

S. HARRISON

***The Western Interventions  
in the Soviet Union  
1918-1920***

*by*

**D. F. FLEMING**

# ***The Western Interventions***

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**I**N RECENT years the American and Soviet peoples and governments have discovered that they have much in common. Each conquered a great continental empire. Both are developing runaway technological civilizations which produce essentially the same kinds of technocrats and managers. Both are developing the ultimate weapons of destruction and can go on doing so indefinitely—at huge expense—until the day when the gadgets of doom destroy man himself. Knowing that this can already happen at any time, they are even united in wishing to stop the spread of these nation-killers into the hands of lesser men, some of whom may have highly explosive emotions. But for Vietnam, a détente between the two super powers would now be very far advanced.

Of course the abysmal difference remains between them as to who shall get the profits of business and industry, though even this chasm seems to narrow somewhat. What does not narrow is the gap in their experiences during the two world wars. In each case they fought on the same side, but both times Russia was terribly devastated, almost mortally wounded, while the United States suffered no damage on its continental territory. To us the wars were unpleasant but victorious and highly prosperous periods; to the Soviet peoples they are agonies still felt in their souls. Moreover, this almost unbridgeable difference in experience grows because we naturally tend to forget what the Russians suffered and think they should forget it too.

This is not as much true of World War II, when the vast struggles and sieges in Russia meant much to us too, as it is of World War I and the Western Interventions which followed it. Most Americans knew little about the interventions at the time and it has been a minor episode in history to later generations, especially since the Cold War began promptly after the end of World War II.

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Indeed one reviewer of my book about the Cold War stamped as utter "historical nonsense" my statement that the interventions had "resulted in the death of 7,500,000 Russians—as many as died in World War I, but in more horrible ways."

Yet the fact remains that the new Soviet Union was invaded from all four sides by armies either sent by Russia's recent allies or equipped by them. Let us sketch some of the actions involved.

### **In the East**

THE presence in Siberia of 45,000 to 60,000 Czechoslovak deserters from the Austrian armies, who had been fighting alongside the Russians, proved to be the circumstance which precipitated large-scale Allied intervention. The Czechoslovak National Council wanted to bring these troops out to reinforce the Western front in France in 1918, but friction between them and the Soviets led to the seizure of the Trans-Siberian railway by the Czech forces, and under their protection two relatively democratic anti-Soviet governments were set up which were soon succeeded by a monarchist dictatorship at Omsk under Admiral Kolchak.

These events led the British Ministry of War, as early as April 1, 1918, to decide that the Czech troops should not be brought out, but remain to oppose the Bolsheviks. The French Government was at first opposed, wanting reinforcements in the West, but it agreed by mid-June, and on July 12 the Czechoslovaks who had captured Vladivostok began moving West, back into Siberia.<sup>1</sup>

These developments greatly heartened all of the elements of the old regime and gave substance to the civil war, the struggle of the "Whites" against the Reds. The British did all that they could to equip Kolchak's forces. On one occasion Prime Minister Lloyd George declared in the House of Commons that Great Britain had sent "one hundred million pounds sterling' worth (\$500,000,000) of material and support in every form" and on November 17, 1919 he said that no country had "spent more in supporting the anti-revolutionary elements in Russia." Naming France, Japan and America, he said: "Britain has contributed more than all these powers put together." On May 29, Churchill had said in the House of the Kolchak forces: "In the main these armies are equipped by British munitions and rifles, and a certain portion of the troops are actually wearing British uniforms."<sup>2</sup> Some 79 shiploads of equipment were sent.

Yet Kolchak's forces were defeated and they fled east along the Trans-Siberian railway toward Vladivostok, in the dead of winter,

accompanied by hordes of Whites along the roads. One landowner had a train of 60 wagons containing his possessions and people.

In *The White Armies of Russia* (Macmillan, 1933), George Stewart has left an unforgettable picture of this tragic retreat. In one city alone 60,000 died of typhus and on the 1500 mile trek from the River Tobol to Lake Baikal alone, 1,000,000 men, women and children perished.

It did not help either that President Wilson had reluctantly sent 7,000 American troops to Vladivostok, largely to checkmate the Japanese, who sent 72,000 troops anyway and stayed in the region until the winters and the Reds drove them out in 1922.

