

BENJAMIN ISITT

Mutiny from Victoria to Vladivostok, December 1918



On 21 December 1918, French-Canadian soldiers mutinied in the streets of Victoria, BC. Their story has never been told. Conscripts in the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force, these young men broke ranks while marching from the Willows Camp to the troopship *Teesta*, about to embark for Vladivostok, Russia. Revolver fire sounded through the city, as the obedient men were ordered to whip the mutinous back into line. At the point of bayonets, the march proceeded up Fort Street and through downtown Victoria to the outer wharf. Twenty hours passed before the last dissenters were herded aboard the *Teesta*. In the ship's hold, along with twenty-one tons of gear for the YMCA and 1700 tons of ammunition, a dozen ringleaders were detained in cells, the two worst handcuffed together. At 4:15 a.m. on 22 December 1918, the 259th Battalion of the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force set sail for Vladivostok.¹

INTRODUCTION

'Time will reveal some strange things in the great Siberian drama,' the *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, newspaper of the Victoria Trades and Labour

1 This description of the Victoria mutiny appears in a letter from a lieutenant to his wife, sent from Japan en route to Siberia. See 'What a Muddle,' *British Columbia Federationist* (hereafter cited as *Federationist*), 28 Feb. 1919. For military records pertaining to troops and cargo aboard the *Teesta*, see Divisional Transports, Vancouver, to Naval Service, Ottawa, 23 Dec. 1918, file NSC 1047-14-27 (vol. 1), vol. 3969, RG 24, Defence, Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter cited as LAC). For details of the YMCA mission in Siberia, see Charles W. Bishop, *The Canadian YMCA in the Great War: The Official Record of the Activities of the Canadian YMCA in Connection with the Great War of 1914-1918* (Toronto: National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations of Canada, 1924), 304-310.

Council, declared two days before the mutiny.² This forgotten chapter of the First World War presents several challenges of research and interpretation. Straddling military history, working-class history, and the social history of Canada and Quebec, this story fits uneasily into any one field. The Canadian experience of war has been temporally, geographically, and thematically bounded by the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918.³ A handful of historians have examined Canada's intervention in Russia, while others sought to explain the demobilization riots that erupted among Canadian troops in the British Isles; studies of the Siberian Expedition, however, underestimate the dissent among the troops, the connection of this dissent to anti-conscription sentiment in Quebec, and the process through which this dissent translated into mutiny.⁴ Absent is a serious inquiry of

2 'The Siberian Expedition,' *Victoria Semi-Weekly Tribune* (hereafter cited as *Semi-Weekly Tribune*), 19 Dec. 1918.

3 The Canadian experience on the Western Front is explored in Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War, 1914–1919* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1989); also Granatstein and Morton, *Canada and the Two World Wars* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2003); Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993) and *Canada and War: A Military and Political History* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1981). See also Gerald W.L. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War: Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914–1919* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962), and Robert Craig Brown and Ramsey Cook, *Canada, 1896–1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974). The impact of stress and exhaustion on the morale of troops, particularly in the Second World War, is the subject of Terry Copp and Bill McAndrew, *Battle Exhaustion: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Canadian Army, 1939–1945* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990). Copp points toward a more 'bottom-up' method of military history in *The Brigade: The Fifth Canadian Infantry Brigade* (Stoney Creek: Fortress, 1992).

4 Studies of the Siberian Expedition include Gaddis Smith, 'Canada and the Siberian Intervention, 1918–1919,' *American Historical Review* 64 (July 1959): 866–77; J.A. Swettenham, 'Allied Intervention in Siberia 1911–1919,' Report No. 83, Historical Section (G.S.) Army Headquarters, 20 Oct. 1959, <http://www.forces.ca/dhh/downloads/ahq/ahq083.pdf>; Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia, 1918–19: And the Part Played by Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967); Robert N. Murby, 'Canadian Economic Commission to Siberia, 1918–1919,' *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 11, no. 3 (1969): 374–93; Roy MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976); J.E. Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia, 1918–1919* (Ottawa: Access to History Publications, 1990); and reviews of Swettenham and MacLaren by William Rodney in the *Canadian Historical Review* 49, no. 2 (1968): 184–6, and *Canadian Historical Review* 58, no. 4 (1977): 515–17. For a detailed account of the Russian experience in Siberia, see N.G.O. Pereira, *White Siberia: The Politics of Civil War* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996). A one-hour CBC radio documentary on the subject, compiled by Rodney and narrated by Leigh Taylor, can be found at William Rodney,

the social movement that emerged within the Canadian working class to force their return home. Within the field of working-class history, domestic expressions of industrial unrest have been privileged over local responses to international events such as the Russian revolution. To date, no study has focused on Canadian labour's response to the Siberian Expedition. This topic raises important questions, such as the dual role of soldiers as workers, and the way class tensions were manifested within the armed forces, providing fertile ground for expanding our understanding of the working-class experience in Canada.⁵ As William Rodney observed in 1968, 'the real story of intervention and Canada's role in it has still to be written.'⁶

As the last guns sounded on the Western Front, 4000 Canadian troops assembled at Victoria for deployment to Siberia. Born at a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet in London in July 1918, the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force (CSEF) was plagued from the outset by lack of clarity about its aims; a month after the main body of the force arrived in Siberia, the order was issued from Ottawa to begin preparations for evacuation. Few troops in the CSEF ever saw direct fighting. Ambivalence in Allied strategy prevented their deployment into the interior of Siberia. Most of their time was spent training White Russian conscripts and conducting routine security operations around Vladivostok – responding to looting, theft, assault, and murder in the port city. The threat of Bolshevik insurgency precipitated countermeasures by the Canadian command and the deployment of a small number of troops to the village of Shkotova. An attempt to move a body of troops up the Trans-Siberian Railroad was thwarted by a strike of Russian rail-workers, while another train carrying the horses and men of the Royal North West Mounted

Canada and the Siberian Intervention, 1918–1919, tape reel, n.d. (ca. 1970), ID no. 416, 006 range 43, University of Victoria Archives and Special Collections (hereafter cited as UVASC).

- 5 Studies of labour and the left in British Columbia during this period include David Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978); Gerald Friesen, 'Yours in Revolt: Regionalism, Socialism, and the Western Canadian Labour Movement,' *Labour/Le Travailleur* 1 (1976): 141–57; Ronald Grantham, 'Some Aspects of the Socialist Movement in British Columbia' (master's thesis, UBC, 1942); Ross Alfred Johnson, 'No Compromise – No Political Trading: The Marxian Socialist Tradition in British Columbia' (PhD diss., UBC, 1975); Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990); and A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899–1919* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977).
- 6 William Rodney, review of *Allied Intervention in Russia*, by Swettenham, *Canadian Historical Review* 49, no. 2 (1968): 186.

Police (RNWMP) was wrecked near Irkutsk. By June 1919, all but a handful of troops had returned to Canada.

