were not so fortunate. The Provisional Government was no more, and the first act of the new authorities was to call for an immediate peace.

The historical consensus is that the Provisional Government fatally undermined its hold on the country by failing to initiate a comprehensive program of land redistribution and by failing to extricate Russia from the war.² This is the context for judging the historical significance of the failure of the Provisional Government's peace program. But did that program ever really have a chance for success? The answer that emerges from this thesis is decidedly "no". But a more probing question is whether the fault of that failure should be placed entirely at the door of the Provisional Government or whether the actions and inactions of Russia's allies bear a share of the blame for this failure?

The first element of the Russian government's peace program was an international socialist conference to discuss ways for the socialist parties of the belligerent countries to move towards a general peace: that is, the idea that became

¹ Morris to Lansing, telegram, 8 November 1917, USDS, *FRUS, 1918. Russia*, 1:225. Available from: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1918v1>. First Accessed: 5 May 2011.

² Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 142-3.

known as the Stockholm Conference. This proposal had been met with hostility by all of the Western democracies, and Washington took the lead by flatly refusing to consider allowing American socialists to attend the conference. However, by August 1917, Kerensky, as leader of the Provisional Government, no longer desired to see the Stockholm Conference go ahead. As for the second element of the Russian peace program, the idea of a conference of Allied governments to discuss the revision of war aims, the Provisional Government, or more specifically Russian Foreign Minister Mikhail Tereshchenko, never pressed this proposal on Russia's allies. It went from being an idea "in the air" after the Provisional Government's first statement on the war (10 April) to becoming a semi-official overture in early June. But that overture was made only to France and only in the guise of a "message" that Albert Thomas was asked to bring back to Paris with him. Tereshchenko never made a formal proposal for a conference, and he never extended his informal proposal to revise Allied war aims to either London or Washington. After the military failures and setbacks in July and August, Tereshchenko seemed to have abandoned the idea of a negotiated peace as an immediate objective in 1917. The realities of international politics – that is, the actions and statements of the Allied and American governments in the spring and summer of 1917 – coupled with his growing personal disillusionment with the Provisional Government, specifically Alexander Kerensky, had made it clear to him that a negotiated peace was simply not in the cards.³

However, regardless of the Provisional Government's zeal – or lack thereof – to pursue the revision of Allied war aims, Paris and London had remained suspicious about any discussion of war aims. President Wilson – the Provisional Government's best hope

³ Wade, *Russian Search for Peace*, 122, 146.

of support for war aims revision – proved to be uninterested in an immediate negotiated peace or the discussion of war aims, even after the recommendations from the Root Mission and Ambassador Francis made clear that the Provisional Government needed external support in order to continue the war.

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of this story is the “fog” surrounding President Wilson’s position. There appears to be no definitive evidence to explain Wilson’s lack of interest in war aims revision, especially when we consider his earlier and later statements and diplomacy regarding war aims and peace. Neither Link’s outstanding collection of the president’s papers nor Seymour’s edition of the House diaries permit a conclusive answer. Wilson’s remarks to his cabinet on 29 May, as reported by Josephus Daniels, suggest that the president now saw peace as something to be considered only towards the end of the war. But Daniel’s diary does not go beyond this. Thus I have been unable to establish a satisfactory answer to this final question about President Wilson’s position on war aims revision, by which I mean an answer grounded in clear and unassailable evidence. We are left with the frustrating question of why, in the spring and summer of 1917, did Woodrow Wilson not see, what is plain to see today – that it was in the best interest of the Allies to keep the Provisional Government in power, and that to do so meant making a statement, even if it was just a superficial accommodation, on the question of war aims.