Earlier two White bandit leaders, protected by the Japanese, had massacred great numbers of people. After some initial skirmishes with the Reds our General Graves held rigidly to his instructions not to aid either side and he wrote that "I am well on the side of safety when I say that the anti-Bolsheviks killed 100 people in Eastern Siberia, to every one killed by the Bolsheviks."<sup>3</sup>

In Japan, the struggle between the moderates and the military expansionists was "not fully resolved until the greater cataclysm of the Second World War."<sup>4</sup>

On December 23, 1917, Britain and France had made an agreement dividing European Russia into zones of influence and exploitation. By its terms the British zone was to include North Russia, the Baltic States, the Caucasus and its great oil fields, the Kuban, Armenia, Georgia and Kurdistan. The French zone comprised the Ukraine, Crimea and east to the Don River. A dispatch from the Ukraine to the Foreign Office in Paris stated that the Ukraine would become "la plus belle colonie de France."<sup>5</sup>

### **In the South**

GENERAL Denikin, the White leader in the South, was informed on April 4, 1919 that the French would control everything in their zone, including "operations against the Bolsheviks," but the French troops who had fought on the Western Front had no desire to die in Russia. They succumbed to Red propaganda so fast that they had to be evacuated in haste from Odessa and Sevastopol in April 1919. The British tried to keep a hold on the Russian oil region, where they had investments, but unrest in Ireland and India compelled them gradually to relax their grip, though they clung to Batum until July 1920. The presence of British troops there did not prevent the capture of the city in September 1918 by a force of Turks and Tatars, who mas-

<sup>1</sup> Louis Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, New York, 1930, Vol. I, pp. 114-15.

<sup>2</sup> *The United States and the Soviet Union*, New York, The American Foundation, 1933, pp. 253, 319, 321; *Hansard*, November 17, 1919, Col. 721; W. T. Goode, *Is Intervention in Russia a Myth?*, London, 1931, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> William S. Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure*, New York, 1941, pp. 49-50, 354.

<sup>4</sup> James M. Morley, *The Japanese Thrust into Siberia*, Columbia University Press, 1957, pp. 286-7, 312-3.

<sup>5</sup> Fischer, *supra*, pp. 154-55; Goode, *supra*, p. 21. The text of the Anglo-French agreement is carried in Fischer as an Appendix.

sacred 30,000 Armenians and indulged in a wholesale orgy of murder, rape, arson and pillage.<sup>6</sup>

The number of Allied troops used in South Russia may never be known accurately. On March 28, 1919 Stephen Pichon, French Foreign Minister, listed a total of 850,000 men as employed in South Russia, including: French, 140,000; Rumanian, 190,000; British, 140,000; Italian, 40,000; Serbs, 140,000; and Greeks, 200,000.<sup>7</sup> Louis Fischer speaks of "some 12,000 troops including Algerians, Senegalians, Poles and Greeks" occupying the Ukrainian coast of the Black Sea, backed by a big Anglo-French fleet, and a force of similar composition in the Crimea.<sup>8</sup>

The main effort to defeat the Reds in South Russia was made by equipping and advising the White Armies led by General Denikin. Churchill later summarized the British contributions as follows: "A quarter million rifles, two hundred guns, thirty tanks and large masses of munitions and equipment were sent through the Dardanelles and the Black Sea to the port of Novorossiisk; and several hundred British officers and non-commissioned officers, as advisers, instructors, store-keepers, and even a few aviators furthered the organization of his armies."<sup>9</sup>

The French material contribution to Denikin, while less than the British, was also large. In Washington Ambassador Bakhmetev was permitted to use considerable credits granted to the Kerensky Government just before its fall.<sup>10</sup>

All this aid enabled Denikin's forces to win large battles and to take Odessa, Kharkov, Kiev, Kursk and Orel (places made tragically famous again in World War II) before their 1,000 mile front collapsed, only 200 miles from Moscow, and disaster ensued.

Another long tragic retreat began, in which thousands of refugees from every city joined. Before the desperate savage multitude reached Novorossiisk more than 200,000 people had died of typhus and exposure. Whole trains on the railroad became silent, with every person aboard dead, including the crews. When the survivors reached the port, in March 1920, a raging "Borah" wind covered the sidewalks with blue bodies, largely stripped by the survivors. Typhus and smallpox continued their deadly work, while at Odessa, people fought for places on the transports. Some 50,000 embarked, but many more were left behind.