The Siberian Expedition was part of a larger Allied campaign to alter the outcome of the Russian revolution and install a more sympathetic government in Russia. From Murmansk and Archangel to Baku and Vladivostok, Canadian troops joined soldiers from thirteen countries in a multi-front strategy of encirclement designed to isolate and defeat the Bolshevik regime in Moscow.⁷ In Siberia, the Canadians backed a succession of White Russian governments, headed by General Dmitri Horvath, Grigori Semenov, and finally, Alexander Kolchak, former admiral of the czar's Black Sea Fleet, who seized power at Omsk in November 1918.

7 See 'Canadian "Syren" Party, Northern Russian Expeditionary Force (The Murman Front),' and 'Canadian "Elope" Party, Northern Russian Expeditionary Force (Archangel Front),' file 15, vol. 1872, Defence, RG 24, LAC; also John Bradley, *Allied Intervention in Russia* (Lanham, New York, and London: University Press of America, 1968); George A. Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army and Allied Intervention in South Russia, 1917–1921: A Study in the Politics and Diplomacy of the Russian Civil War* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966); MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 9–124; Leonid I. Strakhovskiy, *Intervention at Archangel: The Story of Allied Intervention and Russian Counter-Revolution in North Russia, 1918–1920* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1944); and Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia*, 187–274.

The Canadian intervention in Russia has received significantly less attention than the activities of American and British forces. See R.M. Connaughton, *The Republic of the Ushakovko: Admiral Kolchak and the Allied Intervention in Siberia, 1918–20* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990); Christopher Dobson and John Miller, *The Day They Almost Bombed Moscow: The Allied Intervention in Russia, 1918–1920* (New York: Atheneum, 1986); David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: US Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917–1920* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Michael Kettle, *The Road to Intervention: March–November 1918* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988); Robert J. Maddox, *The Unknown War with Russia: Wilson's Siberian Intervention* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio, 1977); Clarence A. Manning, *The Siberian Fiasco* (New York: Library Publishers, 1952); Betty Miller Unterberger, *America's Siberian Expedition, 1918–1920: A Study of National Policy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1956); Carl J. Richard, "'The Shadow of a Plan': The Rationale behind Wilson's 1918 Siberian Intervention,' *Historian* 49 (Nov. 1986): 64–84; and John Silverlight, *The Victors' Dilemma: Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1970).

For the Australian role in Siberia, see Bruce Muirden, *The Diggers Who Signed On for More: Australia's Part in the Russian Wars of Intervention, 1918–1919* (Kent Town, Australia: Wakefield, 1990). The Japanese contribution is explored in John Albert White, *The Siberian Intervention* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1950). The French role is examined in Michael J. Carley, 'The Origins of the French Intervention in the Russian Civil War, January–May 1918: A Reappraisal,' *Journal of Modern History* 48, no. 3 (Sept. 1976): 413–39; and Carley, *Revolution and Intervention: The French Government and the Russian Civil War, 1917–1919* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983).

Armistice on the Western Front liberated Allied forces for battle against the nascent Soviet state. The *British Columbia Federationist*, newspaper of the BC Federation of Labour, quoted G.W. Tschitcherin, Soviet commissar of foreign affairs, who presented a Bolshevik interpretation of the conflict:

A handful of capitalists who desired to repossess themselves of the factories and banks taken from them on behalf of the people; a handful of landowners who want to take again from the peasants the land they now hold; a handful of generals who again want to teach docility to the workers and peasants with a whip ... have betrayed Russia in the north, in the south, and in the east to foreign imperialist states, by calling foreign bayonets from wherever they could get them.⁸

The failure of Canada and its allies to defeat the Bolsheviks consigned this story to the margins of history, far removed from the heroism of the Canadian Corps in the trenches of France and Flanders.⁹

The mutiny that erupted in the streets of Victoria on 21 December 1918 was located at the intersection of class and national cleavages. It provides a compelling window into persistent tensions in Canadian society, tensions that were amplified in the heat of wartime. The historic antagonism between French and English, heightened around the issue of conscription, combined with the political radicalism of British Columbia's working class. The French-Canadian conscripts who arrived in Victoria were mustered from the districts around Quebec City and Montreal, which had experienced rioting in opposition to the Military Service Act; in the British Columbia capital, they encountered a robust socialist movement that identified with the aims of the Russian revolution and launched a determined campaign to prevent their deployment to Siberia. In street-corner meetings and in packed auditoriums, working-class leaders of the Socialist Party of Canada and Federated Labour Party provided a vocal critique that transformed latent discontent among the troops into collective resistance.¹⁰ Both class *and* ethnicity drove the

8 'The Soviet's Reply to Allied Gov'ts,' *Federationist*, 20 Dec. 1918.

9 Commemoration of the Great War is the subject of Jonathan F. W. Vance's *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

10 The propensity of troops to engage in collective crowd action is discussed in Lawrence James, *Mutiny: In the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1797–1956* (London: Buchan & Enright, 1987); Desmond Morton, "Kicking and Complaining": Demobilization Riots in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1918–19,' *Canadian Historical Review* 61, no. 3 (Sept. 1980): 334–60; Julian Putkowski, 'The Kimmel Park Camp Riots 1919,' *Flintshire Historical Society Journal* 32 (1989): 55–107; and Jeffrey Ricard, 'Bringing the

conscripts toward mutiny; neither can sufficiently explain the complex motivations behind an event that military and press censors did their best to conceal at the time. At this junction of social forces – the converging interests of working-class Quebecois and British Columbia socialists – a violent standoff erupted in Victoria.

WHY SIBERIA?

To understand the working-class response, and also the growth of discontent among the troops, it is essential to understand the rationale behind the Siberian Expedition. From the outset, Canada's aims in Russia were complex, fluid, and confused. Military strategy, international diplomacy, economic opportunity, and ideology influenced the decision of Canada and its allies to intervene in the Russian civil war. Militarily, the Siberian Expedition must be understood in the context of Russia's transition from trusted ally to de facto enemy. In March 1917, as unrest mounted in Petrograd and the Romanov 300-year rule neared its end, a group of Canadian military officers toured Russia, meeting with Czar Nicholas II and other Russian leaders. 'Russia is now thoroughly supplied with munitions,' Victoria's *Daily Times* reported. 'The Czar's huge armies are prepared ... industries and transportation are fully organized ... everything is in readiness for a great offensive, simultaneously with a similar move by the Western Allies.'¹¹ Within a week of this optimistic report, the czar abdicated the throne. By November, the Bolshevik party under V.I. Lenin had displaced the pro-war provisional government and entered into negotiations with Germany and other belligerent nations that ultimately removed Russia from the war – and

Boys Home: A Study of the Canadian De-Mobilization Policy after the First & Second World Wars' (master's thesis: University of New Brunswick, 1999). The historiography of collective crowd action was inaugurated in George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1848* (New York: Wiley, 1964). For opposition to conscription in Quebec during the First World War, see Elizabeth H. Armstrong, *Le Québec et la crise de la conscription 1917–1918* (Montreal, VLB Éditeur, 1998); Bernard Dansereau, *Le mouvement ouvrier montréalais et la crise de la conscription: 1916–1918* (Montreal: Université du Québec à Montréal, 1994); Gaston Dugas, 'Le Québec et la crise de la conscription, 1917–1918,' *L'Action nationale* 9 (Nov. 1999): 139–41; Gérard Filteau, *Le Québec, le Canada et la guerre 1914–1918* (Montreal: L'Aurore, 1977); J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1985), 24–99; and Ferdinand Roy, *L'appel aux armes et la réponse canadiennne-française: étude sur le conflit des races* (Quebec: Garneau, 1917).

