

AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH THE RUSSIAN PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT,  
MARCH TO NOVEMBER, 1917

by

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The writing of a Master's thesis is a group project. First there is the writer himself, the apprentice historian. Next is the major professor who shares the wealth of his experience and knowledge with his charge. Second and third readers complete the complement. By working under the guidance of these historians, the student gains an awareness and appreciation of the standards of excellence of his chosen academic profession. I wish to acknowledge my debt and appreciation to the members of my thesis committee--Dr. Joseph L. Wieczynski, Dr. John R. Ross, and Dr. Robert P. Grathwol--for their advice, constructive criticism, editing, and above all, patience.

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PREFACE

In 1917 an event occurred that was to have a monumental effect on the world. In March of that year the first of the 1917 revolutions toppled the autocracy of Russia. A temporary governing cabinet was formed to prepare the way for what most political observers believed would be a democratic government in Russia. Eight months later the Provisional Government was overthrown by the Bolsheviks. During those eight months the primary foreign mainstay of the Provisional Government was the United States. This is a study of the political relationship between Russia and the United States during the period of the Provisional Government, March to November, 1917. It is designed to indicate the full scope of those political relations, and to determine the impact and influence of American diplomacy on Russia.

I undertook this study partly because of an interest in Russo-American relations and partly because of the wealth of public primary sources on this period available to the historian. As with any study of Russia, I have had difficulties in establishing a consistent form for Russian names and dates.

Each collection of documents, memoir, and monograph has its own form of transliteration. For the sake of clarity and consistency I have chosen to adopt the spelling of Russian

names as given in Robert Browder and Alexander Kerensky, eds., The Russian Provisional Government, 1917: Documents. Names given in quotes from other sources will not usually conform to this pattern. In these instances I have presented the names as found rather than changing the spelling.

Until the introduction of a calendar reform in 1918, Russian dates were given according to the Julian calendar which was, in 1917, thirteen days behind the western Gregorian calendar. To apply the New Style dates to 1917 Russia, one has to add thirteen days to a particular date. All dates given in this study are New Style except in certain instances, such as a date given in quote. When this occurs an OS enclosed in brackets will accompany the date to signify that it is given in the Old Style of the Julian calendar.

# I

The storm had been gathering for almost a century. Finally in March, 1917, an unpopular international war and growing disaffection at home broke loose the torrent. The Russian Revolution had begun.

On the morning of March 12, fighting broke out in Petrograd. Leaderless soldiers and workers rallied against the monarchy. Nicholas II abdicated in favor of his brother Michael on March 15, but Michael refused to take the throne. The Tsarist government, that "autocracy of autocracies" had fallen never again to rise. The centuries old Romanov dynasty fell "not as a result of any carefully planned conspiracy or coup d'etat, but as a result of an unorganized, almost anarchical popular movement, the success of which was the measure of the inner weakness and decadence of the old order."<sup>1</sup>

On March 16, the Temporary or Provisional Government was formed.<sup>2</sup> The members of this first Provisional Government

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<sup>1</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, Vol. I, 1917-1918: From the Overthrow of the Czar to the Assumption of Power by the Bolsheviks (New York, 1963), 79.

<sup>2</sup> The Provisional Government was referred to many times in the discourse between American representatives in Russia and the Secretary of State as the Temporary Government. However, this was probably a mistaken use of the name Temporary Committee, which had been organized as the Executive Committee

were:

Prince Georgii E. Lvov - Minister President  
Pavel N. Miliukov - Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Aleksandr I. Guchkov - Minister of War and Navy  
Aleksandr F. Kerensky - Minister of Justice  
Nikolai V. Nekrasov - Minister of Transport  
Aleksandr I. Konovalov - Minister of Trade and Industry  
Aleksandr A. Manuilov - Minister of Education  
Andrei I. Shingarev - Minister of Agriculture<sup>3</sup>

Most of these Ministers were members of the Constitutional Democrat or Cadet party and had been members of the several Dumas. Politically they were liberal; socially they were bourgeois. Though Lvov held the premiership, the real power rested in the persons of Pavel Miliukov, head of the Cadets, and Aleksandr Kerensky, a popular and powerful socialist leader.

From its conception the Provisional Government was plagued by weakness which bordered on impotence. It lacked both an administrative bureaucracy, and the means to enforce its new found authority. The new government not only had to carry on an unpopular war but also had to put its revolutionary ideas into practice. But the Provisional Government was in reality of secondary importance. The real power in

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of the Duma on Feb. 27. It was this committee that named the composition of the Provisional Government. The discrepancy could also have resulted in the English rendering of the term vremennyi, which translates both as temporary and provisional.

<sup>3</sup>  
Robert P. Browder and Alexander F. Kerensky, eds., The Russian Provisional Government, 1917: Documents, Vol. I (New York, 1961), 125, 135. Hereafter cited as Browder and Kerensky, Documents.

Petrograd was the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>4</sup>

Without the Soviet's support, the Provisional Government could not function.<sup>5</sup>

The new government set about almost immediately to redress grievances against the Tsarist regime, and to prepare for the election of a Constituent Assembly which would organize a new and lasting government for Russia. Such was not to be. Time and peace were the two intangibles most needed if the Provisional Government were to survive and the Assembly meet. Neither was available. The war destined the Provisional Government to failure just as it had the Monarchy. Radical agitation, rapidly declining support for the war, and a worsening domestic situation caused largely by food shortages, pushed and prodded the government, giving it no time to stabilize. Indeed, the Provisional Government was always on the defensive.

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Rex A. Wade, The Russian Search for Peace, February-October, 1917 (Stanford, 1969), 14; Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, 100-01.

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The problems faced by the Soviet were almost as taxing as those of the Provisional Government. Whereas the Provisional Government had "the wish but not the means to govern," the Soviet had "the means but not the wish to govern." The Soviet had several opportunities to form a government but refused each time because it feared the responsibility of power, and because it knew that if it did assume the leadership of Russia, the Bolsheviks would oppose the Soviet just as had the Soviet opposed the Provisional Government. Frederick Lewis Schuman, Russia Since 1917: Four Decades of Soviet Politics (New York, 1957), 70.



On the other side of the world, the United States watched the Russian Revolution with more than casual interest. Having been constantly impressed with the mystique and significance of our own revolutionary experience, we rejoiced that another people had thrown off the yoke and emerged into the light of free and democratic civilization.<sup>6</sup> Parallels were drawn between the Russian and the American Revolutions. Americans caught a glimpse of democracy in a land where heretofore only autocratic regimes had ruled.<sup>7</sup>

With Russia, however, our joyous concern was not entirely high-minded and unselfish. Our sizable Jewish population had been clamoring for years against the pogroms that had been condoned (at times instigated) by the Tsarist government.<sup>8</sup> The new government professed more than a tolerance of minority nationalities, abolishing "all

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In the United States the March Revolution "was met with universal approval as a triumph of democratic principles." Claude Edwin Fike, Jr., "A Study of Russian-American Relations During the Ominous Years, 1917-1921" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1950), 8.

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Robert Crawford McClelland, Woodrow Wilson and the Russian Revolution: In Part, a Study in Calvinistic Ethics (Norfolk, 1955), 1.

8

Thomas A. Bailey, America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day (Ithaca, 1950), 233.

restrictions based on class, religion, and nationality," as one of its eight guiding principles.<sup>9</sup> But these were secondary to our main interest and concern--the war.

The United States was moving steadily toward war. Germany's renewed submarine offensive and the Zimmermann telegram had broken down much of American isolationist sentiment. Still, there was not reason enough to justify the shedding of American blood on European soil. Then suddenly the Russian Revolution helped break down the last barriers to intervention. The effect of the Revolution on American entry into the European war has been subject to much dispute. The consensus opinion is that it was of little pragmatic importance in that America would have entered the war even had there been no Russian Revolution. But the effect of the Revolution on President Wilson and subsequently on the American public was that it helped provide the war with an ideal. With the autocratic Tsarist regime toppled, and the Provisional Government democratically inclined, Wilson could now present to the American people not a war but a crusade--a war to make men free, to save the world for democracy.

It was in this atmosphere that American-Russian relations took a new course. Brief and tempestuous, almost

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<sup>9</sup>

Browder and Kerensky, Documents, I, 135.

always uncertain, relations began in March only to end abruptly in November.

On March 15, the American government received its first official notice of the Revolution. David R. Francis, American Ambassador to Russia, cabled Secretary of State Robert Lansing that the Revolution had occurred, and was now being stabilized. Francis reported that the army had sided with the Duma. No American citizens were known to be injured and the American compound was safe.<sup>10</sup>

David R. Francis was an interesting figure. He had been a grain merchant and Mayor of St. Louis, Governor of Missouri, and President of the 1904 Universal Exposition. In 1916, at the age of sixty-five, he had been appointed Ambassador to Russia by President Wilson.<sup>11</sup> The Governor, as he was usually called, was an amateur who "knew nothing about Russia," and was "more adept in the intricacies of poker than in the arts of diplomacy."<sup>12</sup> He was closely associated with the leading members of the Provisional

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<sup>10</sup>  
Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918, Russia, Vol. I (Washington, 1931), 1; from Document 1287, Francis to Lansing. Hereafter cited as Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia.

<sup>11</sup>  
George F. Kennan, Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920, Vol. I, Russia Leaves the War (New York, 1967), 32-41.

<sup>12</sup>  
Eugene Hayward Bacon, "Russian-American Relations, 1917-1921" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1951), 1.

Government professionally and privately. A friend of the Revolution, he sent overly optimistic reports to Washington on the state of the new government--reports that were to create a false image of the general situation in Russia. It is regrettable that the United States was not represented by a more able statesman during this critical period in Russo-American relations.

The Secretary of State was further informed of the state of affairs in Russia when on March 19, the Russian Ambassador to the United States, Boris Bakhmetev, presented the former with a letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pavel Miliukov. After citing the formation of the Provisional Government as the official government of Russia, Miliukov stated that Russia would "continue to respect the international undertakings made by the fallen regime and will redeem Russia's word." He professed friendship for the Allies, and declared that "democratic principles" would be the guideline for Russian foreign policy.<sup>13</sup>

On March 18, Francis made unofficial calls on Mikhail Rodzianko (who had been President of the Fourth Duma and Chairman of the Temporary Committee), and then on Miliukov. From conversations with these two leaders, Francis was further convinced of the responsible and democratic nature

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<sup>13</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 5; Doc. unnumbered, Bakhmetev to Lansing.

of the Provisional Government. He felt that the government had the support of the armed forces. In reality, however, the government could not claim the complete allegiance of these forces; for many of those who had not deserted or had been disaffected by the war, were openly siding with the Soviet.

It was customary each day for the representatives of Britain, France, and Italy to call together at the Russian Foreign Office. Having followed this practice with the Tsarist government, they continued to do so with the Provisional Government, thus according tacit, though not official recognition.

Sir George Buchanan, Britain's Ambassador to Russia and Dean of the diplomatic corps in Petrograd, had the recognitive power, but was waiting for the other Allied representatives to be accorded similar rights before acting. This procrastination set the stage for Francis' coup de théâtre.

He requested "authority to recognize the Provisional Government as first recognition is desirable from every viewpoint. . . . Our recognition will have a stupendous moral effect especially if given first."<sup>14</sup> To help persuade President Wilson and Lansing, Francis went on to give

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Ibid., I, 5; Doc. 1107, Francis to Lansing.

assurance that Russia would continue in the war. The army of democratic Russia would pursue the war more actively than had the army of Tsarist Russia. But the success of Russia's war effort depended on the success of the Revolution. American recognition would help in the latter instance. It is ironic and tragic that Francis was never able to ascertain just how greatly the continuation of the war endangered the success of the Revolution.

The reply came on March 20. Francis was instructed to contact the Provisional Government through Miliukov, and extend to it official recognition by the United States.<sup>15</sup>

Ambassador Francis called on Miliukov at 11 A.M., March 22, and extended recognition.<sup>16</sup> At Francis' suggestion, it was decided that the Council of Ministers of the Provisional Government would receive the American staff later in the afternoon for a full-uniform, formal ceremony. Thus at 4:30 P.M., the American Embassy staff in full dress and headed by Ambassador Francis, met for the first time with the Council. With a certain degree of dignity, Francis delivered the address:

Mr. President of the Council of Ministers, I have the honor, as American Ambassador and as representative of the Government of the United States accredited to Russia, to state in

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., I, 12; Doc. 1271, Lansing to Francis.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., I, 12; Doc. 1120, Francis to Lansing.

accordance with my instructions that the Government of the United States recognizes the new Government of Russia, and that I, as Ambassador of the United States, will be pleased to continue intercourse with Russia through the medium of the new Government. May the cordial relations existing between the two countries continue to obtain and may they prove mutually satisfactory and beneficial.

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A new era had begun; it would not last long.

This whole affair was rather amusing to Miliukov. Writing of it later he noted that "there was even a certain amount of rivalry in this. The ambassador from the United States, the dear Francis (who was never a diplomat), clearly wanted America to be the first to recognize the Russian revolution, and I willingly entered a little conspiracy with him. On March 9 [OS]<sup>18</sup>, Francis was received by the government in a solemn audience."