In the Crimea, General Wrangel brought some order out of chaos and in May and June 1920 his 40,000 fit troops defeated the Reds in Taurida, just north of the Isthmus, in a series of sanguinary battles, but after the Russo-Polish war was ended, on October 12, 1920, the Red Army swept the White forces into the sea. Some 126 ships carried 146,000 people away from the Crimea to exile and penury abroad. Behind them their native land lay filled

<sup>6</sup> F. L. Schuman, *Soviet Politics at Home and Abroad*, New York, 1946, p. 153.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Pichon, "Allied Policy in Russia," *Current History*, Vol. 10, Pt. 1, No. 2, May 1919, pp. 280-1.

<sup>8</sup> Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>9</sup> Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis: The Aftermath*, New York, 1931, pp. 246-50.

<sup>10</sup> William Henry Chamberlain, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*, New York, 1935, Vol. II, p. 170.

with ruined cities, wrecked railroads, hungry, plague-stricken people and unburied corpses—fit soil for the apocalyptic famine of 1921-2.<sup>11</sup>

### **In the West**

**T**HE POLISH INVASION. The debacle of the White armies in the South opened the way for a full-scale invasion by the Poles, aimed at "the permanent weakening of Russia" by seizing the vast areas between the Baltic and Black Sea, cutting her off from both and seizing most of her agricultural and mineral wealth.<sup>12</sup>

Striking swiftly, the Poles captured Kiev, capital of the Ukraine on May 8, 1920, before being hurled back by the Red Army to the gates of Warsaw. This major war could not have taken place had the Poles not been well armed by the British and French, both of which had now to pour munitions and 400 French officers through Danzig to reorganize the Poles who then drove the Red armies back, enabling Poland to retain a broad strip of Ukrainian and White Russian territory. It was this area, inhabited by alien peoples under Polish landlords, which prevented any Polish-Russian accord to oppose Hitler.

*In the Baltic*, the White General Yudenich was armed and supplied for a dash to Petrograd in the late summer of 1919. The British supplied the munitions and the American Relief Administration, which was saving hundreds of thousands of lives in the area from famine, supplied the gasoline and food for the thrust. It was agreed that a part of the food could be sold at high prices to finance the expedition, which almost reached Petrograd before it was thrown back in October, with a loss of 14,000 men from typhus during the retreat and a train of 21,000 starving refugees.<sup>13</sup>

### **In North Russia**

**T**HE Allied operations in this area began with the consent of the Soviet Government in the Spring of 1918, to avert a threat of German capture of Murmansk, with its great military stores sent there by the Allies.

Murmansk was occupied and a break with the Soviets soon occurred. Archangel was seized by British troops at the beginning of August and 5,500 American troops arrived the next day, sent by President Wilson with great reluctance. After the war with Germany ended, on November 11, 1918, various excuses for remaining were found by the Allies. Offensive action against the Reds, fanning out in five directions, continued through the bitter winter along with much corruption and troop dissatisfaction in the two ports, and with mounting protests at home.

The evacuation of the Americans began late in May 1919, but the

<sup>11</sup> D. F. Fleming, *The Cold War and Its Origins, 1917-1960*, New York, 1961, Vol. I, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 301.

<sup>13</sup> Stewart, *op. cit.*, pp. 222, 226; E. A. Ross, *The Russian Soviet Republic*, New York, 1923, p. 258.

British stayed on and under Churchill's orders an offensive was prepared in the direction of Kotlas in the hope of making a junction with Kolchak's forces and putting a real stranglehold on Moscow. Some 37,000 splendidly equipped troops were accumulated, but Kolchak's collapse ended all hopes of a strategic union with him. Then more troops had to be sent to help extricate the British Army from Archangel, which was done on September 27, 1919, after hard fighting all summer. The allies left Murmansk on October 12, after several near disasters, advising the puppet General Miller not to try to hold both ports, but he did so and lost both in February 1920.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Immediate Results**

**W**HY THE SOVIETS WON. Anyone who delves only a little into the history of the Civil War and Western Interventions is soon compelled to wonder why the Soviets won. Louis Fischer aptly described their situation when the great struggle began:

Intervention found the Soviets standing alone on a small piece of territory faced by a combination of Russia's *bourgeoisie* and a group of foreign countries. They had little money, an imperfect organization, a weak army, limited experience, and insufficient military equipment. The enemy disposed of huge financial resources, expert military leadership, boundless supplies of arms, munitions and stores, great stretches of territory (Siberia, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, the North, etc.), and the richest agricultural, raw-material producing and industrial sections of the country.<sup>15</sup>

As the Tsarist forces, powered by the West, got underway with their assaults on the small center of Russia held by the Reds the situation of the Soviets worsened. At one time they were compressed into a small area around Leningrad and Moscow. As Fischer describes it,

the encirclement of Soviet Russia which Clemenceau had planned was now complete. On the west, Russia was cut off from the outside world by the Baltic buffers, the Germans, the British fleet and by Poland; on the north, by British, French, American, Italian and Serbian troops; on the south by the French in the Ukraine, Denikin in the Kuban, and the British in Caucasia and Transcaspia; on the east, finally by the Japanese and their faithful atamans in Eastern Serbia, and by the Czechs and Kolchak in Western Serbia.<sup>16</sup>

With all hope of making terms with the outside world ended, after urgent and repeated attempts to do so, the Soviet leaders had no choice but to start from scratch and raise a great army. Tsarist officers were cajoled and coerced into serving again and in the later stages many joined voluntarily, notably General Brusilov who became Commander-in-Chief against the Poles. Conscription and discipline were enforced and communist fervor and teaching fired enough

<sup>14</sup> L. I. Strakhovsky, *The Origins of American Intervention in North Russia*, 1918, Princeton, 1937, pp. 6, 16, 98; Konni Zilliacus, *Mirror of the Past*, New York, 1946, pp. 273-3; Stewart, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-95, 195-204.

<sup>15</sup> Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

recruits to win the war, under the generally acknowledged heroic leadership of War Commissar Leon Trotsky. The army was almost doubled in August 1918 and reached 800,000 men by the end of the year. By 1920 the figure was 3,000,000 and during that year it nearly doubled again, though there were never arms for more than 500,000 troops.

The Soviets were greatly aided, too, by the conduct of the aristocrats and landlords who officered the White armies. They treated the peasants like dirt, tried to recover control of the land and roused them into a great force on the side of the Reds. Thus the interventions gained great loyalty for the Red regime, stirred it to forge a powerful state machine by harsh draconian methods and to create a great army much quicker than it could or would have done otherwise.

These results comprised the true defeat of the interventions. As W. P. and Zelda Coates put it in their fine book, *Armed Interventions in Russia, 1918-1920, 1918-1922*, the interventions worked "to give strength and cohesion to the Soviet Government, and, by so doing, achieved exactly the opposite effect of what was intended."<sup>17</sup>

This is a quotation from the report of the distinguished Committee of Inquiry headed by Lord Emmott appointed by the British Coalition Government (1918-1922) which had led in waging the interventions. In the light of the fact that "at least 90 per cent of the Russian people were opposed to the blockade, armed intervention and support of the rebel 'White' Generals," the authors conclude that it "is indisputable that there was not the slightest moral warrant for the policy pursued by the British and other Allied governments." The Coates add that the Russian Whites never had any loyalty to the Allies. They were concerned only in recovering their own properties and privileges.

A further reason for the failure of the interventions is to be found in the inability of the Western governments to go all-out to restore the Whites. Deep war-weariness at the end of World War I made it impossible to lead or drive the Allied peoples to the necessary efforts. The troops sent had no heart in the undertaking. They were recurrently in a state of mutiny or nearly so and the people back home would not support the interventions. The relatives of the American troops sent called for their return and in Britain the Labor Party Conference in June 1919 demanded an end of the interventions and called for "the unreserved use of both political and industrial power." There were great street demonstrations to enforce the demand and in May 1920 dock workers' strikes stopped the sending of munitions to Poland.<sup>18</sup>

Another basic consideration to keep in mind is the near certainty that the Civil War would not have amounted to much in the absence

<sup>17</sup> London, 1935, pp. 366-7.

<sup>18</sup> Zilliacus, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-82; Goode, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

of the great supplies poured into Russia by the Allies, along with finances, encouragement and aid in organization.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Costs to the Soviet Peoples**

**I**N 1960 George F. Kennan wrote that the interventions "did not resemble in any way the major concerted effort to overthrow the Soviet Government which Soviet historiography today depicts. . . ." It was merely "a series of confused and uncoordinated military efforts." More serious damage was probably done, he adds, "by the support given by the Allies to the Russian Whites in supplies and munitions. . . ."