11 'In Fear of Russia,' 9 Mar. 1917; 'Russians Are Fighting with Allied Forces in the West,' 11 Mar. 1917; 'Russian Hospitality,' 11 Mar. 1917, *Victoria Daily Colonist* (hereafter cited as *Daily Colonist*).

liberated German forces for battle on the Western Front. The Allied Supreme War Council, meeting in London in December 1917, pledged support to those elements in Russia committed to a continuation of war against Germany.¹² The stage was set for Allied intervention.

In a speech to the Canadian Club and Women's Canadian Club in Victoria's Empress Hotel in September 1918, Newton Rowell, president of the Privy Council, described the loss of Russia as the most 'tragic surprise' of the war. The Siberian Expedition was necessary, he said, 'to reestablish the Eastern front' and 'support the elements and governments of the Russian people, which are battling against German armed force and intrigue.'¹³ This theme of Germanic influence on the Bolshevik side tapped into public fear of 'Hun' aggression and harked back to Lenin's famed passage through Germany in a sealed railcar; it provided justification for opening fronts far removed from Germany and continuing fighting after Germany's surrender. Allegations of Bolshevik atrocities, including the supposed 'nationalization of women,' were amplified to bolster public support for the Siberian campaign.¹⁴ A final component

12 After March 1917, the provisional government that succeeded the czar adhered to a policy of 'revolutionary defencism,' insisting that war against Germany was necessary to preserve the gains of the March revolution. In contrast, the Bolsheviks advocated 'revolutionary defeatism,' the withdrawal of Russia from the war, on the basis of a separate peace if necessary. This stance bolstered Bolshevik support among soldiers, farmers, and industrial workers, culminating in the defeat of the provisional government in November 1917. The new regime called for negotiations between all warring nations, but the Allies refused to participate. Instead, they aligned themselves with anti-Bolshevik factions in Russia in the hope of maintaining the Eastern Front. The result of negotiations between the Bolsheviks and Germany was the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, signed in March 1918, which saw Russia surrender land, resources, and money to Germany in exchange for peace. By the summer of 1918, large numbers of German troops had been redirected to the Western Front for the Ludendorff offensives, and the Allies were suffering heavy losses. To Allied leaders, reopening the Eastern Front seemed essential, and they therefore moved to formalize their assistance to White Russian forces in Siberia and other regions. See Swettenham, 'Allied Intervention in Siberia 1911-1919,' 4-5; Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 4-6.

13 'Siberia Offers Vast Opportunity,' *Daily Colonist*, 28 Sept. 1918.

14 Alexandra Kollontai, *The Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman*, trans. Salvator Attanasio (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 38. Kollontai, people's commissar of social welfare in the new Soviet government, describes the controversy: 'My efforts to nationalize maternity and infant care set off a new wave of insane attacks against me. All kinds of lies were related about the "nationalization of women," about my legislative proposals which assertedly ordained that little girls of twelve were to become mothers.' An example of Allied allegations of the mistreatment of women in Russia appears in 'Women in Soviet Russia' in one of the CSEF newspapers, the *Vladivostok Siberian Bugle* (hereafter cited as *Siberian Bugle*), 6 Mar. 1919, in War Diary of 259th Battalion Canadian Rifles C.E.F. (S), vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. The article claimed that 'nationalization of women has

of this military rationale was the presence in Siberia of the Czecho-Slovak Legion, an anomalous body of troops, sixty thousand-strong, which was marooned in the Russian Far East from 1917 and 1920, and formed the advance party of the Allied campaign in a desperate bid for national recognition.¹⁵

Diplomacy also shaped Canadian policy in Siberia, as political and military leaders sought greater power and independence within the British Empire. As Rowell told the Canadian Club, the achievements of Canadian troops during the war had won for the country 'a new place among the nations,' obliging Canada to do her part on the world stage. He informed Parliament that, after refusing a request from the British War Office to send another contingent to France, Canadian leaders felt obliged to provide a brigade for Siberia. Borden underscored this diplomatic motivation in a letter to a skeptical colleague, as domestic opposition to the Siberian Expedition mounted: 'I think we must go on with this as we have agreed to do so ... [I]t will be of some distinction to have all the British Forces in Siberia under the command of a Canadian Officer.'¹⁶

- been attempted in various parts of Bolshevik Russia. One instance of this occurred in the town of Saratov, where a decree declaring all women to be property of the nation was promulgated by the Free Love Association of the Anarchists' Club, and later given force of law by the Soviet of the district.' For the story of Lenin's passage through Germany in 1917, see Michael Pearson, *The Sealed Train* (New York: Putnam, 1975).
- 15 The Czecho-Slovak Legion consisted of prisoners-of-war and deserters from the Austrian army, who joined the czar's forces to bolster their nationalist cause, and won recognition as an official Allied army, following the March revolution. Beyond their military value on the ground, the Czecho-Slovaks provided propaganda fodder for the Allies; as Rowell told the Canadian Club, a primary motivation of the Canadian mission in Siberia was 'to aid the brave Czecho-Slovak army.' 'Siberia Offers Vast Opportunity,' *Daily Colonist*, 28 Sept. 1918. For greater detail on the Czecho-Slovak Legion, see John F.N. Bradley, *The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia, 1914-1920* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1991); Connaughton, *The Republic of the Ushakovko*, 36-40; Edwin P. Hoyt, *The Army without a Country* (New York: Macmillan, 1967); Victor M. Fic, *The Bolsheviks and the Czechoslovak Legion: The Origin of Their Armed Conflict, March-May 1918* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1978); and Betty Miller Unterberger, *The United States, Revolutionary Russia, and the Rise of Czechoslovakia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).
- 16 See N.W. Rowell speech to Canadian Club, 'Siberia Offers Vast Opportunity,' *Daily Colonist*, 28 Sept. 1918; Rowell speech in Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (1 Apr. 1919), p. 1063; and J. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs* (Toronto: Canadian Annual Review, 1919), 53; Henry Laird Borden and Heath MacQuarrie, eds., *Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs* (Toronto and Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), 2:146. As the Siberian force was mobilized to Victoria, Borden announced that the organization of the Canadian army would henceforth be independent of the British army. This step toward Canadian independence from