Our government's main concern, and the reason for prompt recognition and the extending of war loans to Russia, was not only to keep Russia in the war but also to intensify her prosecution of that war. But in pressing the Provisional Government to continue the war, the Allies helped assure the doom of the infant political structure. Russia's allies had

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Ibid., I, 12-13; Doc. 1124, Francis to Lansing. See also David R. Francis, Russia from the American Embassy (New York, 1922), 94-95, for a more descriptive report.

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Paul Miliukov, Political Memoirs, 1905-1917, ed. by Arthur P. Mendel and trans. by Carl Goldberg (Ann Arbor, 1967), 439.

quickly recognized the new government in the hope of strengthening and encouraging "the newcomer to their democratic ranks." The rather deluded Allied nations somehow "overlooked the import and duration of upheavals in their own history," and the time it took for revolution to stabilize and bear fruit.<sup>19</sup> How then could they have expected so much so soon from Russia?

In the early days of the Revolution and the beginning of the new Russo-American accord, one of the few clear pictures of events in Russia was provided by North Winship, the American Consul in Petrograd. His reports to the Secretary of State were long, detailed, and ominous. Winship was a pragmatic realist and did not share Francis' optimistic belief in the strength and chance for success of the Provisional Government. He recognized that the real power in Russia was in the hands of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. At the very time the Ambassador was urging recognition, loans, and credits to Russia, Winship was warning the State Department of the danger to the new government provided by food shortages in the cities and the constant Socialist-revolutionary agitation.

Francis recognized the Socialist menace but felt that the government was getting stronger daily. To help keep the Socialists in line, he suggested that Samuel Gompers, head

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McClelland, Woodrow Wilson and the Russian Revolution, 7; Kennan, Russia Leaves the War, 19.



of the American Federation of Labor, send a message to the Petrograd Soviet, advising that it support the Provisional Government. A message from Gompers could hardly have been of any importance to the Soviet, for though Gompers was a friend of Russian labor, he was ardently anti-socialist. The Soviet was well aware of this fact.

Among the other problems besetting the new government was finance. Francis informed the Department that Britain had and would continue to aid Russia, but that "assistance to meet pressing necessities would be very opportune and highly appreciated. Financial aid now from America would be a master stroke." <sup>20</sup> Beginning in April and May, American aid would prove somewhat generous, though of no real significance. It was both too late and too little.

American-Russian relations were placed on an Allied or war-time basis when on April 2, President Woodrow Wilson appeared before a joint session of Congress to ask for a declaration of war against Germany. It was in this speech that Wilson made his "league of honour" address, which excited Francis to the point that the Ambassador requested a copy for publication in Russia.

That segment of the President's speech is worth quoting in full because it demonstrates the effect of the Revolution

on him, and his basic lack of understanding of Russia and the Russian Revolution. Wilson declared:

Does not every American feel that assurance has been added to our hope for the future peace of the world by the wonderful and heartening things that have been happening within the last few weeks in Russia? Russia was known by those who knew it best to have been always democratic at heart, in all the vital habits of her thought, in all the intimate relationships of the people that spoke their natural instinct, their habitual attitude towards life. The autocracy that crowned the summit of her political structure, long as it had stood and terrible as was the reality of its power, was not in fact Russian in origin, character, or purpose; and now it has been shaken off and the great, generous Russian people have been added in all their naïve majesty and might to the forces that are fighting for freedom in the world, for justice, and for peace. Here is a fit partner for a league of honour. 21

This speech, as a work of literary art, was beautiful; as a work of political reality, it was an abomination. That Russia had always been "democratic at heart" demonstrates Wilson's idealistic naivete as well as his unfamiliarity with Russia and Russian history. 22 He failed to see that there was little understanding of democracy among the Russian masses, whose only "vital habits" was their intense

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Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., War and Peace: Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers (1917-1924) by Woodrow Wilson, Vol. I (New York, 1927), 12-13.

22

Fike, "A Study of Russian-American Relations During the Ominous Years, 1917-1921", 11.

23  
desire for land and bread.

Robert Lansing stated that "the Revolution was not so clearly perceived by the Washington government."<sup>24</sup> Even the President on March 20, had taken "sharp issue with Lansing's remarks that 'the revolution in Russia removed the last obstacle to viewing the war as one for democracy and against absolutism'. "<sup>25</sup>

The President knew little of Russia when he declared that the monarchy had not in fact been "Russian in origin, character, or purpose." The monarchy had been as vital and significant a part of Russian life as had the Orthodox Church, the icons, and the forests. The monarchy was indeed Russian. Much of this misplaced hope can be attributed to Francis and his overly optimistic (if not mistaken) reports to the State Department on the strength and chance of success of the Provisional Government.

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7. McClelland, Woodrow Wilson and the Russian Revolution,

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Robert Lansing, The War Memoirs of Robert Lansing, Secretary of State (New York, 1935), 330.

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Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters, Vol. VI, Facing War, 1915-1917 (New York, 1940), 501.

II

During World War I, one of the State Department's most arduous tasks was the formulation of American policy vis-a-vis Russia.<sup>1</sup> For though the precipitate American recognition of the Provisional Government and America's entry into the war had given a great deal of confidence and prestige to the new government,<sup>2</sup> it could not insure Russia's continuance in the war.

The primary means of achieving this was through financial aid. On April 3, Francis was instructed to confer with the Russian Minister of Finance, M. I. Tereshchenko, on aid and credit desired by the Provisional Government. The Departments of State and Treasury wanted a full report on the whole Russian financial aid question, and to know if the borrowed money would be used to buy supplies in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Three days later Francis replied. He had met twice with Tereshchenko and was informed that Russia would need

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<sup>1</sup> Julius Pratt, "Robert Lansing, Secretary of State," in The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy, Vol. X, ed. by Samuel Flagg Bemis (New York, 1958), 107.

<sup>2</sup> Fike, "A Study of Russian-American Relations During the Ominous Years, 1917-1921," 11.

<sup>3</sup> Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, III, 1; Doc. 1295, Lansing to Francis.

an estimated \$500,000,000 (the same amount given by the United States to Britain and France). To take less than what was offered the other Allies, contended the Minister, "would be injurious to the new government and humiliating to Russia."<sup>4</sup> The Ambassador pointed out Russia's great wealth in natural and raw material as an inducement to granting credit to that country. Francis gave his personal recommendation for such aid and credit.

The Secretary of the Treasury, William G. McAdoo, requested additional information on Russia's financial needs and her ability to pay back the loan. Lansing directed Francis also to impress upon the Russian government that, should a separate peace be made between that government and Germany, no aid whatsoever could be given to Russia.<sup>5</sup> Francis complied and cabled the requested information to Washington.

Between the time of America's entry into the war, and the failure of the Russian offensive in July (after which Russia was no longer a serious factor in the war), the intent of American policy vis-à-vis the Provisional Government was to keep Russia an active participant in the war. The State Department and Ambassador Francis somehow had forgotten that dissatisfaction with the war had been one of the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., III, 2; Doc. 1161, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., III, 3; Doc. 1313, Lansing to Francis.

main causes of the March Revolution.

Many disquietening rumors were reaching the State Department concerning a separate peace. On April 3, North Winship sent to Washington a copy of a proclamation made by the Petrograd Soviet to the peoples of the world. The Soviet had announced on March 27, "that the time has come to start a decisive struggle against the grasping ambitions of the governments of all countries; the time has come for the people to take into their own hands the decision of war and peace." It appealed to the German people to throw off the yoke of despotism. The proclamation ended with the famous cry: "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" Though Winship was alarmed by this statement, he did not view it or the Soviet as a distinct threat to the Provisional Government at that time.<sup>7</sup>

The message from Samuel Gompers to Russian labor (which Francis hoped would have a sobering effect on the recalcitrant Soviet) arrived in Petrograd on April 3. It was ignored by the Russian press. Another was sent and received publication only because of the personal efforts of the

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Peter G. Filene, Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 1917-1933 (Cambridge, 1967), 13.

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Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 18-20; Doc. 283, Winship to Lansing. For different translations of the Soviet proclamation, see Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1076-77; and Frank A. Golder, Documents of Russian History, 1914-1917 (New York, 1927), 325-26.

Ambassador. Compers welcomed the Russian laborers to the ranks of democracy, and urged them to support the Provisional Government and the war effort.<sup>8</sup> The effect on the workers was nil.

Ambassador Abram I. Elkus in Turkey cabled the Secretary of State April 4, reporting a current rumor among the Turks that Russia would soon quit the war. The previous day, Turkey's Minister of Foreign Affairs had stated "that Russian soldiers at the front had sent word to the Turkish soldiers that there was no use of further military operations as there would be peace within ten days."<sup>9</sup>

In Russia the conflict over continuation of the war raged between the Provisional Government and the Soviet. The problem was that:

- 1) The Provisional Government wanted a defensive war (a war to defend the homeland, but not to capture territory or wage an offensive against Germany), but peace through victory.
- 2) Miliukov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, felt that the revolution had not changed Russia's basic war aims. He wanted the Straits and Constantinople for Russia. 10

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Ibid., I, 68; Doc. 1292, Francis to Lansing.

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Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917, Supplement 2, Vol. I, 16; Doc. 2591, Elkus to Lansing. Hereafter cited as Foreign Relations, 1917.

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Alexander F. Kerensky, The Catastrophe: Kerensky's Own Story of the Russian Revolution (New York, 1927), 131; Wade, Russian Search for Peace, 10.

- 3) The Soviet wanted a defensive war, but a negotiated peace with no annexations and no contributions. <sup>11</sup>

Of these, the dilemma of the Provisional Government was the greatest. Though it was only a temporary government, it was recognized as the legitimate government of Russia. The new cabinet felt a certain responsibility towards the Allies, and this made it impossible--both morally and politically--to betray the West, which had befriended the new government, to Germany. <sup>12</sup> But the more the government pursued the war, and the longer it continued without revising Russia's war aims, the stronger became the opposition to it by the Soviet. <sup>13</sup>

On April 10, as the result of Soviet agitation, the Provisional Government issued a declaration of Russia's war aims. After heated debate, the cabinet had decided to reject Miliukov's policies for those of the Soviet. The message in part stated:

Leaving to the will of the people, in close union with our Allies, the final solution of all problems connected with the World War and its conclusion, the Provisional Government considers it to be its right and its duty to declare at this time that the purpose of free Russia is not domination over other nations, or seizure of their national possessions, or forcible

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Wade, Russian Search for Peace, 9-25 passim.

12

Max M. Laserson, The American Impact on Russia--Diplomatic and Ideological--1784-1917 (New York, 1950), 402.



occupation of foreign territories, but the establishment of stable peace on the basis of the self-determination of peoples.... But the Russian people will not permit their fatherland to emerge from this great struggle humiliated and sapped in its vital forces. <sup>13</sup>

Lansing met with the Russian Ambassador to the United States, Boris Bakhmetev, on April 11. The Ambassador stated that it was his belief that the Provisional Government would soon be overthrown by the "anarchists," who would then make a separate peace with Germany. At the time Lansing dismissed Bakhmetev's warning because of the latter's monarchist sentiments. Personal intercourse between the two men was obviously unpleasant for Lansing. Lansing saw him as barbaric, heartless, and indifferent to the plight of the common man and the tremendous war losses of Russia. He remarked that "the Ambassador was very much of a Tartar in his point of view as well as in appearance." <sup>14</sup>

That same day Lansing forwarded to President Wilson Telegram No. 1169, from Francis, which reported the rapidly deteriorating condition of the Russian navy, and the continued urging of peace by the socialist element. To counter socialist maneuvers, the Secretary of State suggested that the United States send a commission to Russia. One of the

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<sup>13</sup>  
Golder, Documents of Russian History, 329-31; Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1045-46; Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 21-24; Doc. 287, Winship to Lansing.

<sup>14</sup>  
Lansing, War Memoirs, 331-32.

members should be Samuel Gompers, whom Lansing believed would exert a decided influence on Russian labor.<sup>15</sup> Obviously the Secretary had not taken into consideration the fate of Gompers' telegram.

On instruction by the Department of State,<sup>16</sup> Francis met with Miliukov to discuss a rumor that the socialists in Russia and Germany were planning to hold a conference to determine a peace settlement. The Minister of Foreign Affairs assured Francis that there was no chance for a separate peace, and that the government was growing stronger daily.<sup>17</sup>

Convinced that it was in the best interest for their Russian brethren to support the Provisional Government and the war, certain prominent American Jews--Marshall, Morgenthau, Schiff, Strauss, and Rosenwald--sent a message to the Russian Jews. The Americans appealed to them to forego the idea of a separate peace which would mean "the ultimate restoration of an autocratic government and the degradation of the Russian Jews below even their former deplorable condition."<sup>18</sup> Though this message probably had little effect

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<sup>15</sup> Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Lansing Papers, 1914-1920, Vol. II (Washington, 1940), 325-26.