This of course is the giant iceberg concealed beneath the protruding tips of the Western interventions which Western scholars now barely perceive. It was this massive and tenacious support in the sinews of war which made the interventions into calamity for Russia equivalent to World War I, if not exceeding it. As Kennan himself said on an earlier page: "By November 1918 it was already evident that without extensive foreign military support, the White (anti-Bolshevik) cause would fail. . . ." In 1967 it is impossible to estimate exactly how many millions of Russian lives were ruined or ended as a result of the interventions. One of the best studies is certain that "not thousands but millions of Soviet citizens lost their lives."<sup>20</sup>

It could not be otherwise, for Russia was already exhausted and thoroughly disorganized by her heroic but pathetic efforts for four years during World War I, when so many millions of her best men had been mobilized and hurled almost unarmed and unsupplied against the superbly equipped German and Austrian war machines. Then in 1918 the chaos of three years of intervention and civil war descended on her and when it was all over in 1921 the Soviet Union was devastated throughout her vast expanses, from Poland to the Pacific and from the Arctic to the Caucasus. Millions of poor civilians had died of abuse, hunger and famine, which was soon to claim millions more. Everything was in a far worse state than at the time of the March 1917 revolution, bad as that was. Hatred and degradation filled the land. The upper classes in whose behalf the war had been fought had been humiliated and broken in labor battalions, killed and scattered abroad to live in bitter exile.

The results of the Allied interventions have been tellingly summarized by Bruce Lockhart, who was the British Agent to the Soviets after formal diplomatic intercourse was interrupted. His conclusions are that by June 1918 there was no danger of Russia being overrun

<sup>19</sup> Goode, *Is Intervention in Russia a Myth?* p. 33. When the first important gathering of Russian monarchists occurred in Rostov in South Russia during December 1917, its leaders were at once offered \$100,000,000 by the British Government and 100,000,000 rubles by the French to make war on the Soviet Government. Schuman, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-4.

<sup>20</sup> *The Coates*, *op. cit.*, p. 369; George F. Kennan, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1941*, New York, 1960, pp. 29-30, 123 (An Anvil paperback by Van Nostrand).

by Germany, that it was a mistake to intervene at all, that the consequences were "disastrous both to our prestige and to the fortunes of those Russians who supported us" and that they regarded the intervention "as an attempt to overthrow Bolshevism."<sup>21</sup>

Some of the horrors accompanying the interventions were scarcely heard of in Britain, let alone the United States. In South Russia from 300,000 to 500,000 Jews were massacred by the Whites. In 1923 Dr. J. H. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi of London, published a pamphlet in which he described the wholesale slaughter, "drownings, burnings and burials alive" along with diabolic torture, and the most bestial violations of young girls before their parents' eyes. In many populous Jewish communities no survivors were left to bury the dead. Adding those who perished indirectly from hunger, cold and disease, he estimated that "the dread total will be very nearly half a million human beings." Yet all this continued for nearly two years "without any protest by the civilized Powers, with hardly any notice in the English press of this systematic extermination." W. T. Goode concludes that "even the horrors committed directly by the Whites can be laid largely at the door of foreign intervention," since the Allies organized and equipped them and kept them on the march for many months.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Reasons for the Interventions**

**W**HAT were the reasons for the interventions which condemned millions of people to death, directly or indirectly, by exposure, plagues and famine?

After the Russians left the war in 1917 the French yearned for the reconstitution of some kind of second front to keep the Germans from transferring millions of troops to the Western Front. They did not foresee that Ludendorff would later testify that the troops he got transferred to the French front were of little use when they arrived. But after the end of the war Clemenceau soon concluded that the victory would have to be reinforced by the encirclement and ultimate overthrow of Bolshevism, and plans were made accordingly.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of the Japanese and the Poles the motives were strongly imperialistic and the same urges animated the British and French in lesser degrees. But the authors quoted above agree that the suppression of Bolshevism rapidly became the dominant aim. One says that after the Armistice the object was "purely to destroy the Bolsheviks." Another finds that after November 1918 "the civil war in Russia became a clear-cut struggle between Red revolution and black reaction" and that the Allies sided with the latter. He adds, however, that "the weakening of Russia was the motive which united all types of interventionists in England." The ancient rivalry would not down. "There

<sup>21</sup> R. H. Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent*, New York, 1932, pp. 311-12.