More significant than diplomacy, however, was the economic motivation. For decades Canadian, American, Japanese, British, and German investors had eyed the resource wealth of Russia's Far East and the region's consumer market. The German-controlled Kunst & Albers Company had established a vast retail-wholesale network in Siberia before the war, an enterprise similar to the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada. When Russia's provisional government ordered the firm be sold, a Canadian intelligence officer saw 'a wonderful chance for Canada.' Trade commissioners had been posted to Petrograd and Omsk in 1916, and a Russian purchasing mission was established in Canada; exports to Russia reached \$16 million, making it the seventh largest market for Canadian goods.¹⁷ In June 1917, Russia's consul-general to Britain, Baron Alphonse Heyking, described Siberia as 'the granary of the world' and urged, 'Let capitalism come in. It will develop quickly.'¹⁸ The Bolshevik revolution interrupted these efforts to develop the Russian economy

Britain, and Canada's seat at Versailles, was impelled by the unlikely conflict in the Russian Far East. See Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs* (Toronto: Canadian Annual Review, 1918), 419. For the larger picture of Rowell's influence in shaping Canadian foreign policy in the years 1917 to 1921, see Margaret Prang, *N.W. Rowell: Ontario Nationalist* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975). Borden's tenure as prime minister during the war is discussed in Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography*. Vol. 2, 1914–1937 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1980). The Versailles peace talks, where Canada had its first experience formulating a foreign policy independent of Britain, is explored in Margaret MacMillan, *Paris, 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002).

¹⁷ See Murby, 'Canadian Economic Commission to Siberia, 1918–1919'; also MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 224. Canadian exports to Russia increased sharply in the decades preceding the war; in 1896, they totalled a meagre \$16,000. Murby describes the Kunst & Albers operation as something akin in scope and importance to the Hudson's Bay Company. All goods were of German origin, shipped through the parent house in Hamburg. With a network of branches across eastern Siberia, and enterprises ranging from sawmills and a coal mine to the chief bunkering facility at Vladivostok, Kunst & Albers recorded sales of 150 million rubles in 1913, and sustained sales of 40 million rubles in 1918, notwithstanding the chaos of war. The report proposing Canadian acquisition of the Kunst & Albers interests in Siberia was provided by Maj. J. Mackintosh-Bell, a Canadian who was attached to the British Intelligence Mission in Russia. An earlier example of foreign commercial interest in Siberia occurred in 1899, when San Francisco speculator George D. Roberts, backed by British and French capital, and in concert with a Russian syndicate led by Col. Vonliarsky, won a concession from the Russian government to mine gold along a 1000-mile stretch of the Siberian coastline. His 'Siberian Expedition' ended in disarray a year later, when dissension erupted between Americans and Russians on the ship *Samoa*, en route to Siberia from Nome, Alaska. See 'That Expedition to Siberia,' *Daily Colonist*, 31 Sept. 1900.

¹⁸ 'What Russia Will Do after the War Is Over,' *Federationist*, 29 June 1917.

along capitalist lines. Rather than welcome foreign investment and trade, the new regime nationalized the assets of Russians and foreigners. 'This vast country is in a very precarious position from the standpoint of trade and commerce,' Rowell warned. 'She needs capital and expert guidance in the work of reconstruction ... [With] more intimate relations the greatest benefit may result both to Canada and Siberia.'¹⁹ In October 1918, as Canadian troops were mustered to Victoria, the Privy Council authorized the formation of a Canadian-Siberian economic commission, including representatives of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Royal Bank of Canada; the latter opened a branch in Vladivostok at the end of 1918.²⁰

The Allied countries also had a direct financial interest in the defeat of the Lenin regime. An estimated 13 billion rubles in war loans had been repudiated by the Bolsheviks.²¹ Against this outstanding debt stood the Imperial Russian Gold Reserve, the largest holdings of the precious metal in the world. Valued at over 1.6 billion gold rubles, one quarter of this gold had been shipped from Vladivostok to Vancouver in December 1915, June 1916, November 1916, and February 1917, to guarantee British war credits; it was transported on the Canadian Pacific Railway and stored for several months in a Bank of England vault in Ottawa. The portion remaining in Siberia has its own intriguing story, moving from one train to another, and from town to town, as the czar and an array of

19 'Siberia Offers Vast Opportunity,' *Daily Colonist*, 28 Sept. 1918.

20 See Borden to White, 8 Aug. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC: 'Confidential. United States and Great Britain are sending economic commission to Siberia in connection with military expedition. I consider it essential that Canada should take like action'; Mewburn to Borden, 12 July 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC: 'It has been suggested that trade conditions in this territory, will be a vital factor, looking to the future, and it might be advisable to have some Canadian representative accompany this force, as far as Trade and Commerce goes.' Also Privy Council Order (hereafter cited as PC) 2595, 21 Oct. 1918, Canada, Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations (1909-1918)* (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1967), 1:211-13; Murby, 'Canadian Economic Commission to Siberia, 1918-1919'; Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs* (1918), 432; Edson L. Pease, vice-president and managing director, Royal Bank of Canada, as quoted in Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs* (1919), 801; Dana Wilgress, 'From Siberia to Kuibyshev: Reflections on Russia, 1919-1943,' *International Journal* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1967): 364-75.

21 The repudiation of the czar's war loans was announced by the Bolshevik government on 28 Jan. 1918. The total value of these loans appears in G.G. Shvittau, *Revoliutsiia i Narodnoe Khoziaistvo vv Rossii, 1917-1921* (Leipzig: Tsentral'noe kooperativnoe izdatel'stvo, 1922), 337, as quoted in Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 578. A contemporary discussion appeared in Henry Hazlitt, 'Repudiation,' *Nation*, 21 Feb. 1918, 220.

White generals retreated eastward.²² As a military officer told a December 1918 meeting of Federated Labour Party in Victoria, 'We are going to Siberia as far as I know because Britain has loaned a great amount of money to Russia. I don't know how much, and the Bolsheviki has repudiated the loan money. This is as much ours as anybody's, and we are going there to get it.'²³

The final motivation behind the Siberian Expedition was ideological. In all industrialized countries, the events of 1917 amplified divisions between the social classes. As working-class grievances against profiteering and conscription mounted in Canada, with labour demanding the 'conscription of wealth,' the Russian revolution provided a powerful symbol of resistance. Fear of revolution informed Allied policy from the outset. An editorial in the *Federationist* summed up a growing sentiment among BC workers: 'There is no other sign post upon the social horizon pointing the way to peace than the movement which is now typified in the Russian Bolsheviki. Well may rulers and robbers hail its advent with terrified squawks and bourgeois souls quake with terror at its probable triumph. For with that triumph their game of loot and plunder will end.'²⁴ To radical sections of BC labour, the Bolshevik insurrection was celebrated as a bold response to the two-fold scourges of war and capitalism; it provided a framework through which BC workers came to interpret their own class position. Within the Canadian elite, however, the Bolshevik revolution was received with grave misgivings, viewed as a catalyst to domestic unrest and an example of radical movements that were left unchecked. The *Siberian Sapper*, newspaper of the CSEF, warned that 'Bolshevik missionaries are spreading their doctrines in every country in the world ... There is a mad dog running loose among the nations, and it would seem to be the duty of the nations to handle it as mad dogs are usually handled.'²⁵ This fear of domestic Bolshevism was intensified by statements such as those of Joseph Naylor, president of the BC Federation of Labour and a socialist leader of the Vancouver Island coal miners: 'Is it not high time that the workers of the western world