<sup>16</sup> Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. I, 19; Doc. 1308, Lansing to Francis.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., I, 23; Doc. 1192, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., I, 25; Doc. 1321, Lansing to Francis.

on the Russian Jews, the idea behind it was sound, for many Jews were active in Russian revolutionary circles.

On the following day, April 13, Francis informed the State Department that a problem had arisen. The Provisional Government's call for full prosecution of the war had precipitated a clash with the Soviet. This note, along with another on continuing prejudice against the Jews, were among the few ominous notes sent by the Ambassador in the early days of Russo-American relations. Francis did not cable the message, possibly out of fear that it might be picked up by the Russians. He did note that it should reach Washington by courier by May 25. It arrived June 26. One of the few meaningful notes sent by Francis, it took over two months for delivery. But Francis' lucidity came only in flashes, for in the same message he stated that it had been his "effort . . . to impress upon all the importance of a vigorous prosecution of the war and to subordinate thereto all questions as to the rights of races or the recognition of classes."<sup>19</sup> If the United States had the best interest--as many claimed--of Russian democracy at heart, Francis' order of priority should have been reversed. As far as the war was concerned, there was little compatibility between Western hopes and Russian needs. Most Russians were concerned

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Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 25-27; Doc. 703, Francis to Lansing.

with bread and land rather than war and democracy.<sup>20</sup> Without  
out peace, basic reforms such as the rights of races and the  
redistribution of land would not be readily forthcoming.<sup>21</sup>  
Without reforms, the revolution and the war effort were in  
serious jeopardy of collapsing.

If the message had been cabled, the Department would  
not have had to ask on April 19 for a report on "the general  
conditions in Russia." Lansing needed a report favorable  
enough to release to the press in order to allay American  
apprehension and speculation on the possibility of a separate  
peace.<sup>22</sup>

With these instructions in mind, the Ambassador con-  
sulted again with Miliukov, and once again was assured of the  
constant improvement of the general situation, and that there  
was no chance of a separate peace with the Central Powers.  
The Foreign Minister let it be known that he and the other  
members of the Provisional Government were beginning "to  
feel [that] such insinuations [were a] reflection on Russian  
honor." Again Francis added his personal assurance that

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7. McClelland, Woodrow Wilson and the Russian Revolution,

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Schuman, Russia Since 1917, 72.

22  
Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. I, 30-31; Doc.  
1139, Lansing to Francis.

23

there would be no separate peace.

On the evening of April 22, a socialist mob marched on the American Embassy to protest the death sentence given to one "Muni" in California. Mooney had been convicted of an anarchist bombing outrage. A troop of Cossacks diverted the demonstrators away from the Embassy. Later in the week Kerensky visited Francis to express his and the Provisional Government's regret over the incident.<sup>24</sup> In response to the "Muni Incident," President Wilson on May 11 cabled Governor William D. Stephens of California requesting a commutation of Mooney's sentence of death, or a temporary suspension of his execution. That same day the Governor replied favorably<sup>25</sup> to Wilson's request, and stayed the execution indefinitely.

There were many in Russia who tried to allay American fears, and establish a friendly, personal relationship between the peoples as well as the governments of Russia and the United States. On April 23, a public meeting was held in Petrograd by the Society for Promoting Friendly Relations between Russia and America. The meeting was addressed by Miliukov and Francis. Baron Rosen, Chairman of the Society,

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Ibid., I, 35; Doc. 1213, Francis to Lansing.

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Francis, Russia from the American Embassy, 101-02.

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Baker, Woodrow Wilson, Vol. VII, War Leader, April 6, 1917-February 28, 1918, 65-66.

cabled a resolution to Wilson, sending the President and "the American people . . . its fraternal greetings and expression of admiration for your constant upholding of the great principles of freedom and right. We are deeply convinced that our two countries which represent the greatest democracies of the world will remain closely united and work in common for the progress of humanity."<sup>26</sup>

On April 29, from 10 A.M. to noon, there was a demonstration of friendship before the American Embassy. Fifty thousand people, bands, and banners cheered the Embassy, the symbol of the United States. Francis made five speeches, and invited Rodzianko from the crowd to speak from the balcony.<sup>27</sup>

These events led Wilson to express his and America's appreciation for the Rosen note and the demonstration. Francis spoke for the President when he assured Baron Rosen of Wilson's "confident trust that new Russia, imbued with the same spirit of true democracy as is the United States, will remain firm in combating the armed forces of autocracy and insuring, by the final overthrow of military despotism, the lasting peace of the world and the universal acceptance of

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Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 32-33; Doc. unnumbered, Baron Rosen to Wilson. The same note appears in Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. I, as Doc. 1217.

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Ibid., I, 33; Doc. 1235, Francis to Lansing.

the principles of right and justice and the recognition of human freedom." <sup>28</sup> Even in our gratitude we could not help but caution Russia against a separate peace. Here again Wilson transferred American ideas and concepts to the Russian situation. They did not fit, for it was expected that Russian democracy would be but a model of the American system. <sup>29</sup>

As with any new government, especially in time of war, the need for money was tremendous. Because of the lack of stability and available domestic sources from which to draw funds, one of the few financial avenues open to the Provisional Government was foreign loans, aid, and credit. Russia turned in need to the United States. If our aid had been other than to merely keep Russia fighting, it might have helped the Provisional Government, and in turn the chance for the success of Russian democracy. But it was not, and it did not.

K. M. Onu, Russian Chargé to Washington, cabled Miliukov on April 8, to report his meeting with the Secretary of the Treasury. Onu reported that money for the loan would soon be available, but that McAdoo wanted assurances that the credit would be properly used. The Secretary further suggested

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<sup>28</sup>

Ibid., I, 33; Doc. 1362, Lansing to Francis.

<sup>29</sup>

Filene, Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 16.

that an Allied Committee be formed to keep watch over loans and prices, and that the Trans-Siberian railway be revamped to facilitate quick and easy delivery of supplies.<sup>30</sup>

In a report on Russian finance to the Secretary of the Treasury, Francis listed Russia's total funded debt at Rs. 37,000,000,000, most of which was in forty-nine year bonds. The Ambassador again cited Russia's natural riches as far exceeding the debt. A report of those assets was being prepared and would be forwarded when completed.<sup>31</sup>

By April 21, Congress had passed a war loan of seven billion dollars, earmarking three billion for the Allies. Lansing instructed Francis to inform the Russian government of this, but again to state emphatically that no aid would be forthcoming if a separate peace were signed.<sup>32</sup>

The same day, Onu transmitted to Lansing a message from Guchkov, Minister of the Navy, and Lvov concerning the defense of the Arctic coast of Russia. The Provisional Government requested three ships that had been ordered previously, seven armed patrol vessels, seven armed transports, and twenty armed trawlers, to be delivered not later

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Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 502-03.

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Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, III, 5; Doc. 1212, Francis to Lansing.

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Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1053.



than May. Guchkov further requested that the United States immediately send four destroyers and four armed patrol boats to combat German submarine activity in the area. The Arctic route was vital, for it was the "only one opened for supply ships to European Russia and the security of this route is of an enormous importance to the Allies' cause."<sup>33</sup> Because of the needs of our own coastal defense, the Department of the Navy could grant only the three ordered vessels and the patrol boats.<sup>34</sup>

Two ministers called on Francis April 29. They had heard reports that French and British missions to Washington had succeeded in obtaining a larger share of the war loan than Russia. Francis reported that "they are very fearful of our granting credit to England and say such policy would be [a] grievous mistake and would hurt Russian pride irreparably."<sup>35</sup> With this the Ambassador fully concurred.

The first credit was opened to the Provisional Government for \$100 million on May 3.<sup>36</sup> From the first the Russian's

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<sup>33</sup> Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. I, 32-33; Doc. unnumbered, Onu to Lansing.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., I, 52; Doc. 1370, Lansing to Francis.

<sup>35</sup> Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, III, 6-7; Doc. 1236, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>36</sup> Richard B. Fisher, "American Investments in Pre-Soviet Russia," The American Slavic and East European Review, Vol. VIII, 91; Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 502.

fear of receiving less than the other allies was well founded. The United States did not extend aid to Russia commensurate with that given to our other allies. This suggested that the State Department harbored doubts as to the stability of the Provisional Government.<sup>37</sup>

On May 1, the tenuous truce between the Provisional Government and the Soviet was shattered by Miliukov's statement of war aims. It was his comment on the April 9 declaration of war aims by the Provisional Government--the declaration which he had "let it be known . . . did not in any way bind him as minister of foreign affairs, in his policy."<sup>38</sup> Miliukov stated that the aims of the Provisional Government were identical with those expressed by President Wilson. He declared that it was "the aspiration of the entire nation to carry the world war to a decisive victory." He pledged the government to take a full share in prosecuting the war, even more so than did the Tsarist regime.<sup>39</sup>

The note was not so much different from the one issued April 9. But by this time "hostility to Miliukoff in the Soviet and in the Democratic Revolutionary circles . . . was

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>38</sup> Kerensky, Catastrophe, 132.

<sup>39</sup> Golder, Documents of Russian History, 333-34; Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1098; Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. I, 53-55; Doc. 343, Onu to Lansing.

so great that these elements were no longer able to consider and grasp the contents of the note."<sup>40</sup>

Miliukov's statement caused an uproar among the radical political elements in Petrograd. Crowds of soldiers and workers marched on May 3, demanding Miliukov's resignation. Many demanded immediate peace.

At 6:30 P.M. that day, Francis met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Guchkov and told them that unless they gave better evidence of a stable government, he would advise the American government to "make specific demands [on Russia] before furnishing credit or supplies; that if [the] present Government resigned or failed to assert itself [he] would [advise] . . . the Government to withhold all support."<sup>41</sup>

Later that night the demonstrations took a different tone as supporters of the government began to outnumber its opponents. Francis blamed the whole affair on Lenin, whom he labeled a German agent.<sup>42</sup>

The demonstrations reached such a dangerous level that on May 4, the Soviet urged all workmen and soldiers to cease their agitating, put away their guns, and go home. In the

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Kerensky, Catastrophe, 135.

41

Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 40; Doc. 1248, Francis to Lansing; Francis, Russia from the American Embassy, 110.

42

Francis, Russia from the American Embassy, 113.

name of the revolution it begged calm, order, and discipline. <sup>43</sup>

That same day, the Provisional Government issued a statement on the Minister of Foreign Affairs' message. The government agreed with Miliukov's call for victory, but stood by its declaration of April 9. <sup>44</sup> The note was joyously proclaimed by the Soviet, which was relieved that the crisis had passed. <sup>45</sup>

Another of the myriad of messages from Samuel Gompers was sent to Russia on May 7. Francis forwarded the note unofficially to the Soviet, and then released it to the press. Gompers took his usual line of assuring the Russian workers of American labor's support for the war effort. He labeled peace advocates as "tools of the Kaiser." <sup>46</sup> Gompers, like so many other Americans, was totally out of touch with the realities of the Russian situation. The message was totally ignored by the Soviet and the socialist press. Even the

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<sup>43</sup>

G. K. Cumming and Walter W. Pettit, eds., Russian-American Relations, March, 1917-March, 1920: Documents and Papers (New York, 1920), 13-14; Golder, Documents of Russian History, 335-36.

<sup>44</sup>

Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1100; Golder, Documents of Russian History, 336; Cumming and Pettit, Russian-American Relations, 12-13.

<sup>45</sup>

Golder, Documents of Russian History, 336-37; Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1100-01.

<sup>46</sup>

Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. I, 57-58; Doc. 1385, Lansing to Francis; Cumming and Pettit, Russian-American Relations, 14-16.

liberal papers of Petrograd attached so little importance to it that they either did not print it, or printed it without comment. North Winship wrote the epitaph of such messages when he noted that they elicited the approval only of "the people of the middle classes."<sup>47</sup>

By this time, messages from America were of little use to the Provisional Government. The ability of the cabinet to govern was lessened because the Ministers of the government "evoked neither fear nor respect from the people. They could therefore command neither confidence nor obedience."<sup>48</sup>

The events of May 3 led five days later to a cabinet crisis within the Provisional Government. Determined to do something about Miliukov, the cabinet asked him to resign his post, and offered him the Ministry of Education. He refused and resigned from the cabinet. Kerensky threatened to resign unless the Soviet took an active part in the governing of Russia. Guchkov resigned his post as Minister of War and Navy. The "romantic period" of the Provisional Government had come to an end.<sup>49</sup>

By May 18, a coalition cabinet had been formed. Kerensky

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Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 55; Doc. 304,  
Winship to Lansing.

48

Schuman, Russia Since 1917, 72.

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Kerensky, Catastrophe, 137; Foreign Relations, 1918,  
Russia, I, 52-53; Doc. 1286, Francis to Lansing.

was given the portfolio for the Ministry of War, Tereshchenko that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Tseretelli became the new Minister of Posts.<sup>50</sup> The socialists now had to share with the liberals the responsibility for governing Russia.