But if the Provisional Government’s peace program was a failure, and if not all of the questions raised by this failure can be answered, why was the investigation of this issue important? As I have stated in my introduction, this thesis focuses on the diplomatic history of the Provisional Government with the Allies, a topic which receives

hardly a fraction of the attention historians give to the origins and consequences of the Bolshevik coup in November 1917. The Provisional Government stands as an anomaly in the history of Russia. Between three hundred years of autocracy and a further seventy-five years of despotism under a communist regime, the Provisional Government was a nine month experiment in trying to lay the groundwork for a functioning democracy in Russia. It is conventionally treated as an episode or way-station, little more. This thesis is an effort to redress this imbalance, at least for the diplomatic questions it addresses. Furthermore, even when a question cannot be fully answered, there remains value in asking it: that is, the value of making the importance of the question evident. Not being able to discover precisely why President Wilson's ideas and goals seemed to change in the spring and summer of 1917 has at least the value of making explicit a significant historical problem. No other historian (as far as I am aware) has focussed attention on the problem of the American president's *volte-face* on a negotiated peace and war aims, much less explained why it happened.

This investigation has led me to ask whether a revision of war aims, or a statement about a revision of war aims made by Wilson, could have saved the Provisional Government? To pose the question is to immediately see that it cannot be answered definitively: too many factors were working against the Provisional Government for the president's attitude to have turned the tide all on its own. That said, the evidence available does suggest that a statement by Wilson on war aims might well have boosted the morale of the Russian army and shown the Russian people and the Petrograd Soviet that their peace program – and therefore the possibility of ending the war – was being taken seriously. While a statement on war aims by Wilson may not have stopped the

eventual *dénouement* of a Bolshevik take over, it would perhaps have undercut one of the three elements of Bolsheviks' incantatory promise of "Peace, Land, and Bread". The Bolsheviks' appeal in Russia lay largely in its reputation as the "party of peace". In July 1917 Kerensky had been able to turn that fact against Lenin and his followers by accusing them of being the agents of a "German peace". Some accommodation from Washington on the peace issue could have allowed Tereshchenko to say that the rejection of a "Bolshevik peace" did not mean the rejection of a negotiated peace in general, and that the Provisional Government's plan to get Russia out of the war was working to achieve that end. In other words, a timely statement of support or even just "interest" on the part of President Wilson could have lent a measure of credibility to the Provisional Government's peace program.

At the beginning of this study I argued that President Wilson was confronted with two goods when the Provisional Government came to power in March 1917: the prospect of the establishment of democracy in Russia, and the prospect of an Allied military victory to which a revitalized Russia would contribute. President Wilson's actions ensured that neither of these prospects would come to fruition. By not allowing American socialists to attend the Stockholm Conference and by remaining silent on the revision of war aims, he undermined the believability of the Provisional Government's program on getting Russia out of the war through a general peace settlement. Furthermore, by not acting promptly in implementing the recommendations made by the Root Mission which were aimed at boosting the morale of the Russian army and increasing the army's ability to fight the war, Wilson again guaranteed that the two goods he had been confronted with in March 1917 would not come to pass. While we can never

definitively know why Wilson's ideas about war aims and peace terms changed in the spring and summer of 1917, we can at least be clear that during these months Wilson's actions and inactions did not help the Provisional Government's efforts to convince the Russian people that a way out of the war could be found. The Provisional Government's peace program was at times confused and confusing. Foreign Minister Mikhail Tereshchenko was less than clear or single minded in his gambit on the revision of war aims. Those failings might have been enough in themselves to bring the Provisional Government's initiatives in the direction of a negotiated peace. But President Wilson's unwillingness to give the idea of a negotiated peace any kind of chance once he brought the United States into the war made the failure of the Provisional Government's peace program all but certain. By doing so he would leave himself and eleven future American presidents to contend with an undemocratic and unfriendly regime in Russia.

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Appendix 1: Trade Statistics for the United States and Imperial Russia:⁴

Imports (from Imperial Russia to the United States)	1910-1914
(European) Russia to the United States	\$19,731,000
(Asiatic) Russia to the United States	\$1,734,000
Exports (from the United States to Imperial Russia)	1910-1914
United States to (European) Russia	\$23,456,000
United States to (Asiatic) Russia	\$1,148,000

⁴ Treasury Department, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, D.C. : Government Printing Office, 1928), 464-7 Although I had hoped to include the trade figures up until 1916, the only data available was for between the years of 1910 and 1914. The data for these trade figures starts back up in 1920, under Soviet Russia. My only guess is that the war and revolutions in Russia had an effect on the collection of the pertinent trade figures for the years between 1914 and 1920