<sup>22</sup> W. T. Goode, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-3, 102-3.

<sup>23</sup> A. E. C. Quainton, "The French in South Russia, 1918 and After," *St. Antony's Papers in Soviet Affairs*, St. Antony's College, Oxford, February 2, 1959.

could be little doubt that the main underlying motive actuating the protagonists of armed intervention was hostility to the Soviet regime; the fear of a successful workers' Government in any country."<sup>24</sup>

A very perceptive doctoral dissertation at Stanford University concluded that the essence of the interventions was an attempt to overthrow Bolshevism, but that the reluctant and restrained American participation "helped to restrain the Japanese, British and French and to prevent the detachment of the Russian Far East."<sup>25</sup>

### Legality

WHILE the Allied Governments sent their troops into the Soviet Union, from all four sides, and powered a disastrous civil war throughout the immense reaches of the Russian realm, no one seems to have bothered about the question of legality, any more than our Government has concerned itself lately while violating all the great charters—Nuremberg, UN and OAS—as well as its own laws and Constitution in trying to control Cuba, Santo Domingo and Vietnam.

After the event, in 1921, the British Court of Appeal held that from the dispersal of the Constituent Assembly on December 30, 1917 "it must be accepted that the Soviet assumed the position of a sovereign Government and purported to act as such." Under this judgment the Soviet Government was "an independent sovereign Government" all during the period of the Western interventions and the White Russian forces were rebels and not belligerents.<sup>26</sup>

### The Long Term Consequences

I HAVE indicated above that the interventions not only failed to suppress communism but entrenched it instead. In another place I have explained more fully the extent to which this occurred:

Within the limits of the exhaustion and chaos which lay all around them the Reds waged the first total war. They had to do so in order to survive. In the fires of this grim testing time they also hammered out the machinery of the totalitarian state—organized terror by the secret police, the planned use of all national resources, nationalization of all industry, class war in the villages in order to feed the starving cities (which later ended in the forced collectivization of the land), a monolithic, highly disciplined Party controlling and unifying all activity, military or civil, and a powerful army, taught and schooled with every means at command.

These pillars of totalitarian state power might well have been erected under the Soviet State in the course of time, without the compelling whip of the Civil Wars. They may all have been implicit in Marxism, but it is altogether unlikely that they would have been built as quickly and strongly. Evolution in the Soviet Union would have proceeded much more slowly and, in all probability, with much greater moderation, without the scourging compulsion of Western intervention.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Goode, *op. cit.*, p. 17; Fischer, pp. 138-9; Coares, p. 359.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin J. Bock, *The Origins of the Interallied Occupation in Eastern Asia, 1918-1920*, p. 33. Unpublished.

<sup>26</sup> Coares, *op. cit.*, pp. 368-9.

<sup>27</sup> Fleming, *The Cold War and Its Origins*, 1918-1920, Vol. I, p. 32.

It is doubtful that all this was even dimly understood at the time, or that it is yet. The passion against communism was so strong that even the *New York Times* gave its readers no indication that the West was defeating itself. On August 10, 1920 the *New Republic* published a now famous study by Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz of the coverage of Russian news by our leading newspaper from March 1917 to March 1920. This long and revealing document shows that after the Soviets accepted the German dictated Treaty of Brest-Litovsk "organized propaganda for intervention penetrates the news" and after the Armistice in November 1918 the Red peril took the lead. Thereafter the study found "passionate argument masquerading as news," in headlines as well as articles, especially in predicting the doom of the Soviets. Thus in the two years after November 1917 it was predicted no less than 91 times that "the Soviets were nearing their rope's end or had actually reached it" and their collapse was reported 19 times. Even the deep Polish invasion of Russia was made to seem somehow defensive.<sup>28</sup>

Accordingly, for the American people the cosmic tragedy of the interventions in Russia does not exist, or it was an unimportant incident long forgotten. But for the Soviet peoples and their leaders the period was a time of endless killing, of looting and rapine, of plague and famine, of measureless suffering for scores of millions—an experience burned into the very soul of a nation, not to be forgotten for many generations, if ever. Also for many years the harsh Soviet regimentations could all be justified by fear that the capitalist powers would be back to finish the job. It is not strange that in his address in New York, September 17, 1959, Premier Khrushchev should remind us of the interventions, "the time you sent your troops to quell the revolution," as he put it.<sup>29</sup>