On May 19, Francis spoke at a public meeting in the circus auditorium in Petrograd. His address was well received. The Ambassador stated that America did not believe that Russia would desert the Allies, and that the new coalition ministry would wage more aggressive warfare.<sup>51</sup>

The new Minister of Foreign Affairs cabled Lansing on May 21. After acknowledging Russia's admiration for American democracy, he stated that:

Like the United States, emancipated Russia is not seeking conquest or any covetous end in the present contest. The war is carried on to secure the freedom of nations and achieve universal lasting peace effectively guaranteed against all later attack. I am glad to find that those lofty principles which were so eloquently formulated in America are striking a warm unanimous echo in free Russia, now mistress of her destinies.<sup>52</sup>

President Wilson sent to Francis on May 22 a statement of America's war aims, to be released to the Russian press.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 66; Doc. 1289, Francis to Lansing; Doc. 306, Winship to Lansing.

<sup>51</sup>  
Ibid., I, 73; Doc. 1299, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>52</sup>  
Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1106.

<sup>53</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. I, 71-73; Doc. 1426, Lansing to Francis.

What followed was a rather confusing and possibly dangerous affair. After a great deal of procrastination by the Provisional Government and attempts to alter the note, the Minister of Foreign Affairs agreed to publish Wilson's message.<sup>54</sup>

On the morning of June 10, the President's message was published without alteration in Russia and America. Wilson declared that:

The position of America in this war is so clearly avowed that no man can be excused for mistaking it. She seeks no material profit or aggrandizement of any kind. She is fighting for no advantage or selfish object of her own, but for the liberation of peoples everywhere from the aggressions of autocratic force. 55

The Provisional Government had objected to Wilson's remarks on readjustments, and the clause: "The war has begun to go against Germany."<sup>56</sup> But Wilson would not allow the message to be altered, and the Provisional Government relented.

The story of the remaining American relations with the first Provisional Government under the premiership of Lvov is told in the record of the special missions sent to Russia by America, and Bakhmetev mission to Washington.

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<sup>54</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 93-94; Doc. 1369,  
Francis to Lansing.

<sup>55</sup>  
Baker and Dodd, War and Peace, 49-51.

<sup>56</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 87-88; Doc. 1354,  
Francis to Lansing.

III

In the summer of 1917, the United States sent two official missions to Russia and gave its tacit approval for a third. Russia sent one mission to America in the form of an Extraordinary Embassy. Missions from Italy, France, and Britain made their way to America, but we dispatched missions only to Russia.

President Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing grew increasingly aware of the absence of a strong American representative in Petrograd. But rather than replace Ambassador Francis, the State Department sent scores of amateur diplomats to further cloud a darkened stage.<sup>1</sup> One cannot escape the thought that the State Department must have realized that it was sending missions to a weak and unstable Russia.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Root Mission

Early in April, Lansing and Wilson discussed the idea of

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<sup>1</sup> William Hale concluded that the decision to send missions to Russia resulted in America descending upon Petrograd "with such a cloud of assorted trouble shooters, visiting firemen, adventurers, and idealists as had never before been seen in the relations between civilized states--each of them independent of the next, and all of them amateur." William Harlan Hale, "When the Red Storm Broke," in America and Russia: A Century and a Half of Dramatic Encounters, ed. by Oliver Jensen (New York, 1962), 143.

<sup>2</sup>

Bacon, "Russian-American Relations, 1917-1921," 27.



sending a commission to Russia. Both men were concerned over the uncertain Russian situation. It was hoped that an American mission would bolster the confidence and authority of the Provisional Government and persuade Russia to remain in the war.<sup>3</sup> One of the major problems in organizing a mission was the selection of the proper personnel.<sup>4</sup>

Several men were suggested to head and man the mission. George Kennan, the famous adventurer, lecturer, and author of the two volume exposé Siberia and the Exile System (1891), though a prime candidate, was passed over because of advanced age. Kennan would probably have made a very good mission leader due to his knowledge of Russia and his devotion to the liberal element in Russia.<sup>5</sup> As it turned out, the man chosen to head the mission was but a few years younger than George Kennan.

Colonel Edward M. House, special representative of and advisor to the President, suggested sending Theodore Roosevelt.

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<sup>3</sup> Brenda Kurtz Shelton, "President Wilson and the Russian Revolution," in University of Buffalo Studies, XXIII, 19.

<sup>4</sup> Lansing Papers, II, 326. Wilson wanted "men of large view, tested direction, and a sympathetic appreciation of just what it is they have been sent over for...and it is necessary...that they look the part." He felt it necessary to avoid any semblance of partisanship in the selection.

<sup>5</sup> Laserson, American Impact on Russia, 412, 415-16.

In a fit of extreme indignation, Wilson rejected that proposal.<sup>6</sup> House also suggested sending a prominent member of the Jewish community, Oscar Straus, and labor leader Samuel Gompers.<sup>7</sup>

Lansing on April 14, instructed Francis to ascertain from Miliukov if a good-will mission from the United States would be acceptable to the Provisional Government, and if it would be objectionable if a Jew were a member of the mission.<sup>8</sup> Francis replied that Miliukov had no objections. The Ambassador favored a commission but admonished that "such a commission should be very discreet and give attention first and mainly to successful prosecution of war, exercising care in giving expression to views concerning internal affairs."<sup>9</sup>

With the approval of the Provisional Government, Wilson and Lansing went ahead with the task of manning the commission. They wanted someone who could work with and influence the socialists in Petrograd. Wilson stressed, however, that an American socialist must not be a member of the mission. The President approached Samuel Gompers even though he knew the

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<sup>6</sup> Philip C. Jessup, Elihu Root, Vol. II, 1905-1937 (New York, 1938), 357; Baker, Woodrow Wilson, VII, 69.

<sup>7</sup> Lansing Papers, II, 326.

<sup>8</sup> Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 107; Doc. 1315, Lansing to Francis.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., I, 107; Doc. 1202, Francis to Lansing.

labor leader to be unpopular with the Russian socialists.<sup>10</sup>  
Gompers declined to serve on the commission because of prior commitments in America. He suggested that James Duncan, first vice-president of the American Federation of Labor, go instead. Wilson consented, and Duncan became the representative of American labor on the commission to Russia.<sup>11</sup>

William G. McAdoo nominated Elihu Root, a former Secretary of State and a prominent Republican, to lead the commission. Wilson was in favor of McAdoo's nominee mainly because of the President's desire to avoid sending only Democrats to Russia, and because it offered him an opportunity to get one of his harshest critics out of the United States for awhile. Lansing had a conference with Root on April 19<sup>12</sup> and found him a suitable man for the task.

Soon after Root was chosen, the other appointments were filled. The "envoys extraordinary of the United States on special diplomatic mission" were: industrialist Charles R. Crane, Dr. John R. Mott of the Y. M. C. A., businessman Cyrus McCormick, New York banker and financier S. R. Bertron, James Duncan of the American Federation of Labor, author Charles

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<sup>10</sup>  
Lansing Papers, II, 327.

<sup>11</sup>  
Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography, II (New York, 1925), 398.

<sup>12</sup>  
Lansing Papers, II, 327.

Russel, Major General Hugh Scott, and Rear Admiral James H. Glennon.<sup>13</sup> The mission included a twenty-man staff. Root and his fellow commissioners were of a similar conservative character.<sup>14</sup>

The makeup of the mission and the mission itself revealed Wilson's fundamental lack of insight into the Russian problem.<sup>15</sup> Although the despatches of North Winship in Petrograd and Consul-General Maddin Summers in Moscow warned of the waning power of the Provisional Government, and of the growing power of the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky, Wilson chose to base his policy on the recommendations of Ambassador Francis.<sup>16</sup> As his confidence in Francis subsided, the President began to rely on his own circle for advice on the Russian problem. This circle included House, Crane, McAdoo, McCormick, Lansing, Crane, and Professor Samuel N. Harper of the University of Chicago.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., II, 326-27, 337; Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 109; Doc. 1396, Lansing to Francis.

<sup>14</sup> Shelton, "President Wilson and the Russian Revolution," 112-13.

<sup>15</sup> William Appleman Williams, American-Russian Relations, 1781-1947 (New York, 1952), 87.

<sup>16</sup> Foster Rhea Dulles, The Road to Teheran: The Story of Russia and America, 1781-1943 (Princeton, 1944), 104.

<sup>17</sup> Williams, American-Russian Relations, 86.

As soon as it was announced that Root would become the mission's ambassador extraordinary, complaints began to pour into Washington.<sup>18</sup> Rabbi Steven S. Wise objected to the appointment of Root because Root had opposed Russian Jewish immigration to America during his tenure as Secretary of State. Wilson wrote to Wise on April 28, and stood by his appointee.<sup>19</sup>

American socialists denounced Root as a capitalist and a reactionary. Morris Hillquit, International Secretary for the Socialist Party in the United States, declared on May 1 that the Russian socialists would be promptly informed of Root's character, and of the opposition of the American socialists to Elihu Root.<sup>20</sup>

Wilson had wanted the commission to be representative of nearly every major facet of American life. Obviously it was not. One important omission was that a woman was not included on the mission. This was brought to the President's attention by suffragette Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt. Wilson replied that

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According to Richard W. Leopold, one of Root's biographers, "the President was apparently not prepared for these attacks; and although he stuck by his choice, he probably regretted it even before Root departed." Richard W. Leopold, Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition (Boston, 1954), 118.

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Baker, Woodrow Wilson, VII, 42.

20

New York Times, May 2, 1917.

though he was in favor of women's rights, it was not possible to send a woman to Russia at that time.<sup>21</sup>

The New Republic found nothing in Root's background to make him acceptable to the powerful socialist element in Russia. Indeed, his antecedents made it unwise for him to head a mission to unstable Petrograd. The journal urged Wilson to reconsider the appointment.<sup>22</sup>

Root did not escape the notice and criticism of the Russian press. Journalist V. Kerzhentsev, in an article in Lietopis, the radical socialist review, wrote that "it just so happens that every reactionary movement has found in him [Root] a defender and apologist. Little wonder, then that the reactionary mission of the United States to Russia was entrusted to this particular statesman."<sup>23</sup>

Not all of the comments on Root were unfavorable, however. Most major American newspapers praised Wilson's appointee. In an editorial, the New York Times declared that:

We give the highest possible proof of the depth and sincerity of our interest in the welfare of the new government of Russia by sending to Petrograd...a statesman of the eminence of Elihu

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105. Baker, Woodrow Wilson, VII, 59; Dulles, Road to Teheran,

22  
New Republic, May 5, 1917.

23  
Quoted in Laserson, American Impact on Russia, 415.

Root.... It may be that the officers of the Provisional Government in Petrograd will be glad to avail themselves of Mr. Root's stores of wisdom, of knowledge, and of experience. They could seek advice from no better source. 24

Root was not without a good deal of personal skepticism about heading such a mission to Russia. 25 Though he was not eager to go to Russia, he felt that he had to do so. He had been a strong advocate for war against Germany. Just as civilians had volunteered or were drafted by the army, Root considered himself "drafted" to the service of his country. He had been a strong opponent of Wilson before the war; now he felt it his duty to unite behind the President. 26 But Root later told Taft that Wilson "never would have appointed me if I had not been seventy-three years of age." 27

On May 1, Francis informed the Provisional Government of the makeup of the Root Commission. The Ambassador was instructed by Lansing to state that:

It is the primary purpose of this commission to convey to the Russian Government the friendship and good will of this nation.... The commission

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New York Times, April 28, 1917.

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Root wrote to his friend William Howard Taft on April 30, declaring that "you have no idea how I hate it, but...there can be no question of going." Jessup, Elihu Root, II, 356.

26

Leopold, Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition, 117.

27

Jessup, Elihu Root, II, 355.

will further be charged with the duty of finding the most efficient means of cooperating with the Russian Government in the prosecution of the war.<sup>28</sup>

Root was quite concerned when he learned that a railroad mission was also being sent to Russia. In hope of avoiding possible confusion and duplication of effort, he suggested to Lansing that the Stevens Railway Commission be placed under the suzerainty of the Root Mission.<sup>29</sup> The Secretary of State, anxious to avoid having three separate bodies represent the United States in Russia, brought the matter to Wilson's attention.<sup>30</sup>

The President met with mission delegate S. R. Bertron on May 7, to correct Root's misconceptions as to the purpose of the Stevens Railway Commission. He informed Bertron that the two missions bore no resemblance. Root was to head an essentially political diplomatic mission, whereas John F. Stevens and his mission were going to Russia to lend advisory and material aid to the Russian railway system. The President felt that there was no reason to grant Root's request.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. I, 50-51; Doc. 1366, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>29</sup> Lansing Papers, II, 329.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., II, 330.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., II, 331, 336-37. The President's reply was "one of the factors which persuaded Root that Wilson did not intend his Mission to have much importance." Jessup, Elihu Root, II, 359.