22 Jonathan D. Smele, 'White Gold: The Imperial Russian Gold Reserve in the Anti-Bolshevik East, 1918-?' (An Unconcluded Chapter in the History of the Russian Civil War), *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 8 (1994): 1317-47. In comparison, in 1914 the gold reserve of Britain amounted to 800 million gold rubles, while that of France was valued at 1.5 billion gold rubles.

23 'Organized Attempt To Wreck Mass Meeting,' *Federationist*, 20 Dec. 1918.

24 'Bolsheviki Infection Spreading,' *Federationist*, 25 Jan. 1918.

25 *Vladivostok Siberian Sapper*, 8 Feb. 1919, file 119, vol. 363, series III, RG 9, LAC, as reproduced in Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 142.

take action similar to that of the Russian Bolsheviki and dispose of their masters as those brave Russians are now doing?²⁶

This complex array of Canadian motives – military, diplomatic, economic, ideological – is reflected in a cryptic letter, received by the Victoria Trades and Labour Council from the deputy minister of militia and defence, Ottawa, ‘acknowledging a letter from the Council opposing the Siberian expedition’:

The Department does not consider Canada at war with the Russian people, but that they, the Government of Canada, are supporting certain governments in Russia, such as that organized at Omsk and Archangel, which governments are, by the way, quite socialistic. At any rate no aggression is meant by the Dom. Govnt, rather an economic development.²⁷

This official statement of Canadian policy, despite its confusing syntax, reveals implicit opposition to the spread of socialism, but also a clear intent to alleviate labour’s fear that Canada was acting on purely ideological grounds.

A BEACHHEAD ON RUSSIA’S EASTERN FLANK

In December 1917, there were 648,000 tons of Allied munitions and war supplies in the Siberian port of Vladivostok. The security of Allied military and commercial interests in the city was compromised by the election that month of a majority of Bolshevik deputies to the local Soviet. Given the severity of the situation, British, Japanese, and American warships were deployed to Vladivostok, lying at anchor in the harbour. In April, 500 Japanese marines landed ashore, as 50 Royal Marines left the cruiser *Suffolk* to guard the British Consulate. By June 1918, the Allied powers had launched an attack to establish Vladivostok as a beachhead on Russia’s eastern flank. Fifteen thousand Czechoslovaks, aided by Japanese and British marines, seized control of the city, toppling the local Soviet. A group of armed *gruzshchiki* (longshoremen) staged a standoff in the Red Staff building, and though outnumbered forty to one, resisted until the building was hit with an incendiary bomb, killing dozens. At the funeral, attended by 17,000 workers and adorned with the banners of forty-four unions, Konstantin Sukhanov – a twenty-four-year-old student and president of the Vladivostok Soviet – declared defiantly, ‘The Soviet for which they died shall be the thing for which we

26 ‘Lenine’s Doctrine Scares Ruling Class,’ *Federationist*, 14 Dec. 1917.

27 Minutes, 8 Jan. 1919, box 3, 80-59, Victoria Labour Council Fonds, UVASC.

live – or if need be – like them, die.’²⁸ Two days later, Japanese, British, American, French, and Czech officials placed the city under their ‘temporary protection.’ By the end of July, all administrative, judicial, and financial functions had been assumed by the White cabinet of General Dmitri Horvath.²⁹

Across the Pacific in British Columbia, the summer of 1918 was marked by acute industrial conflict. Organized workers were on the brink of the first citywide general strike in Canadian history. The Victoria Trades and Labour Council–backed newspaper *The Week* was suppressed by government order after publishing the terms of the Allies’ secret treaties. Burgeoning colonies of draft resisters had taken shape in the Comox Valley of Vancouver Island and near Howe Sound on the mainland. Labour leader Albert ‘Ginger’ Goodwin was shot dead while evading the Military Service Act, while miners’ leader Joseph Naylor was jailed for assisting draft resisters.³⁰ On both the industrial and political

- 28 ‘The Red Funeral of Vladivostok,’ *Federationist*, 13 Dec. 1918, reprinted from the *New Republic*; also Albert Rhys Williams, *Through the Russian Revolution* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921). The arrival of British, Japanese, and American forces in Vladivostok is described in Connaughton, *The Republic of the Ushakovko*, 36–40; Kettle, *The Road to Intervention*, 35; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 126–7; and Pereira, *White Siberia*, 45–53. Skuce overlooks the opening movements of the Allied forces in Siberia, writing, ‘The first Allied forces landed in Vladivostok on August 13, 1918.’ Skuce, *CSEF: Canada’s Soldiers in Siberia*, 6.
- 29 ‘Britain States Aims in Russia,’ *Daily Colonist*, 30 July 1918; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 134; and Pereira, *White Siberia*, 54, 73. A rival White government calling itself the Provisional Government of Autonomous Siberia, under Pyotr Derber, had attempted to consolidate power in Vladivostok but failed. On 5 July 1918, the US consular representative in the city came to the conclusion that Derber ‘has no authority for claiming to be the government of Russia.’ Gen. Horvath, based in Harbin, China, and for several years director of the Chinese Eastern Railway, was recognized by the Allies, though after Nov. 1918 the supreme authority in Siberia rested with the Kolchak government in Omsk.
- 30 ‘Arrest of Naylor at Cumberland,’ *Federationist*, 16 Aug. 1918; ‘Naylor Is Found Not Guilty at Nanaimo,’ *Federationist*, 11 Oct. 1918; Susan Mayse, *Ginger: The Life and Death of Albert Goodwin* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour, 1990); Roger Stonebanks, *Fighting for Dignity: The Ginger Goodwin Story* (St John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2004). The grand jury at the Nanaimo Assizes threw out the charges against Naylor on the grounds of insufficient evidence; however, fellow mine-union leader and co-accused David Aitken remained in prison. The Ginger Goodwin general strike of 2 Aug. 1918 is discussed in ‘Albert Goodwin Shot and Killed by Police Officer Near Comox Lake,’ and ‘Trades and Labor Council Endorse 24-Hr. Protest,’ *Federationist*, 2 Aug. 1918, and ‘Labor Temple Scene of Trouble and Rioting,’ *Federationist*, 9 Aug. 1918; also Paul A. Phillips, *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia* (Vancouver: BC Federation of Labour and the Boag Foundation, 1967), 72–4. For the banning of *Week*, see Minutes, 7 Aug. 1918, box 3, 80–59, Victoria Labour Council Fonds,

fields, British Columbia labour developed organizational muscle. Aided by wartime labour shortages, new organizations took root among shipyard workers, longshoremen, sawmill workers, telephone operators, teamsters, school teachers, fire-fighters, police officers, and laundry workers.³¹ Led by militants in the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), British Columbia's labour movement was entering into a period of unprecedented unrest, preparing to mount a challenge to the moderate leadership of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. Electorally, the Federated Labour Party (FLP) established branches across the province, backed by the provincial labour federation and a team of organizers that included J.S. Woodsworth. The FLP's lone parliamentarian in the BC legislature, Jim Hawthornthwaite of Nanaimo, aligned himself with the Russian revolution:

The capitalist press in this country is out-lying each other in vilifying the Bolsheviki, but we cannot believe one word we read ... The Russians have large stores of supplies in Vladivostok and Petervolosky ... So we are forced to the conclusion that the Allies are liberating the Germans on the western front, and allowing them to devastate the Russian workers' republic.³²

In both Russia and Canada, working-class unrest was fuelled by discontent with the high cost of living, shortages of food, carnage on the battlefields, compulsory military service, and restrictions on civil liberties. In both countries, the roots of unrest could be traced to the class system itself, to the determination of the domestic elite to engage in war, and to the efforts of sections of the working class to alter basic economic relationships. As radicalism in the industrial and political branches of BC labour intensified, Prime Minister Borden requested that his director of

UVASC; also 'Intervention in Russia,' *Victoria Week*, 20 July 1918, and 'Here We Are Again!' *Victoria Week*, 1 May 1920.

31 For organizational gains in various industries, see Minutes, June–August 1918, box 3, 80–59, Victoria Labour Council Fonds, 80–59, box 3, UVASC; *Federationist*, June to Aug. 1918.

32 'Federated Labor Party Alive on the Island,' *Federationist*, 8 Mar. 1918. Hawthornthwaite, who previously served as a SPC MLA (1900–12), was elected in a January 1918 by-election in the riding of Newcastle, a mining centre on Vancouver Island, defeating his Liberal opponent with 917 votes to 473. A week later, delegates to the annual convention of the BC Federation of Labour (BCFL) voted eighty-two to eleven to form a new political party of labour, and at a conference immediately following the BCFL proceedings, delegates adopted a resolution declaring 'That the Federated Labor Party be organized for the purpose of securing industrial legislation for the collective ownership and democratic operation of the means of wealth production.' See 'Labor Convention Decides To Form United Working Class Political Party,' *Federationist*, 1 Feb. 1918; 'Working Class Conference Organizes Political Party,' *Federationist*, 8 Feb. 1918.

public safety, Montreal lawyer C.H. Cahan, investigate the proliferation of Bolshevik influences in Canada.³³

Against this domestic backdrop, the Imperial War Cabinet convened in London in July 1918. Borden joined British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and political and military leaders from Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, to formulate Allied strategy on the Western Front – and commit forces to the emerging fronts encircling Bolshevik Russia. In his memoirs, Borden writes that on 27 July 1918 ‘we discussed our contingent for the Siberian expedition.’ The next day, Borden received a wire stating that the Privy Council ‘approves principle of sending expedition, leaving you to arrange cost and other detail.’³⁴ Earlier that month, American President Woodrow Wilson committed 7000 US troops to Siberia. As Allied leaders assented to the Siberian campaign, 1000 troops in Britain’s 25th Middlesex Regiment made their way from Hong Kong to Vladivostok, to serve under the Canadian command. By the end of August, 15,000 of 73,000 Japanese troops had landed in the city. American soldiers sailed from the Philippines, as an array of foreign armies made their way to Siberia: 2000 Italians, 12,000 Poles, 4000 Serbs, 4000 Romanians, 5000 Chinese, and 1850 French troops. When combined with the Czecho-Slovak Legion and White Russian forces, the total Allied troop strength in Siberia exceeded 350,000.³⁵

33 Opposition to the high cost of living appears in Minutes, 16 and 29 Nov. 1916, box 3, 80–59, Victoria Labour Council Fonds, UVASC. For opposition to conscription, see *Federationist*, various issues, Dec. 1916 to July 1918; also Martin Robin, ‘Registration, Conscription, and Independent Labour Politics, 1916–17,’ in A.M. Willms, ed., *Conscription 1917* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 60–77. Cahan’s appointment to investigate Bolshevism, and other measures aimed at containing radicalism, are discussed in Jeff Keshen, ‘All the News That Was Fit To Print: Ernest J. Chambers and Information Control in Canada, 1914–19,’ *Canadian Historical Review* 73 (1992): 327.

34 On 9 July, Rowell received a request from the War Office, London, regarding Canadian participation in Siberia. Mewburn, minister of militia and defence, wrote to Borden on 12 July, discussing the Canadian contingent and ‘trade conditions’ in Siberia, and attached a letter from London proposing the composition of the Canadian force. See Redcliffe to Rowell, 9 July 1919; Mewburn to Borden, 12 July 1919; Redcliffe to Mewburn, 12 July 1919; Mewburn to Militia (Ottawa), 12 July 1919; Doherty to Borden, 28 July 1919, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC; see also Borden and MacQuarrie, eds., *Robert Laird Borden*, 2:146; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 140.

35 The 1000 troops in Britain’s 25th Middlesex Regiment left garrison duty in Hong Kong for Vladivostok; they were later joined by the 900-strong 1/9 Hampshire Regiment, and served under Elmsley and the Canadian command. Japan’s presence in eastern Siberia represented the largest foreign contingent in Russia, with Gen. Kikuzo Otani providing overall leadership to Allied forces in the region. The Allied campaign in western Siberia, on the active front against the Red Army in the Ural mountains,

On 13 August 1918, the details of the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force were revealed publicly: 'Canada to Send Force 4,000 Strong to Help Russia in Siberia,' the *Daily Colonist* announced. Victoria was selected as an assembly point, along with New Westminster and Coquitlam. Major-General James H. Elmsley returned from London and began accumulating his army at the Willows Camp, located on the edge of Victoria, as military officials arranged for the shipment of 3,000,000 rounds of ammunition from Vancouver to Vladivostok.³⁶ Even at its inception, however, the CSEF was plagued by indecision in senior ranks. Gen. S.C. Mewburn, minister of militia and defence, questioned whether the troops could be raised voluntarily, asking Borden, 'How will the public of Canada view the raising of another Force to be sent to another theatre of war ... in view of the present unrest in Canada.'³⁷ In Regina, 'B' Squadron of the RNWMP Calvary unit enlisted 181 horses and 215 men, all volunteers.³⁸ From British Columbia to Nova Scotia, 4197 troops were mobilized to the West Coast; as Mewburn had anticipated, 1653 were conscripts. In addition to small units of bakers, butchers, medics, and other supporting troops – and Nursing Matron Grace Elrida Potter, the lone woman in the force – the bulk of the CSEF consisted of the 16th Canadian Infantry Brigade, which included the 259th and 260th Battalions and Britain's 25th Middlesex Regiment.³⁹

