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Book Review #8
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Bradley, John F. Allied Intervention in Russia. London:
Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968. 251 pp.

In this small volume, John Bradley has attempted to write a history of Allied intervention in Soviet Russia, but it remains unclear whether he has really succeeded in explaining a complicated and controversial subject. The difficulty, the author contends, lies partly in the gaps in available sources and partly because of the large number of parties involved in the intervention. The most outstanding feature of this book is Bradley's comprehensive review of available sources in the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Austria and his short bibliographical essay evaluating them. A thirty-seven page bibliography of unpublished and published materials in English, Russian, German, French, Polish, and Czech is also provided.

Bradley states at the very beginning that the history of the civil war and intervention is complicated (p. viii), and he does not succeed in dispelling that notion. Events that occurred in Omsk, Irkutsk, and Vladivostok were simply beyond the reach of Allied diplomats in Paris, no matter how hard they tried to guide them. In addition to the problems of distance and communication, there were those of competing national interests. The Czech government was in Prague, had delegations in Paris, London, and Washington, and maintained political representatives throughout Siberia. Also in Siberia were Czech

officers and French, ^{and?} British military and political advisors. Under the best of conditions, the coordination of any policy would have been difficult, but in the chaos of civil war, in the midst of personal intrigues, with Franco-British political rivalry, and because of communications difficulties it is not surprising that the Czech revolt followed a spontaneous, uncontrolled course. Besides, any intervention in Soviet Russia was seriously hampered by Franco-British rivalry and their inability to harmonize national policies, or to even clearly define those aims, let alone coordinate diverse White movements.

The Czech revolt may be said to have "officially" begun 14 May 1918 in Cheliabinsk, but that incident was merely the culmination of escalating Czech frustration in trying to reach Vladivostok. Soon the entire Trans-Siberian railway was under Czech control. This then prompted the Allies, especially the United States, to reevaluate intervention to protect the Czechs. American and Japanese troops landed in Vladivostok. British and French advisors and aid were dispatched to Siberia. Once involved in Russia, it is amazing to read of the Allies continually shifting, contradictory plans for using the Czechs to prolong the civil war; (Much of the lack of Allied purpose derived from simply a lack of available shipping to remove the Czechs from Russia) but whatever plans may have been made, reality was made on-the-spot in Siberia by the Czech Legion and Allied advisors. Understandably, an important point brought out by Bradley is Czech morale which was low when the revolt began

and remained low throughout, as Czech soldiers remained primarily preoccupied with getting out of Russia. Thus, lack of enthusiasm and numbers and confused Allied policies effectively doomed the Allies' grandiose plans.

Bradley's concluding remarks leave the reader a little uneasy. He points out the failure of intervention due to technical shortcomings, lack of real planning, bad intelligence, international rivalry, and public opinion. Basically though, "the overall failure of the Allied intervention was caused by Allied inability to harmonize national interests in the struggle against the bolsheviks [sic]." (p. 213) The author, however, makes two disquieting remarks that leave one wondering about his grasp of this subject. Ignoring the example of the Nineteenth century "Concert of Europe," Bradley states that "it was difficult for the Allies to decide on intervention in Russia. This was so above all by the lack of a single historical precedent." (p. 211) Further on in another offhand remark, he characterizes the intervention and civil war as "never vitally threatening the bolsheviks." (p. 214)

Bradley's work is further marred by a number of small, accumulating errors. There are persistent grammatical misconstructions. For example, "On 16 March Drysdale reported that at Nikovsk prisoners were almost free fraternizing with the bolsheviks [sic]." (p. 51) As seen here, Bradley also refuses to capitalize the word "Bolsheviks." Geographical names present another confusing problem: Vilno (p. 193), Wilno (p.

197), and Vilna (p. 200). There are also oversights in the bibliography: no author is indicated for The Soviets in World Affairs (Louis Fischer). A major difficulty arises with the footnotes which are almost exclusively citations of diplomatic correspondence, e.g. "Lavergne to Clemenceau, 1 June 1918." (p. 46) This raises the fundamental question of intention. Is the book a synthesis, which the massive bibliography would imply, or new original research based exclusively on archival sources? The fact remains that it seems quite impossible that an entire book, which deals with this chaotic period, and considering the author's acknowledgement of the problem with sources, was ~~written~~ entirely based on diplomatic communications.

For a variety of reasons--the grammar which suggests translation, the insistent use of the uncapitalized "bolsheviks" which connotes hostility, the extensive use of Czech and Polish sources, the manner of footnoting, the peculiar emphasis on the Czech revolt--the reader will eventually suspect that the author is a Czech. In fact, Bradley was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1930. He was arrested nineteen years later, tried as a spy, and sentenced to ten years of hard labor in the Uranium mines from which he later escaped. (Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, vol.10, p. 65)

Thus, the purpose of Bradley's book remains unclear. In his narrative he repeatedly emphasizes the low morale of the Czech Legion which implies that the Czech soldiers had no real stomach for intervention and that it was only the intrigues of

certain officers, e.g. Generals Gajda or Pavlu and the French officers Major Guinet and Captain Bordes, or Allied plans that kept the Legion fighting in Siberia. The question somehow remains: If the revolt broke out in the spring of 1918 and the last Czech troops left Vladivostok in June 1920, why did they continue to fight if their morale was so abysmally poor? In other words, Bradley attempts to portray the Czech soldiers in Soviet Russia as the innocent victims of Allied diplomatic manipulations.

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