The Root Mission sailed from Seattle aboard the S. S. Buffalo on May 20 and arrived at Vladivostok on June 3. In order to keep Root informed on the Russian situation, Francis wired news to the Ambassador Extraordinary each day of the voyage.<sup>32</sup> To sweeten the long trip, Root had among his personal provisions 250 fine cigars and two cases of Haig & Haig.<sup>33</sup>

When the mission arrived in Vladivostok, it was greeted first by a delegation from the local Soviet and later by officials of the Provisional Government. The former Tsar's own train carried the Americans to Petrograd. Along the way Root had the opportunity to visit a peasant village. His patrician demeanor showed best when he remarked: "I am a firm believer in democracy, but I do not like filth." The mission stayed at the Winter Palace; Root occupied Catherine the Great's suite.<sup>34</sup>

At the time of the formation of the Root Mission, Lansing suggested that Professor Samuel Harper, an expert on Russia from the University of Chicago, be made a formal member. But on second thoughts it was decided that Harper could serve the mission best in an unofficial capacity. In that way he

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<sup>32</sup> Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 110; Doc. 1425, Lansing to Francis.

<sup>33</sup> Jessup, Elihu Root, II, 360.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., II, 361.

could meet with persons whom the mission could not officially receive. He briefed the members of the Root Mission before they left for Russia, just as he had briefed Ambassador David Francis some years before.

35

Early in the summer of 1917, he returned to Russia. On his way to Russia he picked up boxes of food in Stockholm, Sweden, for the American Embassy in Petrograd. By this time the food shortage in the Russian capital was becoming more acute with each passing day. While in Russia he served as interpreter for the mission, followed and analyzed current political trends, and often visited the Bolshevik headquarters. Each day he briefed the Ambassador at breakfast, and then the members of the mission.

36

Samuel Harper's role in American relations with the Provisional Government was quite important. He served as an indirect advisor to the President; he helped select members of the Root Mission, and served that and other missions in Russia. His most important duty was self-appointed. Harper felt that if the Provisional Government were to succeed, it needed the full support of the United States. To insure that support, he attempted to "combat uninformed skepticism" in

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Paul V. Harper, ed., The Russia I Believe In: The Memoirs of Samuel N. Harper, 1902-1941 (Chicago, 1945), 98.

36

Ibid., 98.

America.<sup>37</sup> In doing so, Harper hoped to create a false impression as to the stability of the Russian government by screening any references of that country's inner weakness<sup>38</sup> from the American public.

On the evening of June 15, the Root Mission was presented to the Council of Ministers of the Provisional Government. "Permit me to introduce," the Ambassador stated, "the distinguished chairman of the Mission, the Honorable Elihu Root, former Secretary of War, former Secretary of State, former Senator of the United States, always a true American."<sup>39</sup>

After this grandiloquent introduction, Root addressed the Council. His speech was full of praise for the new Russian democracy and promises of cooperation between the oldest and the newest of the democratic nations. He quoted extensively from Wilson's war message to Congress. The war was a main tenet of his speech. In part Root stated:

America sends another message to Russia; that we are going to fight and have already begun to fight for your freedom equally with our own and we ask you to fight for our freedom equally with yours. We would make your cause ours and the mutual

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, American-Russian Relations, 87.

<sup>39</sup> Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 117; Doc. 1400, Francis to Lansing.

helpfulness of firm alliance make sure the vic-<sup>40</sup>  
tory over our common foe.

In the same vein were the thirteen other speeches delivered by Root in Petrograd and Moscow. He constantly warned his audiences and the Provisional Government of the dangers inherent in a separate peace with Germany.<sup>41</sup>

While Root made speeches, Mott conversed with dignitaries of the Church and visited Roumania and the front with General Scott. Admiral Glennon paid a visit to the Baltic and Black Sea fleets. Only Russel and Crane seemed to grasp the realities of the Russian problem as they closely scrutinized the Bolsheviks.<sup>42</sup> Completely ignoring the Soviet as well as the Bolsheviks, the other members of the mission moved in a circle of "bourgeois liberalism." They talked<sup>43</sup> mainly with those who held ideas similar to their own. It is little wonder then that the mission returned to Washington enamored of Kerensky and bespeaking the glories and strength of the Provisional Government. They were not fooled,

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Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott, eds., The United States and the War, the Mission to Russia: Political Addresses by Elihu Root (Cambridge, 1918), 98-101.

41

Root was limited by "strict instructions not even to discuss the one thing dearest to the Russian heart--peace." Bacon, "Russian-American Relations, 1917-1921," 31-32.

42

Filene, Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 18.

43

Dulles, Road to Teheran, 105.

as some writers later contended--they just did not see past their own preconceptions.<sup>44</sup>

The Root Mission produced only two meaningful results. The Baltic Fleet and the Russian army in Finland refused to accept Russian paper money as their pay. In order to pay the troops and avert a mass mutiny of Russia's northern forces, Root suggested that the United States grant an immediate credit of \$75,000,000 to Russia. The additional loan was granted on the following day.<sup>45</sup>

There was little or no publicity of the Root Mission in the Russian press. Root's speeches were rarely printed or even received comment. Root, convinced of the value of propaganda for spreading American influence in Russia, requested on June 17 that in order to combat German propaganda, America should wage a battle for the minds of the Russians. He requested \$100,000, and ultimately \$5,000,000 to carry out the program. He needed \$30,000 immediately, and the British

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44

Laserson disagreed with Jessup's contention that the mission was foredoomed to failure. Laserson stated that a "mission that was more familiar with conditions and more sympathetic with the philosophy of the provisional government could have produced more constructive results." Laserson, American Impact on Russia, 414. It is doubtful, however, that a more liberal or a less bourgeois membership could have had more of an effect on the Russian political situation. The position of the radicals was too strong to be shaken by such a mission no matter what its makeup. Dulles, Road to Teheran, 105.

45

Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, III, 11; Doc. 15, Root to Lansing.

Embassy in Petrograd offered to lend it to him.

This gesture rather embarrassed Root, and his pride in the United States kept him from accepting. Together with Bertron and Ambassador Francis, he guaranteed a loan of \$30,000 from the Petrograd branch of the National City Bank. Wilson approved the expenditure, but held back on affecting the rest of the recommendation. Wilson was either convinced of the inadvisability of such a propaganda campaign, or he felt that Russia was already lost, for he approved only \$5,000 for an "educational campaign," and that was not granted until late August.<sup>46</sup>

The mission left Petrograd on July 9 and sailed for home on July 21. After Root's return to Washington, Wilson met with him and the mission only once. Wilson was never again to call on Root for consultation on the Russian problem.<sup>47</sup> Root deeply resented this cavalier treatment, especially as the President did not try to hide his disappointment in the mission.<sup>48</sup>

While Jessup was writing the biography of Root, Root confided in the author that "Wilson didn't want to accomplish anything. It was a grand-stand play. He wanted to show his

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<sup>46</sup> Jessup, Elihu Root, II, 364-66.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., II, 368.

<sup>48</sup> Laserson, American Impact on Russia, 418.

sympathy for the Russian Revolution. When we delivered his message and made our speeches, he was satisfied; that's all he wanted."<sup>49</sup>

The Root Mission had little impact on American-Russian relations in 1917. Perhaps the most telling comment on the Root Mission was made by Raymond Robbins in a letter to Theodore Roosevelt on August 24, 1918. Robbins declared that "Root in revolutionary Russia was as welcome as the small pox, and occasioned as much enthusiasm as would be aroused by an Orangeman leading a popular parade in Dublin."<sup>50</sup>

#### The Bakhmetev Mission

The Provisional Government decided on April 25 to send a mission to the United States. It did so for three reasons: to show its gratitude for America's recognition of the new government, to represent Russia in Washington (as were similar missions from Britain, France, and Italy representing their respective countries), and to use the mission as a replacement for the Russian Embassy in Washington headed by George Bakhmetev.

On April 28, Francis informed the State Department of the Provisional Government's decision to send the mission.

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Jessup, Elihu Root, II, 356.

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Ibid., II, 366.

It was to be headed by Boris Bakhmetev,<sup>51</sup> who had been Assistant Minister of Trade and Industry. Bakhmetev would travel under the rank of ambassador.<sup>52</sup> Lansing replied that such a mission would be joyously received in Washington and urged that it be sent as soon as possible.<sup>53</sup>

Konstantin Nabokov, Russian Charge d'Affaires in London, had written Miliukov concerning "the pitiful state of our present representation in America." The Ambassador in Washington was not representing Russia in a capable manner. An energetic, well informed person was needed immediately to head the Embassy in Washington, and such a man was desired by England and America, as well as Russia.<sup>54</sup>

K. M. Onu discussed the impending mission with Lansing on May 7. Two days later he transmitted a memorandum from the Provisional Government to the Secretary. The note stated that "the object of the Special Mission is to express the gratitude of the Provisional Russian Government for the initiative taken by the great Allied Republic in the official recognition of the democratic regime . . . in Russia." The mission was an Extraordinary Embassy empowered with the right

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Boris Bakhmetev was of no relation to George Bakhmetev.

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Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 153-54; Doc. 1231, Francis to Lansing.

53

Ibid., I, 154; Doc. 1367, Lansing to Francis.

54

Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 1053-54.



to negotiate directly with the American government on financial, diplomatic, military, and railway matters.<sup>55</sup> Professor J. V. Lomonosov was the representative of the Ministry of Ways of Communication. It was his duty to acquire the badly needed railway supplies and rolling stock for Russia.<sup>56</sup>

The mission reached Seattle on June 15, and Washington on June 19. Bakhmetev held his first American news conference on Thursday, June 21, in Washington, D. C. He outlined the new military and political programs of Russia. The Ambassador pledged Russia's continued presence in the war and rejected all mention of a separate peace. Bakhmetev, who spoke fluent English, concluded his address stating that:

New Russia in full accord with the motives which impelled the United States to enter the war, is striving to destroy tyranny, to establish peace on a secure and permanent foundation and to make the world safe for democracy.<sup>57</sup>

On Saturday the Bakhmetev Mission was received by the House of Representatives. After receiving an "uproarious reception," Bakhmetev again gave assurances that the "Provisional Government is laying all endeavor to reorganize and

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<sup>55</sup> Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 154-55; Doc. 354,  
Onu to Lansing.

<sup>56</sup> Laserson, American Impact on Russia, 410.

<sup>57</sup> New York Times, June 22, 1917.

fortify the army for action in common with the allies."<sup>58</sup>

The mission was received by the Senate on June 26. Ambassador Bakhmetev spoke and was greeted with an enthusiasm matching that displayed by the House three days earlier. His speech followed a format similar to that of his two previous addresses. He remarked that "Russia wants the world to be safe for democracy. To make it safe means to have democracy rule the world."<sup>59</sup>

It is readily apparent that the actions of both houses of Congress demonstrated the high regard held by American legislators for the Russian experiment with democracy. Nowhere could there be heard a dissenting voice. A pro-Russian resolution was passed in the Senate following Bakhmetev's<sup>60</sup> speech.

The Bakhmetev Mission was converted into a regular embassy when on July 5, Boris Bakhmetev presented his credentials to President Wilson. Accepting the new Ambassador's letters of credence, Wilson stated that the Ambassador and Russia could "count on the steadfast friendship of the Government of the United States and its cooperation in all

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<sup>58</sup>  
Ibid., June 24, 1917.

<sup>59</sup>  
Ibid., June 27, 1917.

<sup>60</sup>  
Ira S. Cohen, "Congressional Attitudes towards the Soviet Union, 1917-1941," (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1955), 3-4.

61  
desired appropriate directions."

Claude Edwin Fike wrote that the "accomplishment [of] the Russian commission was no more noteworthy than the Root commission." <sup>62</sup> Fike's assessment of the mission was correct as far as it went. The mission was really meant to be nothing more than a replacement for the Russian Embassy then in Washington. Boris Bakhmetev became the Russian Ambassador to the United States and retained that difficult post throughout the troubled years of 1917-1922.

#### The Stevens Railway Commission

One of the most serious problems which confronted the Provisional Government was the deplorable state of Russia's railways. The railroads had never been adequate for Russia's needs. Now in time of war they were in such bad shape as to be almost useless. Vital military supplies lay in Vladivostok and Archangel awaiting transport to European Russia and the front. Food desperately needed by the starving cities could not be shipped because of inadequate and poorly managed railway facilities. A strong competent manager was needed. Britain suggested to the Provisional Government that Vladivostok be given up to the control of the United States, and

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Baker and Dodd, War and Peace, 71-72.

62

Fike, "A Study of Russian American Relations During the Ominous Years, 1917-1921," 14.

Archangel to Britain.<sup>63</sup> This suggestion was summarily dismissed by the Russians.<sup>64</sup>

There were many recommendations for sending railroad experts to Russia to help alleviate the problems posed by the Russian railway system. In an address to the Council of National Defense, Stanley Washburn suggested that such a commission would be welcomed by the Provisional Government. Daniel Willard, President of the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense, agreed and advised sending a railroad mission to analyze the needs of Russia's railways and make recommendations for filling those needs.<sup>65</sup>

Acting on the Council's suggestions, Lansing instructed Francis to feel out the Provisional Government and determine whether it would "welcome an inspection of the Trans-Siberian Railroad by six American railroad experts with a view to making a report for the use of the Russian Government as to how the efficiency of the railroad can be increased, with possible suggestions as to equipment and expert assistance from America."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 28; Doc. 1211, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., III, 7; Doc. 1236, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., III, 183; Doc. unnumbered, Baker to Lansing.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., III, 184; Doc. 1288, Lansing to Francis.

