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AMERICAN TROOPS IN SIBERIA.

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MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AGREED TO JUNE 23, 1919, INFORMING THE SENATE OF THE REASONS FOR SENDING UNITED STATES SOLDIERS TO AND MAINTAINING THEM IN SIBERIA.

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JULY 25, 1919. Read and ordered to be printed and bound in 1919.

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THE WHITE HOUSE,  
Washington, July 25, 1919.

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE:

SIR: For the information of the Senate, and in response to the resolution adopted June 23, 1919, requesting the President to inform the Senate, if not incompatible with the public interest, of the reasons for sending United States soldiers to Siberia, the duties that are to be performed by these soldiers, how long they are to remain, and generally to advise the Senate of the policy of the United States Government in respect to Siberia and the maintenance of United States soldiers there, I have the honor to say that the decision to send American troops to Siberia was announced to the press on August 5, 1918, in a statement from the Acting Secretary of State, which a copy is inclosed.

This measure was taken in conjunction with Japan and in concert with the other allied powers, first of all to save the Czechoslovak armies which were threatened with destruction by hostile forces apparently organized by, and often largely composed of, former prisoners of war. The second purpose in view was to steady the efforts of the Russians at self-defense, or the establishment of a government in which they might be willing to accept assistance. Two regiments of Infantry, with auxiliary troops, about 8,000 effectives—comprising a total of approximately 10,000 men, were sent under the command of Maj. Gen. William S. Graves. The troops are to arrive at Vladivostok in September, 1918. Considerably

larger forces were dispatched by Japan at about the same time, and much smaller forces by others of the allied powers. The net result was the successful reunion of the separated Czecho-Slovak armies, and the substantial elimination in eastern Siberia of the active efforts of enemy prisoners of war. A period of relative quiet then ensued.

In February, 1919, as a conclusion of negotiations begun early in the summer of 1918, the United States accepted a plan proposed by Japan for the supervision of the Siberian railways by an international committee, under which committee Mr. John F. Stevens would assume the operation of the Russian Railway Service Corps. In this connection, it is to be recalled that Mr. John F. Stevens, in response to a request of the provisional government of Russia, went to Russia in the spring of 1917. A few months later he was made official adviser to the minister of ways of communication at Petrograd under the provisional government. At the request of the provisional government, and with the support of Mr. John F. Stevens, there was organized the so-called Russian Railway Service Corps, composed of American engineers. As originally organized, the personnel of this corps constituted 14 skeleton division units as known in this country, the idea being that these skeleton units would serve as practical advisers and assistants on 14 different sections of the Siberian Railway, and assist the Russians by their knowledge of long-haul problems as known in this country, and which are the rule and not the exceptions in Siberia.

Owing to the Bolshevik uprising, and the general chaotic conditions, neither Mr. Stevens nor the Russian Railway Service Corps was able to begin work in Siberia until March, 1918. They have been able to operate effectively only since the railway plan was adopted in February, 1919.

The most recent report from Mr. Stevens shows that on parts of the Chinese Eastern & Trans-Baikal Railway he is now running six trains a day each way, while only a little while ago they were only able to run that many trains per week.

In accepting the railway plan, it was provided that some protection should be given by the allied forces. Mr. Stevens stated frankly that he would not undertake the arduous task before him unless he could rely upon support from American troops in an emergency. Accordingly, as provided in the railway plan, and with the approval of the interallied committee, the military commanders in Siberia have established troops where it is necessary to maintain order at different parts of the line. The American forces under Gen. Graves are understood to be protecting parts of the line near Vladivostok, and also on the section around Verchne Udinsk. There is also understood to be a small body of American troops at Harbin. The exact location from time to time of American troops is, however, subject to change by the direction of Gen. Graves.

The instruction to Gen. Graves directed him not to interfere in Russian affairs but to support Mr. Stevens wherever necessary. The Siberian Railway is not only the main artery for transportation in Siberia but is the only open access to European Russia to-day. The population of Siberia, whose resources have been almost exhausted by the long years of war and the chaotic conditions which have existed

there, can be protected from a further period of chaos and anarchy only by the restoration and maintenance of traffic on the Siberian Railway.

Partisan bands under leaders having no settled connection with any organized government, and bands under leaders whose allegiance to any settled authority is apparently temporary and transitory, are constantly menacing the operation of the railway and the safety of its permanent structures.

The situation of the people of Siberia meantime is that they have no shoes or warm clothing; they are pleading for agricultural machinery and for many of the simpler articles of commerce upon which their own domestic economy depends and which are necessary to fruitful and productive industry among them. Having contributed their quota to the Russian armies which fought the central empires for three and one-half years, they now look to the Allies and the United States for economic assistance.

The population of western Siberia and the forces of Admiral Kolchak are entirely dependent upon these railways.