This was not fair to the restrained American role in the period, but it should remind us of the futility of trying to suppress deep-seated revolutions, especially after cataclysmic wars. The distinguished sociologist E. A. Ross wrote as early as 1921 that "under the pitiless pelting of facts" he had had to give up the idea that the Russian Revolution was the work of a handful of extremists. "If the train bearing Lenin and 18 other Bolsheviks back to Russia had fallen through a bridge," he says, "the peasants would have seized the estates and the soldiers would have quit fighting. The robbed and oppressed masses—a hundred millions of men and women—would have moved toward the goal of their long unfilled desires like a flow of molten lava that no human force can dam or turn aside."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz, "A Test of the News," *New Republic*, August 4, 1920, Vol. II, after p. 288.

<sup>29</sup> *The Times*, London, September 18, 1959.

<sup>30</sup> Ross, *The Russian Bolshevik Revolution*, New York, 1921.

## Containment — Vietnam

AFTER World War II, which again brought almost limitless agonies and losses to the Soviet Union, once more through a great German invasion, there was no question of invading her to stamp out communism. But her Western allies did move promptly, after Roosevelt, to forbid any further expansion of Russian power or of communism.

This "containment" policy, enshrined in the Truman Doctrine, plainly forbade any more popular revolutions, lest they turn Red. This has been our great *leitmotiv* since 1947. In pursuit of it we have led the world in spending a trillion and a half dollars on armaments, while the great underdeveloped southern part of the world moved toward revolution through population explosion and poverty, and our own cities became vast smoldering ghettos for our Negro people.

Then as Russia consolidated her position in power and grew more conservative, the American military industrial complex turned its main attention to the containment and encirclement of China, by every known means, and to policing the rest of East Asia.

After the Korean War our chief attention centered on Vietnam, where we poured arms into the hands of the French up to 1954, to aid their reconquest of Vietnam. Then Washington took over the job itself and for another dozen years has been using every known military technique, including many measures with genocidal effects, to subdue the Vietnamese and crush a deepseated revolution against an ancient landlord-oligarchical system. Endless quantities of bombs of many kinds, crop killers, paralyzing gases, artillery, tanks, troops, etc., have been applied year after year—and yet the little brown people still fight on—aided finally by powerful Soviet weapons which reduce somewhat the almost complete inequality of weapons in the struggle.

### The Future?

AND now on August 8, 1967, R. W. Apple of the *New York Times* cables from Saigon an analysis of our plight there which concludes: (1) that though we have counted the bodies of 200,000 Vietnamese fighters in the past ten years, the enemy now has a record total of 297,000 men in the field; (2) that he has been equipped with many powerful weapons, in spite of our perpetual bombing; (3) that we are reaching the bottom of our ready manpower pool, while the North Vietnamese have committed only a fifth of their Regular Army; and (4) that if both the North Vietnamese and ourselves withdrew, the South Vietnamese regime "would almost certainly crumble in months, so little have the root problems been touched." He finds the Saigon troops "poorly motivated" and led by corrupt, incompetent officers who work a 4½ day week, leaving their troops at Friday noon for long weekends in Saigon. This report is correctly entitled in the Man-

chester *Guardian* "A Stalemate in Vietnam—'and No Way Out.'"

After half a dozen great campaigns over the past decade to herd the peasants into concentration camps by various names, they will not be "pacified." They, and a large majority of the other Vietnamese still insist on controlling their own affairs and on having the same kind of social revolution that has been carried through in Russia and in China.

It is utterly and absolutely incredible that our galaxy of fire powers applied to them, beyond the scale of World War II, should not produce compliance with our wishes that there be no revolution. Yet the struggle goes on. A million of them have been killed and another million made wretched refugees, but our will does not prevail.

Once again it would seem that the deep devotion, patience and heroism, the burning determination of men to defend their country and have a better way of life—in short the aroused human spirit—can defeat any intervention that stops short of crushing genocide, even in a small country.

Are our leaders capable of learning this recurring lesson of history? Or must they continue their efforts to enforce a conservative *Pax Americana* around the world?