The Ambassador made the offer on April 2. The Russian government agreed, though with some apparent reluctance.<sup>67</sup> Verbal approval was given by Miliukov on April 9, but official written permission was delayed for a short while.<sup>68</sup> It is possible that the Provisional Government delayed in hopes that the United States would sense the former's reluctance and diplomatically withdraw the offer.

Francis advised the State Department that Russia had competent railway engineers and operators, and that Russia's railroad difficulties did not stem from them but from the government and from inadequate facilities.<sup>69</sup> That statement was not quite correct. For though the Russian railway men were competent, they were also the most radical and recalcitrant of all the Russian labor force. They could and did impede railway service at will.<sup>70</sup>

Acting on suggestions from several members of the cabinet, Wilson named John F. Stevens to head the railway commission to Russia. Stevens had been the chief planner and

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Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 701.

68

Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, III, 184; Doc. 1167, Francis to Lansing.

69

Ibid., III, 185; Doc. 1179, Francis to Lansing.

70

W. A. Augustine, "Russia's Railwaymen, July-October, 1917," in American Slavic and East European Review, Vol. XXIV, 666.

engineer of the Panama Canal project, and had been instrumental in laying the Great Northern Railroad line across the Rocky Mountains.<sup>71</sup> No better railroad man could have been found to rejuvenate the Russian railways. The commission included George Gibbs, formerly of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Henry Miller of the Wabash Railroad, John E. Greiner of the Baltimore and Ohio, W. L. Darling, and a staff of five clerks and secretaries. The Stevens Commission sailed from Vancouver on May 14.<sup>72</sup>

On June 12, the mission reached Vladivostok where they were met by M. Mitinski, a representative of the Ministry of Ways of Communication. Mitinski transferred control of the marshaling yards and terminals at Vladivostok to Stevens. The commission then traveled across Russia to Petrograd on the special train that had just taken Bakhmetev to Vladivostok.

Ambassador Francis provided the Stevens Commission with two interpreters: Mr. Eugene Prince and Professor Frank A. Golder. Golder was in Russia preparing a book on American-Russian relations.<sup>73</sup>

Stevens began to press American railroad car and locomotive manufacturers for a rapid filling of Russia's orders

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<sup>71</sup> Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, III, 189; Doc. 1372, Lansing to Francis.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., III, 191; Doc. 1404, Lansing to Francis.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., III, 190; Doc. 744, Francis to Lansing.

of rolling stock. He arranged for plants to be built in Vladivostok to assemble the locomotives when they arrived.

Early in July, Stevens was hospitalized with erysipelas. This illness impaired his progress throughout the remainder of his stay in Russia. Henry Miller assumed the role of acting chairman.<sup>74</sup> Though hospitalized, Stevens continued to press for more American aid to Russia's railways.

Among Stevens' many ideas for improving the Russian railways was a plan to have a corps of 129 technical and engineering specialists sent from America to train Russian personnel in the techniques of American operation. The corps was to be broken down into several smaller units and distributed at various points along the route of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. The Bolshevik Revolution had overtaken Russia before the corps could be sent.

By August, the Stevens Commission had begun to dissolve. Miller and several other members returned to the United States. Stevens remained in Russia. Despite the uncooperative nature of the Ministry of Ways of Communication--which felt that the commission's only value was in its recommendations for aid to Russia--the Stevens Commission succeeded in increasing by five times the capacity for traffic along the Siberian

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74

Ibid., III, 192; Doc. unnumbered, Francis to Lansing.

75  
railway system.

### The Red Cross Commission

Perhaps the most egregious of the American missions to Russia was the Red Cross Commission. The mission was made up of various specialists with assimilated military titles and uniforms. The primary members of the mission were: Raymond Robins, Dr. J. D. McCarthy, E. A. Winslow, and Dr. George C. Whipple, experts in the fields of sanitation and public health; William S. Thayer and Dr. Wilber Post, specialists in medical problems; Harold H. Swift and Henry C. Sherman, who studied the problem of food supply; and Henry J. Horn, who conducted a private study of the Russian rail-  
76  
ways.

The commission on August 7 reached a Petrograd grown weary of such delegations. Neither the Russians nor the Americans in Petrograd could see any justifiable reason for the mission. It was therefore met with a "general sense of  
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impatience."

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75  
Williams, American-Russian Relations, 93; Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1742.

76  
American Red Cross, The Work of the American Red Cross: Report by the War Council of Appropriations and Activities from Outbreak of War to November 1, 1917 (Washington, April 9, 1918), 127-28.

77  
Kennan, Russia Leaves the War, 55.



The commission was headed ostensibly by Dr. Frank Billings, but the real authority lay in the person of William B. Thompson, a Wall Street magnate who financed the expedition. He took care of the expenses and salaries of those members who were not able to pay their own way.<sup>78</sup>

On arriving in Petrograd, the mission received a warm welcome from the Provisional Government and the Russian Red Cross. No matter how tired Russia might have been of American missions, it, nevertheless, could hardly afford not to cooperate with such missions. The Russians did not need the Red Cross Mission's personnel, but they did need the priceless medical supplies brought by the Americans. Russia had more than an adequate medical staff, but lacked proper drugs and medical implements.

The mission supplied the Russian army with a 125 vehicle ambulance corps. Thirteen of these vehicles had been donated by the American Jewish Friends of Free Russia. The ambulance corps was operated by Russians under the direction of Red Cross personnel.<sup>79</sup>

Another, and perhaps the most important contribution made by the mission to Russia was its work with the civilian population, especially the children. Sensing the probability

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78

Red Cross, Work of the American Red Cross, 128.

79

Ibid., 129-30.

of an even worsening food problem in the Russian cities, the commission ordered \$351,000 worth of condensed milk and \$8,640<sup>80</sup> worth of foodstuffs. The milk saved a countless number of children's lives during the winter of 1917-1918.

Frank Billings took a second place role from the start. Raymond Robins began to deal more in clandestine politics than in Red Cross relief programs, and soon gained access to the Bolshevik leaders--one of the few Americans to do so. Sensing the rapid decline of the Provisional Government and the corresponding growth of its opponents, he urged the United States to cooperate with the radicals' demands for reform of the Provisional Government. He talked not infrequently with Lenin and Trotsky.<sup>81</sup>

William Thompson felt it his personal responsibility to bolster the shaky Russian government. He made a personal loan of one million dollars to the Provisional Government. To many it appeared quite amusing--a Wall Street backed Social-Revolutionary party.<sup>82</sup> Thompson's bequest had a more

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80  
American Red Cross, *The Work in Europe of the American Red Cross: A Report to the American People by the Red Cross War Council* (Washington, June 1, 1918), 142.

81  
Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 62-65.

82  
Ibid., 57.

pragmatic motive than just to strengthen the government. He was after, among other things, the rich mining concessions in Siberia. As had Robins, Thompson put other interests before those of the Red Cross.

"All during the autumn of 1917," stated Samuel Harper, "the unlikely combination of Thompson and Robins had worked together to succor the weakening Kerensky regime with money, foodstuffs, and propaganda placed in judiciously subsidized newspapers."<sup>83</sup> Harper had remained in Russia after the departure of the Root Mission. He served as an advisor and interpreter for Billings and the others.

Billings finally tired of the facade and left Russia on November 1. What was left of the mission remained in Russia until October, 1918. The accomplishments of the Red Cross Commission were in the form of its gifts to Russia. It had provided in drugs, medical supplies, ambulances, milk and foodstuffs, and shoes, material valued at \$1,359,440.87.<sup>84</sup> Its record was almost void of any meaningful accomplishments.

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83

Harper, Memoirs of Samuel N. Harper, 153.

84

Red Cross, Work in Europe of the American Red Cross, 142.

IV

On July 1, 1917, the inactive Russian army was spurred to life. The ill-fated July Offensive had begun. In a long line along the Galician front, the Russians attacked. After temporary successes, the army was counter attacked and routed by crack German shock troops. Mutiny became the order of the day as Russian troops either offered no resistance to their enemy or fled to safety. The Russians were out of the war as far as operations in the front lines were concerned.<sup>1</sup>

A few years after the fall of the Provisional Government, Samuel Harper met Kerensky in Chicago. The professor wanted to know whether the offensive had been the result of Allied, particularly American, pressure on Russia to resume an effective role in the war, or because of a desire on the part of the government to halt internal disintegration by achieving a military victory. Kerensky replied: "Both factors."<sup>2</sup>

Within two weeks after the July Offensive, the first serious challenge to the authority of the Provisional Government occurred. Russia nearly succumbed to the radical agitation of the workers, soldiers, and Bolsheviks.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas N. Golovine, The Russian Army in the World War (New Haven, 1931), 273, 277; Dulles, Road to Teheran, 110.

<sup>2</sup>

Harper, Memoirs of Samuel N. Harper, 108.

In June, with Lenin and Trotsky at their head, the Bolsheviks stepped up their campaign for peace and for overthrow of the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks had scheduled a peaceful demonstration for June 23. Fearing that a demonstration, whether peaceful or otherwise, against its prerogatives of power threatened its continuance as the governing body of Russia, the Provisional Government issued an order prohibiting the assembly of unauthorized crowds in Petrograd. This order was supported by the Petrograd Soviet, which was beginning to fear the radical Bolsheviks.<sup>3</sup>

The Bolsheviks were not to be put off, however. Francis conferred with Premier Lvov on June 27 about a fourth of July celebration. Lvov could not grant the Ambassador permission to hold a celebration because of the uncertainty of the coming weeks. The Bolsheviks had defied the government's order, and had called for a demonstration for July 1. Trouble was expected.<sup>4</sup>

The demonstration proved to be lacking for supporters. The government then moved against the radicals and arrested 68 "anarchists." Reports of the Russian victories on the southeastern front prompted a spontaneous pro-government

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<sup>3</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 98; Doc. 1429, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>4</sup>  
Ibid., I, 98; Doc. 1442, Francis to Lansing.

demonstration on July 2. For a few days at least the government's star was burning bright.<sup>5</sup>

On July 15, that star again began to fade. Kerensky, Tereshchenko, and Tsertelli returned to Petrograd after a visit to the Ukraine. Their concessions to Ukrainian demands for autonomy precipitated the resignation of four Cadet ministers from the Provisional Government.

The next day, for little discernable reason, thousands of soldiers and workers paraded through the streets of Petrograd demanding among other things "All power to the Soviet." It is questionable whether the Bolsheviks instigated the demonstration. It appears that the real culprit was the First Machine-Gun Regiment--a more radical faction of the party--which sent representatives to the huge metal and munitions works in the city to summon the workers. As the populace massed in the streets, the Bolsheviks were forced either to step aside and thus lose their tenuous leadership of the working classes, or to lead the mobs. They chose the latter alternative.<sup>6</sup>

Fighting broke out all over the capital. Only 300 yards from the American Embassy a group of Cossacks was cut to pieces by machine-gun fire. Francis visited the scene shortly

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., I, 99; Doc. 1462, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>6</sup> Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, I, 166-70.

after the massacre and found the streets "literally and  
actually running with blood."<sup>7</sup>

Huge crowds assembled before the Tauride Palace demanding that the Soviet assume the leadership of Russia. The Soviet leaders were indignant and a bit frightened by this attempt to force them into power. They refused the mob's demands, expressing a desire to work within the framework of a coalition government.<sup>8</sup>

By July 18, the uprising had ceased. After about 36 hours of violence and demonstrations the workers and soldiers left the streets. The Provisional Government was miraculously still in power. For their part, the Bolsheviks blamed the July Days on the July Offensive which they "concluded was the result of the arrival of the American capitalists"---probably referring to the Root Mission.<sup>9</sup>

Francis met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs who informed the Ambassador that the city was by that time in the control of the government, and that a loyal army corps was on its way to Petrograd from the front. Apparently skeptical, Francis threatened to make no further recommendations for

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Francis, Russia from the American Embassy, 137.

8

Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 159-60; Doc. 1521, Francis to Lansing.

9

Browder and Kerensky, Documents, III, 1373.

financial or other assistance for Russia unless a stable government were formed--a government "which would prosecute [the] war . . . and suppress . . . lawlessness with determination and with force."<sup>10</sup>

Francis advised Tereshchenko that Lenin and Trotsky should be captured and promptly executed.<sup>11</sup> In his interference with the internal and domestic problems of Russia, Francis overstepped his bounds as an ambassador. One of his chief faults as a dignitary was that he made no distinction between his personal and diplomatic roles.<sup>12</sup>

Loyal troops arrived on July 19, and seized the Bolshevik's headquarters and their stronghold in the Peter and Paul Fortress. The July Days had ended. The uprising, though premature, served as training for the Bolshevik Revolution in November. Samuel Harper prophetically wrote to Charles Crane on July 23, and informed his friend that "the country can be held together until December without any question. But we are getting more and more tired."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 160-61; Doc. 1528, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>11</sup>  
Francis, Russia from the American Embassy, 141.