The Russian authorities in this country have succeeded in shipping large quantities of Russian supplies to Siberia, and the Secretary of War is now contracting with the great cooperative societies which operate throughout European and Asiatic Russia to ship further supplies to meet the needs of the civilian population. The Kolchak Government is also endeavoring to arrange for the purchase of medical and other Red Cross supplies from the War Department, and the American Red Cross is itself attempting the forms of relief for which it is organized. All elements of the population in Siberia look to the United States for assistance. This assistance can not be given to the population of Siberia, and ultimately to Russia, if the purpose entertained for two years to restore railway traffic is abandoned. The presence of American troops is a vital element in this effort. The services of Mr. Stevens depend upon it, and, a point of serious moment, the plan proposed by Japan expressly provides that Mr. Stevens and all foreign railway experts shall be withdrawn when the troops are withdrawn.

From these observations it will be seen that the purpose of the continuance of American troops in Siberia is that we, with the concurrence of the great allied powers, may keep open a necessary artery of trade and extend to the vast population of Siberia the economic aid essential to it in peace time, but indispensable under the conditions which have followed the prolonged and exhausting participation by Russia in the war against the Central Powers. This participation was obviously of incalculable value to the allied cause, and in a very particular way commends the exhausted people who suffered from it to such assistance as we can render to bring about their industrial and economic rehabilitation.

Very respectfully, yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,

*August 5, 1918.*

## FOR THE PRESS:

The Acting Secretary of State issues the following statement to the press in re American-Japanese action in Siberia:

In the judgment of the Government of the United States, a judgment arrived at after repeated and very searching considerations of the whole situation, military intervention in Russia would be more likely to add to the present sad confusion there than to cure it, and would injure Russia rather than help her out of her distresses.

Such military intervention as has been most frequently proposed even supposing it to be efficacious in its immediate object of delivering an attack upon Germany from the east, would in its judgment be more likely to turn out to be merely a method of making use of Russia than to be a method of serving her. Her people, if they profited by it at all, could not profit by it in time to deliver them from their present desperate difficulties, and their substance would meantime be used to maintain foreign armies, not to reconstitute their own or to feed their own men, women, and children. We are bending all our energies now to the purpose, the resolute and confident purpose, of winning on the western front, and it would in the judgment of the Government of the United States be most unwise to divide or dissipate our forces.

As the Government of the United States sees the present circumstances, therefore, military action is admissible in Russia now only to render such protection and help as is possible to the Czech Slovaks against the armed Austrian and German prisoners who are attacking them and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense in which the Russians themselves may be willing to accept assistance. Whether from Vladivostok or from Murmansk and Archangel, the only present object for which American troops will be employed will be to guard military stores which may subsequently be needed by Russian forces and to render such aid as may be acceptable to the Russians in the organization of their own self-defense.

With such objects in view the Government of the United States is now cooperating with the Governments of France and Great Britain in the neighborhood of Murmansk and Archangel. The United States and Japan are the only powers which are just now in a position to act in Siberia in sufficient force to accomplish even such modest objects as those that have been outlined. The Government of the United States, has, therefore, proposed to the Government of Japan that each of the two governments send a force of a few thousand men to Vladivostok, with the purpose of cooperating as a single force in the occupation of Vladivostok and in safeguarding, so far as it may, the country to the rear of the westward-moving Czecho-Slovaks; and the Japanese Government has consented.

In taking this action the Government of the United States wishes to announce to the people of Russia in the most public and solemn manner that it contemplates no interference with the political sovereignty of Russia, no intervention in her internal affairs—even in the local affairs of the limited areas which her military force

may be obliged to occupy—and no impairment of her territorial integrity, either now or hereafter, but that what we are about to do has as its single and only object the rendering of such aid as shall be acceptable to the Russian people themselves in their endeavors to regain control of their own affairs, their own territory, and their own destiny. The Japanese Government, it is understood, will give a similar assurance.

These plans and purposes of the Government of the United States have been communicated to the Governments of Great Britain, France, and Italy, and those Governments have advised the Department of State that they assent to them in principle. No conclusion of the Government of the United States has arrived at in this important matter is intended, however, as an effort to restrict the actions or interfere with the independent judgment of the Governments with which we are now associated in the war.

It is also the hope and purpose of the Government of the United States to take advantage of the earliest opportunity to send to Siberia a commission of merchants, agricultural experts, labor advisers, Red Cross representatives, and agents of the Young Men's Christian Association accustomed to organizing the best methods of spreading useful information and rendering educational help of a modest kind in order in some systematic way to relieve the immediate economic necessities of the people there in every way for which an opportunity may be open. The execution of this plan will follow and will not be permitted to embarrass the military assistance rendered to the Czechs-Slovaks.

It is the hope and expectation of the Government of the United States that the Governments with which it is associated will, wherever necessary or possible, lend their active aid in the execution of these military and economic plans.







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