- was led by French general Maurice Janin, and composed heavily of Czecho-Slovak and White Russian troops. The American force, originally pegged at 7000, rose to 12,000. In Siberia, the Czecho-Slovak Legion numbered 55,000, joining over 200,000 White Russian troops. See Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs* (1919), 53; 'Siberia Force To Be Composite,' *Daily Colonist*, 25 Aug. 1918. Also Kettle, *The Road to Intervention*, 301; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 137, 181; Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 6–7; and Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia*, 126–7.
- 36 'Canada To Send Force 4,000 Strong To Help Russia in Siberia,' *Daily Colonist*, 13 Aug. 1918; Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs* (1918), 419; Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 7–8. Elmsley had commanded the 8th Brigade of the Canadian Expeditionary Force on the Western Front. For details on the shipment of ammunition, see major-general for military secretary to naval secretary, 16 Aug. 1918, file NSC 1047-14-26 (vol. 1), vol. 3968, RG 24, Defence, LAC.
- 37 Mewburn to Borden, 13 Aug. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC.
- 38 'Total Strength of Squadron,' 14 Nov. 1918, file 'RCMP 1918 – Siberian Draft Pt. 1,' vol. 1929, RG 18, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Collection (hereafter cited as RCMP), LAC. Data on the horses can be found in Memorandum to the Officer Commanding RNWMP, Depot Division, Regina, 20 Aug. 1919, RCMP 1918 – Siberian Draft 3-6, 'Instructions issued to all Divs. and O.C. Squadron,' vol. 1930, RG 18, RCMP, LAC.
- 39 For details on the composition of the force, see 'The Force dispatched to Siberia,' file DHS 4-20 'Cdn Exped Force, Siberia,' vol. 1741, RG 24, Defence, LAC; also 'Disposition of Officers, NCO's & Other Ranks of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Siberia, Friday, January 31st, 1919,' file 15, vol. 1872, RG 24, Defence, LAC; and Skuce,

ANATOMY OF THE MUTINY

The 259th Battalion (Canadian Rifles) was formed in September 1918 and organized into four companies, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Albert 'Dolly' Swift, with headquarters in Montreal. 'A' and 'B' companies were mustered from the districts of Kingston, Toronto, and London, ON, and received preliminary training at Niagara Camp before moving to Victoria. 'C' and 'D' companies were drawn from Montreal and Quebec City, and relied heavily on 'MSA men' – conscripts under the Military Service Act. Of 1083 troops in the Battalion, only 378 had enlisted voluntarily.⁴⁰ Conscription was bitterly resented in Quebec, where historical linguistic and national tensions undermined support for the British war effort, and exploded into rioting in early 1918. This political context helps explain discontent within the Quebecois companies of the 259th Battalion. Morale in the 259th was also influenced by the presence of 135 Russian-speaking troops, belonging to two Russian platoons that had been recalled from the Canadian Corps in France and attached to the CSEF to provide interpretative services in Siberia.⁴¹ Finally, the outbreak of the Spanish flu sowed the seeds of discontent within the 259th, forcing the quarantine of 'C' and 'D' companies in Quebec, and taking the life of seven members before they even reached Victoria.⁴² At the end of October, the Quebecois units of the 259th Battalion boarded two separate trains for the journey to the Willows Camp.

The situation that greeted the men in Victoria was far from ideal: A wet British Columbia autumn was aggravated by the influenza epidemic. Private Harold Steele, a twenty-year-old railway worker from Cane Township, ON, who voluntarily enlisted in 'B' Company of the 259th Battalion, described conditions at the Willows: 'The weather is the worst,'

CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia, 23–24. The 260th Battalion consisted of four companies, organized as follows: 'A' Company – Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; 'B' Company – Manitoba; 'C' Company – Saskatchewan and Alberta; 'D' Company – British Columbia. Of the 1026 troops, 520 were conscripts.

40 'Disposition by Unit of M.S.A. Personnel in the CSEF,' 9 Apr. 1919, War Diary of Base Headquarters CEF (S), vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

Also Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 23.

41 War Diary of 259th Battalion CEF (S), 24 Oct. 1918, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

42 'D' Company was placed under quarantine in the Quebec City Citadel on 3 Oct., and 'C' Company was quarantined on 12 Oct. 'C' Company left Montreal on 24 Oct., while 'D' Company left Quebec City aboard a special CPR train two days later, after being inspected by the governor general, Sir Victor William Christian Cavendish, 9th Duke of Devonshire. 'D' Company arrived at the Willows Camp on 31 Oct. 1918, while 'C' Company arrived the following day. War Diary of 259th Battalion CEF (S), 3 Oct. to 1 Nov. 1918, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

Steele wrote to his girlfriend Josie Libby. 'It rains every day and sometimes two or three times a day.'⁴³ A total of 101 people died of influenza in Victoria in 1918, while 2759 fell ill. A quarantine was established at the Willows, and all public gatherings were banned by the civic Health Committee, a prohibition that was not lifted until the end of November. According to the *Daily Times*, 'It may not have been the best time of year for troops to have been quartered in Victoria ... The latter part of their stay has been marked by an unusual amount of rain with an attendant sea of mud at the Willows.'⁴⁴ Dawn Fraser, a volunteer in the 260th Battalion and a pharmacist from Saint John, NB, put the mood of the troops into verse:

So our esprit de corps is waning,
All our pluck and interest too,
The only thing we see to fight,
Is Mud and Spanish Flu.⁴⁵

As the main body of the force assembled in Victoria, the advance party, consisting of 677 men and headed by Major-General Elmsley, departed for Vladivostok aboard the Canadian Pacific steamship *Empress of Japan*.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the labour situation continued to deteriorate.

Within the ranks of Canadian workers, the rift between the moderate Trades and Labour Congress leadership and the socialist leadership concentrated in the western provinces widened into an open split at the congress convention in Quebec City in September 1918. Among the grievances of the socialist delegates was the tabling of a resolution opposing Canadian intervention in Russia.⁴⁷ In response to growing

43 Harold to Josie, 2 Nov. 1918, 'Correspondence 1 August 1918–23 Nov. 1918,' E564, Harold Steele Collection (hereafter cited as Harold Steele), MG 30, LAC.

44 'Siberia Holds Immense Opportunity to Members of Canadian Contingent,' *Victoria Daily Times* (hereafter cited as *Daily Times*), 17 Dec. 1918. For the extent of influenza in the city, see Victoria, *Annual Reports: Corporation of the City of Victoria* (Victoria: Diggan, 1918), 89. Measures adopted to contain the outbreak are described in 'City Will Act To Check Epidemic,' *Daily Colonist*, 8 Oct. 1918.