<sup>12</sup>  
Francis "could not seem to separate his private opinion from diplomatic courtesy as he further injudiciously expressed the view that Lenin and Trotskii should be executed for treason." Fike, "A Study of Russian-American Relations During the Ominous Years, 1917-1921," 24.

<sup>13</sup>  
Harper, Memoirs of Samuel N. Harper, 105.



A few days after the unsuccessful revolt, Prince Georgii Lvov resigned from his position as Minister President of the Provisional Government. He had been a capable statesman, but had failed to assert himself and the government strongly enough to quail opposition. On July 21, Aleksandr Kerensky became Premier as well as Minister of War. By August 6, a new cabinet had been formed. Though it was primarily Socialist in membership it still reflected a rather bourgeois-democratic nature.

Francis placed considerable hope in Kerensky as the new Premier restored capital punishment, began to disband recalcitrant regiments in Petrograd, and moved against the Bolsheviks. Trotsky was jailed for a time, but Lenin escaped. Francis was certain that Russia would take a renewed interest in the war, but remarked that "in Russia now it is presumption to prophesy in the forenoon what will occur in the afternoon."<sup>14</sup>

Tereshchenko visited Francis on the evening of July 22, to assure the Ambassador that the war was being prosecuted more firmly. After the Minister of Foreign Affairs had left, Francis cabled the Department of State. A week before he had urged that additional credits to Russia be withheld for a time; now he recommended that the credit be increased to

\$150 million so that "Russia have no excuse for not prosecuting the war."<sup>15</sup>

American hopes that Russia might yet prove a vital force in the war were steadily being undercut. That is not to say that the Russian government did not attempt to revive the army. Kerensky visited the front and personally tried to rally the troops. Francis greatly lauded the replacement of General Aleksei Brusilov by the authoritarian General Lavr Kornilov as commander-in chief. But it was becoming obvious to Wilson and his cabinet that Russia might at any time quit the war. They were by this time not so much concerned that Russia might conclude a separate peace with Germany as they were that because of the collapse of the Russian army Germany might force Russia out of the war.<sup>16</sup>

When Ambassador Bakhmetev requested a considerable credit to carry the Provisional Government to January 1, 1918, the American government proved reluctant to accede. Bakhmetev was aware of American fears, and perhaps as a ploy intimated that his government might not understand a delay in granting his request. The State Department decided to await developments in Petrograd before acting on Bakhmetev's request.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, III, 16-17; Doc. 1543,  
Francis to Lansing.

<sup>16</sup>  
Baker, Woodrow Wilson, VII, 177, 183.

<sup>17</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, III, 17-18; Doc. 1595,  
Polk to Francis.

The British Ambassador to the United States, Rufus Daniel Isaacs, Earl of Reading, objected to Russia's request, reasoning that much of the material already received by Russia lay unused in Vladivostok. In addition there was not enough shipping available to transport the requested material to Russia within the prescribed time limit. Reading contended that Russia's practical needs accounted for little more than \$10 million a month.<sup>18</sup>

The United States refused to abandon its protege despite the weakness of the Provisional Government. Encouraged by the temporary stay in the declining power of Russia, the United States extended a further credit of \$100 million to Russia plus allocations for 45,000 pieces of rolling stock. The remainder of the \$733 million request remained under consideration. Again a stipulation accompanied the credit: Russia must remain in the war against the Central Powers.<sup>19</sup>

President Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing no longer harbored the firm belief that Russia might yet pull itself up by its boot-straps and fight. But they knew that it would be inexpedient to abandon Russia. As long as Russia was in the war, German divisions would have to remain on the

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18

Ibid., III, 20-21; Doc. unnumbered, Reading to Lansing.

19

Ibid., III, 22-23; Doc. 1642, Lansing to Francis.

eastern front. Thus the money and credits given to Russia would be well spent if they helped keep those divisions from being moved against the western front and American troops. A less pragmatic reason for America's continued support was its hope that its protege--the infant Russian democracy--would survive and grow.

In an attempt to provide itself with national support, the Provisional Government summoned an All-Russian Conference for August 25. This meeting of various groups, organizations, and political factions was to offer advice to the government on how to proceed until the Constituent Assembly could meet and organize a final government for Russia. Many Russians believed that if the Provisional Government did not emerge from the conference with a strong political position, the chances for either a military dictatorship or another Bol-  
20  
shevik rebellion would be greatly enhanced.

Francis had wanted to attend the conference, but since none of his colleagues attended the opening session he decided that it was unwise to go. President Wilson, hoping to unify the conference, sent a message through the Petrograd Embassy. Wilson stated:

I venture to take the liberty to send to the members of the great council now meeting in Moscow

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Ibid., I, 177; Doc. 1651, Francis to Lansing.

the cordial greetings of their friends, the people of the United States, to express their confidence in the ultimate triumph of ideals of democracy and self-government against all enemies within and without, and to give their renewed assurance of every material and moral assistance they can extend to the Government of Russia in the promotion of the common cause in which the two nations are unselfishly united.<sup>21</sup>

The President took another opportunity to assure the Russians of American support when he replied on August 27 to the peace proposal made by the Pope on August 1. Wilson could not accede to the Pope's plan because it would leave Germany in potentially too strong a power position. Agreement would "result in abandoning the new-born Russia to the intrigue, the manifold subtle interference, and the certain counter-revolution which would be attempted by all the malign influences to which the German Government has of late accustomed the world."<sup>22</sup>

A few days after the reply reached the Russian press, Tereshchenko wrote Wilson that the message was well received by the Russians (except of course by the radicals). Wilson's views, stated the Minister of Foreign Affairs, were comparable<sup>23</sup> and compatible with those of the Provisional Government.

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21

Ibid., I, 177; Doc. unnumbered, Wilson to the Russian National Council Assembly. For a slightly different version of the note, see Baker and Dodd, War and Peace, 98.

22

Baker and Dodd, War and Peace, 94.

23

Lansing Papers, II, 342-43, Tereshchenko to Wilson.

Of the Provisional Government, yes; of the radicals and most Socialists, no. The radical press vehemently denounced Wilson's reply to the Pope, and restated its demands for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

The financial plight of Russia continued virtually unabated. The Ministry of Finance could not satisfy all the enormous demands made on it. The Russians were far from pleased at the small share of American aid they were receiving compared to that given to the other Allies. The Soviet press claimed that as of August 25, Russia was receiving only about nine per cent of the total American aid to the Allies.<sup>24</sup> By the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia had received credits amounting to \$325 million, of which only \$187,725,750 was used. To these figures we must compare the \$1,860,000,000 credit already used by Britain, \$1,165 million by France, and \$400 million by Italy.<sup>25</sup> One of the main reasons for this significant discrepancy between America's aid to Russia and to the other Allies was the American phobia that Russia would make a separate peace with Germany. But there is little evidence to attest that any amount of aid would have saved Russia or kept her at war.

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24

Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 178; Doc. 1663,  
Francis to Lansing.

25

Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. 1, 592; Doc.  
unnumbered, R. C. Leffingwell (Asst. Sec. of the Treasury) to  
Lansing; Fisher, "American Investments in Pre-Soviet Russia,"  
104; Browder and Kerensky, Documents, II, 502.

The radical-Socialist element in Russia had little reason to love the United States. As the summer neared an end the radical press grew more and more hostile towards America. Among the reasons for this were American support of the war and the Provisional Government, its little concealed hostility towards the radical-Socialist factions, a feeling that the United States was forcing Russia to continue fighting, and America's refusal to support the Socialist's peace conference in Stockholm. The Department of State refused to grant passports to American citizens who wanted to attend the conference.<sup>26</sup> Pavel B. Axelrod, one of the leaders of the proposed conference and the head of the Menshevik's international section, stated in part that "America is endangering the future of humane culture by preventing peace. If the President does not permit American delegates to come to Stockholm he will indicate that his country is more reactionary than despotic Germany."<sup>27</sup> Wilson and Lansing remained adamant in their opposition.

Though Kerensky continued his get-tough policy, Russia daily grew weaker. Food, land, and the war were still the main problems facing the Provisional Government. In a secret

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<sup>26</sup>

Ibid., 754-55; Doc. 1655, Lansing to Francis.

<sup>27</sup>

Ibid., I, 755; Doc. 697, Ira Nelson Morris (Minister to Sweden) to Lansing.

report by the Intelligence Bureau of the American Department of Information, the State Department was informed on September 3 that unless the Provisional Government made an immediate attempt to solve these problems, there would be "fresh trouble before the winter."<sup>28</sup>

It did not take until winter for fresh trouble to beset the government. Early in September there was a break between Kerensky and Kornilov. It had been upon these men that Ambassador Francis believed whatever "hope there was left for the salvation of Russia" rested.<sup>29</sup>

General Lavr Kornilov had become restive during the Moscow Conference. Whether out of personal ambition or a desire to save Russia from another revolution, he determined to crush the Bolshevik party and the Soviet. For their part, the Bolsheviks gave Kornilov an opportunity to do so when they issued a call for demonstrations and a one-day general strike to protest the "counter-revolutionary" Moscow Conference. Shocked by the strike and bolstered by the lavish praise heaped on him by right wing politicians, Kornilov returned to the front and began to prepare for a move against Petrograd.

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28

National Archives, Microcopy 316, Roll 9; File no. 861.00/487 $\frac{1}{2}$ , Weekly Report on Russia, XX.

29

Francis, Russia from the American Embassy, 155.



Kerensky was aware of Kornilov's growing political ambition. On September 6, the Minister-President sent Prince V. N. Lvov,<sup>30</sup> former Procurator of the Holy Synod, to Kornilov's camp to learn the demands of the Commander-in-Chief. The General, believing that this signaled the willingness of Kerensky to capitulate, demanded that Petrograd be placed under martial law, and that he be given personal and complete military and civil authority.<sup>31</sup>

Kerensky took the fateful step on September 9. He cabled Kornilov and demanded that the General resign his post and report immediately to Petrograd. Kornilov refused and began to march on the capital. It was now that Kerensky made his fatal mistake. To combat Kornilov's Cossacks he ordered that arms and ammunition be distributed to the workers in the city. He was forced to arm his enemies of the Left in order to defeat those of the Right.

During the crisis, Francis urged his colleagues to maintain a neutral position. If they were to choose the wrong side to support or if their decision were in some way to act to the detriment of the war effort, the blame would be on

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V. N. Lvov should not be confused with Prince Georgii Lvov, the first Minister-President of the Provisional Government.

31

Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, I, 210.

their heads. He continued this position of neutrality even after the affair had been terminated.<sup>32</sup>

On September 12, Kornilov announced his surrender. Kerensky had won, but at great cost. He now stood between a hostile Right and an armed and hostile Left. The position of the Provisional Government was virtually hopeless. Francis noted in his memoirs that by this time the overthrow of the government "was only a matter of time."<sup>33</sup>

On September 19, Ira Morris reported from Sweden that the British Government had requested that all British women and children in Petrograd return to Britain immediately. A few days earlier the Japanese Embassy had ordered all Japanese citizens to leave the capital.<sup>34</sup> Francis did not feel such actions necessary and refrained from ordering Americans out of the city. He did, however, obtain a boat on which Americans might take refuge should conditions worsen. Francis wrote Charles K. Moser, the American Consul at Harbin, China, that he would "remain in Petrograd as long as the Government does, and perhaps longer, as there is some doubt expressed as

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32

Francis, Russia from the American Embassy, 157-61.

33

Ibid., 157.

34

National Archives, Microcopy 316, Roll 9; File no. 797, Morris to Lansing.

to the survival of the present Government."<sup>35</sup>

That doubt found expression in the weekly intelligence report to the State Department on conditions in Russia. The report in part stated that the Kerensky Government was failing. "Since the Bolshevik uprising of July . . . he has not shown the necessary strength, and his present cabinet is not considered strong enough to rule the country and restore order."<sup>36</sup>

In late September the leadership of the Petrograd Soviet fell to the Bolsheviks. This resulted in, among other things, a stepped up anti-American program. Helping in this campaign was the American newspaper reporter and journalist, John Reed. Reed had arrived in Russia in August and had presented a letter of introduction to Ambassador Francis.<sup>37</sup> Francis, antagonized by Reed's alleged role in anti-American demonstrations, cabled Lansing on October 1 that he had information that Reed was working with the Bolsheviks. Francis had him watched and investigated. Reasoning that Reed was an American

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35

Francis, Russia from the American Embassy, 162.

36

National Archives, Microcopy 316, Roll 9; File no. 861.00/529 $\frac{1}{2}$ , Weekly Report on Russia, XXI.

37

The letter was signed by a "prominent federal official of New York," whose name Francis chose to omit when he included the letter in his memoir. Francis, Russia from the American Embassy, 167-68.

Bolshevik helping the Russian Bolsheviks prepare to overthrow the Provisional Government, Francis suggested that the Russian Bolsheviks might be working with their counterparts in the United States "to overthrow our democratic government."<sup>38</sup>

On October 3, the French Ambassador to the United States called on Lansing. The former, concerned over the deteriorating situation in Russia, proposed an inter-allied conference to consider what might be done to alleviate the Russian problem. The meeting was tentatively set for October 16 in Paris.<sup>39</sup> Later at the request of the Provisional Government, the meeting was put off to another date, and did not have a chance to convene before the Bolshevik Revolution.

Kerensky in October reorganized his cabinet in an attempt to strengthen the Provisional Government. The government, struggling to recover from the September crises, began to request additional financial aid from the United States. As before, the Departments of State and Treasury wanted Francis' advice before making the decision as to whether or not to honor the Russian request for an additional credit of \$235 million.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>

Ibid., 169.

<sup>39</sup>

Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. I, 222-23; Doc. unnumbered, Lansing to Wilson.

<sup>40</sup>

Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, III, 23; Doc. 1761, Lansing to Francis.

Francis arranged to meet with a representative of the Provisional Government to discuss the matter. On October 15, he met with Tereshchenko, and was not a little put out at the casual attitude taken by the Minister of Foreign Affairs toward the loans. Nevertheless, Ambassador Francis urged that the United States continue to assist Russia in order to keep the Provisional Government in power. But he did not advise granting the total amount requested, and suggested a careful examination of all Russian requests.<sup>41</sup>

In spite of the doubts in Washington as to the future of Russia, American officials continued to try to bolster Russia with eloquent words. On October 18, a telegram drafted by Secretary Lansing to Madame Bressovsky, Chairman of the Russian Committee on Civic Education, appeared in the Russian press. Lansing advised in part that

...the nation should embody the highest individual ideals of civil perfection in order to assert and maintain its honorable position in the world-family of commonwealths, fulfilling its material and moral duties toward its neighbors, strong in the might of right and fearless in the cause of truth and justice.<sup>42</sup>

Francis met with Tereshchenko on October 22. Tereshchenko informed him that the peace sentiment was growing rapidly in Russia, especially in the army. After this conversation

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<sup>41</sup>

Ibid., I, 209; Doc. 1869, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>42</sup>

Baker and Dodd, War and Peace, 107.

Francis advised Lansing to wait before granting the credit. Conditions were worsening in Russia. Lenin was calling for demonstrations against the government. Francis reported that the Bolsheviks were growing more powerful and influential. Pro-Bolshevik sentiment was rising throughout Russia.<sup>43</sup>

The anti-American campaign in the radical press raised the contention that American loans were being granted to the Provisional Government in exchange for Russian territory. Francis attributed such rumors to be German propoganda, but requested an "official denial for publication."<sup>44</sup> Lansing replied that the rumors were entirely unfounded. He stated that the "United States has arranged loans and credits with free Russia founded exclusively on credit of Russian Government and for the single purpose of cooperating in our common struggle against the autocratic militarism of Germany." Lansing reiterated the determination of President Wilson to not add to our own territory.<sup>45</sup>

Anti-American agitation was only one phase of a many faceted attack on the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks were preparing throughout October to overthrow the Kerensky

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<sup>43</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1917, Supp. 2, Vol. I; Doc. 1897,  
Francis to Lansing.

<sup>44</sup>  
Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, III; Doc. 1904, Francis  
to Lansing.

<sup>45</sup>  
Ibid., III, 26; Doc. 1806, Lansing to Francis.

government. They would move by November. By the end of October Petrograd was surging. John Reed wrote that "in the rain, the bitter chill, the great throbbing city under the grey skies [was] rushing faster and faster toward--what?"<sup>46</sup>

On October 31, Kerensky was interviewed by John Reed and two other reporters. "The Russian people," stated the Minister-President, "are suffering from economic fatigue--and from disillusionment with the Allies! The world thinks that the Russian Revolution is at an end. Do not be mistaken. The Russian Revolution is just beginning."<sup>47</sup> In nine days his prophecy would be fulfilled.

The November 1 issue of the Washington Post carried the headline "Russia Quits War." The Department of State was quick to deny the insinuation. A communique stated that neither the diplomatic despatches nor any other information from Petrograd justified such a conclusion on the part of the Washington Post. "Our own advices show that the Provisional Government in Petrograd is attacking with great energy the problems confronting it."<sup>48</sup> Thus the American public was little prepared for the revolution which took place in Russia on November 6-7.

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46

John Reed, Ten Days that Shook the World (New York, 1960), 50.

47

Ibid., 47.

48

Foreign Relations, 1918, Russia, I, 218; Doc. unnumbered, Lansing to Francis.

On November 2 there was an unsuccessful demonstration against the Provisional Government. On November 6 Francis reported that the Bolsheviks were preparing the workers in Petrograd for another demonstration.<sup>49</sup> Only a few days before, Francis had informed the State Department that the Provisional Government could probably withstand a Bolshevik revolt, and indeed up to the very day of the revolution, there was little in Francis' despatches to indicate the danger that the government faced from the Bolsheviks.

On November 6, under Bolshevik leadership, the workers and dissident soldiers in Petrograd rose against the government. The Provisional Government was helpless. Kerensky fled the capital in an American Embassy automobile. The Provisional Government, born eight months before in revolution, now succumbed to revolution. On November 7 Ambassador David Francis cabled the Department of State that the "Bolsheviki appear to have control of everything here. Cannot learn whereabouts of any minister."<sup>50</sup> The government had fallen. American relations with the Russian Provisional Government came to an end.

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<sup>49</sup>  
Ibid., I, 220; Doc. 1954, Francis to Lansing.

<sup>50</sup>  
Ibid., I, 224; Doc. 1962, Francis to Lansing.



V

In an alliance between two powers, there has to be reciprocal benefit for both members. When the United States and the Russian Provisional Government entered into diplomatic relations on March 22, 1917, both nations expected the alliance to accomplish certain goals. The United States wanted to keep Russia in the war against the Central Powers, and to help the fledgling Russian democracy grow to maturity. Unfortunately the two goals were incompatible. Russia needed financial aid in order to carry on the war effort and to establish a functioning government. The Provisional Government had to continue the war in order to receive support from the West. Though America was the only ally to give substantial aid to Russia after the March Revolution, that aid was meted out cautiously and was never commensurate with American aid to the other Allies.

American foreign policy makers had little understanding of the Russian problem in 1917, and failed to establish a viable relationship with the Russian government. This failure resulted in part because of the lack of an adequate concept of the Russian situation by President Wilson and Secretary of State Lansing.<sup>1</sup> They were not able to base American policy

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<sup>1</sup> Shelton, "President Wilson and the Russian Revolution," 111.

on the realities of the situation because they were not sufficiently informed on conditions and trends in Russia by the American Ambassador in Petrograd, David Francis. Another problem which affected policy toward the Provisional Government was the American attitude that Russia and America shared the same democratic ideals and therefore the same desire to defeat autocratic Germany. These preconceived principles conflicted with political realities and contributed to the misunderstanding between Washington and Petrograd.<sup>2</sup>

In an attempt to obtain a clearer view of the Russian situation, the American government sent two official and one quasi-official missions to Russia. These missions often conflicted in purpose, and in their turn misled the Department of State as to conditions in Russia. Like Francis, most of the members of the missions fell victim to their own preconceived ideas about Russia. They saw what they wanted to see rather than what really was. The wealth of misinterpretations and faulty information that the missions carried back to the United States can be attributed largely to the type of men sent by Washington. They were of a rather bourgeois nature, limited in outlook, and affected by the notion that democratic Russia would pattern itself after the American model, triumph easily over its adversaries, and actively

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Filene, Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 17.

pursue the war. The members of the missions had contact almost exclusively with members and supporters of the Provisional Government, with whom they shared kindred ideas. The missions sent home little information about the Soviet or the Bolsheviki except for the almost unanimous opinion that the Provisional Government would triumph over its opponents.

Foreign policy can only be formulated successfully when a clear picture of a situation is available. Ambassador Francis must bear most of the responsibility for failing to provide the State Department with an accurate assessment of conditions in Russia. But the blame cannot rest solely on him. The Department of State had other representatives in Russia, notably North Winship and Maddin Summers, who portrayed the situation more objectively and accurately than did the Ambassador. Yet American policy toward Russia was based primarily on information from Francis. There is a natural tendency to accept the advice of an Ambassador over that of a Consul. Francis' expressions coincided with ideas held by Lansing and Wilson, and his advice was in line with the basic tenet of American policy toward Russia: keeping Russia at war with Germany.

The Provisional Government faced the unenviable task of carrying out the programs of the revolution and instituting a new governing order in Russia, while simultaneously conducting a vigorous war against Germany. While the American

government expected the new Russian government to be able to both establish a democracy and continue the war, it always stressed the latter. In his messages to Russia, the President constantly emphasized that without a victory over German autocracy and militarism, Russian democracy had little chance for survival. Occasionally Ambassador Francis let it be known that the war took precedence over internal considerations. Francis had an ill-disguised desire for a single strong man to lead new Russia through its political infancy.

Francis' attitude was an example of another failure by Americans to recognize the realities of the Russian problem. The State Department found it difficult to distinguish between domestic and foreign policy in Russia. The framers of American policy toward Russia were not able to appreciate the desire of most Russians for an immediate peace--almost at any price. The Socialist-Bolshevik conflict with the Provisional Government was viewed as a foreign rather than a domestic policy dispute. Though Americans made many high-sounding statements in support of Russian democracy, their main concern remained the war and Russia as a belligerent power.

American aid to Russia reflected the former's priorities. Ships, rolling stock, weapons, boots, all types of military equipment to supply the war effort, and money to help support the Provisional Government comprised the bulk of American aid to Russia. This aid was accompanied by the admonition that

only through victory over Germany could the democratic government hope to survive, and the warning that should Russia conclude a separate peace with Germany all aid would be discontinued. American aid was designed not so much to aid Russian democracy or to help the Provisional Government establish a viable political order as to obtain Russian support for the war effort. Domestic needs and considerations were relegated to an inferior status. Indeed, when Bolshevik agitation threatened the Provisional Government, American aid was withheld and not continued until the government took a firm stand against its domestic opponents.

The American government can hardly be blamed for its position. A strong Russia in the war against Germany was vital to the Allied war effort. Russian troops were needed to keep the German divisions in the east from being used against British, French, and American forces in the west.

Though continuation of the war was one of the main factors that led to the overthrow of the Provisional Government by the Bolsheviks, it was only one of many. One of the factors which led to the second of the 1917 revolutions was the delay in convening the Constituent Assembly. Until that body could meet and determine the final form of government for Russia, there would be a conflict between the Provisional Government and the Soviet. If the Constituent Assembly had been elected in the spring or early summer of 1917, there

probably would have been no trouble from the Soviet.<sup>3</sup>

A third reason for the fall of the Provisional Government and Russian democracy to the Bolshevik Revolution was the failure of Kerensky and other moderates in the government to take a firm stand against the radicals. Many historians have looked on Kerensky as a bungler if not an outright fool. But Kerensky suffered the plight of the nineteenth century European liberal. He had fought with the radicals against autocracy. When he suddenly found himself at odds with those same radicals, he could not bring himself to take strong repressive measures against his opponents.<sup>4</sup>

American relations with the Russian Provisional Government were based on the unrealistic assumption that Russia could establish a democracy and fight a war at the same time. American policy never freed itself from that assumption and was consistent and unceasing in its efforts to keep Russia in the war against Germany. In doing so the American government contributed to the failure of the Provisional Government and thereby Russian democracy.

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<sup>3</sup> Paul P. Gronsky and Nicholas J. Astrov, The War and the Russian Government (New Haven, 1929), 124.

<sup>4</sup> Harper, Memoirs of Samuel N. Harper, 106.

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AMERICAN RELATIONS WITH THE RUSSIAN PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT,  
MARCH TO NOVEMBER, 1917

Jerry Michael Bunn

ABSTRACT

Successful diplomatic relations between two countries require that those relations be based on the realities of the situation of the countries involved. Whenever those relations are based primarily on preconceived ideas that do not correspond with political realities, they cease to be viable and may result in damage to either or both of the contracting states. Such was the case with American relations with the Provisional Government of Russia in 1917.

The Provisional Government faced the unenviable task of consolidating the gains of the revolution and establishing a democratic government, while trying to conduct a vigorous war against the Central Powers. The two programs were incompatible. Only in peace could Russia make the transition from the "autocracy of autocracies" to that of a democratic nation. One of the reasons why the Provisional Government did not make peace with Germany was the role played by the United States.

American relations with the Provisional Government were designed to aid the fledgling Russian democracy and to keep Russia in the war against Germany. Primary emphasis was placed on the latter goal. The Department of State made it

clear to the Provisional Government that it would not receive the aid it so greatly needed should Russia quit the war.

The framers of American policy toward Russia had little understanding of the Russian problem. They sincerely wanted democracy to succeed in Russia. But they were convinced that only by the defeat of Germany could Russian democracy hope to survive. Therefore, by stressing Russia's role in the war, the United States pursued what seemed to be the only logical course of relations with the Provisional Government.