45 Dawn Fraser, 'The Mud-Red Volunteers,' *Songs of Siberia and Rhymes of the Road* (Glace Bay, NS: Eastern Publishing, ca. 1919), 12.

46 War Diary of Advance Party 6th Signal Co. CEF (S), 11 Oct. 1918, 'October 1918,' vol. 5057, series III-B-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; also Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia*, 128–9. The Advance Party left Victoria on 11 Oct., arriving fifteen days later in Vladivostok. Elmsley and his troops established base headquarters in the Pushkinskaya Theatre, 'a large modern building' in the centre of the city. Their primary task was to prepare for the arrival of the troops in Victoria, while some of the men were deployed to Omsk to serve as headquarters staff for the Middlesex Regiment.

47 'Delegates to Trade Congress Make Report to Central Body,' *Federationist*, 4 Oct. 1918. Resolution thirty-two was forwarded from Machinists' Local One in Toronto. As a Vancouver delegate later recounted, 'Delegate Koldofsky of Toronto, in supporting the

radicalism, the Borden government approved PC 2384, outlawing fourteen political organizations and all meetings (with the exception of religious services) in the Russian, Ukrainian, and Finnish languages. The proscribed organizations included the Social Democratic Party, Industrial Workers of the World, and Slavic radical groups including the Russian Workers Union and Group of Social Democrats of Bolsheviki. Responding to a strike of Calgary freight handlers, the government banned all labour strikes for the duration of the war. The SPC's *Western Clarion* was declared 'objectionable' under the authority of the Secretary of State of Canada, as was the pamphlet *A Reply to the Press Lies Concerning the Russian Situation* and Lenin's 'Political Parties in Russia,' which had been serialized in the *BC Federationist* only months earlier. Peace set in on the Western Front as Canada declared war against radical labour, both at home and in Russia. On Armistice Day, 11 November 1918, Borden wrote in his diary, 'Revolt has spread all over Germany. The question is whether it will stop there.'⁴⁸

The signing of the Armistice triggered a debate on whether Canadian troops should be deployed to Siberia. As Borden sailed aboard the *Mauritania* en route to peace deliberations in Europe, Acting Prime Minister Sir Thomas White sent an urgent telegram from Ottawa:

All our colleagues are of opinion that public opinion here will not sustain us in continuing to send troops, many of whom are draftees under the Military Service Act and Order in Council, now that the war is ended. We are all of opinion that no further troops should be sent and that Canadian forces in Siberia should, as soon as situation will permit, be returned to Canada. Consider matter of serious importance.⁴⁹

resolution, stated that he was not a Bolsheviki and that he did not agree with them altogether. He had taken part in the 1905 revolt and was personally acquainted with Lenine, though not by any means in accord with his ideas. From his personal knowledge of Lenin, however, he was convinced that under no consideration could he be guilty of the crimes toward the working class in Russia such as were being charged in the daily press. He was strongly opposed to Allied intervention in Russia. In order to conceal their ignorance of the matter, the Eastern delegates shut off debate by tabling the resolution.' The rift within the congress is described in Gerald Friesen, 'Yours in Revolt: Regionalism, Socialism, and the Western Canadian Labour Movement,' *Labour/Le Travailleur* 1 (1976): 141–57; also Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*; and A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899–1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

48 Borden, *Memoirs*, 2:157. The government measures against radicalism included PC 2384, 28 Sept. 1918, and PC 2525, 11 Oct. 1918, as well as 'Censorship Regulations.' See Canada, *Canada Gazette* (Ottawa: J. de Labroqueire Taché, 1918), 1278, 1295, 1379, 1444, 1461.

49 White to Borden (via Sir Edward Kemp, overseas minister), 14 Nov. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC.

T.A. Crerar, a Winnipeg farmer and businessman who would soon defect from the Union cabinet to lead the Progressive Party, was 'absolutely opposed to sending any additional forces to Siberia ... The matter of how Russia shall settle her internal affairs is her concern – not ours.' Borden rejected his ministers' advice, maintaining that troops should leave Victoria for Siberia. 'In my judgment we shall stand in an unfortunate situation unless we proceed with Siberian Expedition ... Canada's present position and prestige would be singularly impaired.' Anticipating that Canadian troops would not be called upon to engage in active warfare, 'beyond possible quelling of some local disturbances,' he suggested they were needed to assist the new government of Admiral Kolchak, which had recently seized power at Omsk and sought to organize anti-Bolshevik forces into a professional army.⁵⁰ White reiterated his earlier opposition, pointing out that Canadian interests in Siberia differed from those of Britain and France, because of Russia's indebtedness to those countries:

Canada has no such economic or business interests as will justify the employment of a Canadian force composed of young men whose parents and friends desire should return at once to their ordinary occupations ...

50 Borden to White, 24 Nov. 1918; also Crerar to White, 22 Nov. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC. Alexandr Kolchak, former admiral of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, landed in Vladivostok from Japan on 21 Sept. 1918 and boarded a train for Omsk, arriving in the Siberian capital on 13 Oct. Four days earlier, the All-Russian Provisional Government had relocated from Ufa to Omsk, along with 651 million rubles of the Imperial Gold Reserve. Five days behind Kolchak, Britain's 1000-strong Middlesex Regiment entered Omsk on the Trans-Siberian Railroad. On 16 Nov., Kolchak dined with Maj.-Gen. John Ward, commander of the Middlesex Regiment, in a train car outside Omsk, returning the next evening at 5:30 p.m. On the night of 17 Nov. 1918, with the men of the Middlesex Regiment asleep in their barracks, the ministers of Omsk's Directory were arrested by Cossack guards and Kolchak was proclaimed supreme ruler of Russia, entrusted with sweeping dictatorial powers. In the wake of the Victoria mutiny, the *Federationist* criticized Canadian support for the Kolchak government: 'Kolchak is the Siberian adjutant of Denikin, was an intimate of the Czar and is the present hope of the Romanoffs.' See 'Chewing the Cud,' *Federationist*, 10 Jan. 1919. Gen. Anton I. Denikin was the White general in southern Russia. See Viktor G. Bortnevski, 'White Administration and White Terror (The Denekin Period),' *Russian Review* 52 (July 1993): 354–66; Connaughton, *The Republic of the Ushakovko*, 70, 79, 88, and 98; A. Denikine, *The White Army*, trans. Catherine Zveintzov (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International, 1973); Peter Fleming, *The Fate of Admiral Kolchak* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963); A. Steel, 'The Present Political Situation in Siberia,' 22 Nov. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC; David Footman, *The Last Days of Kolchak* (Oxford: St Anthony's College, 1953); Smele, 'White Gold,' 1319–21.

Canada should, now that the war is over and no necessity exists for the re-establishment of the Eastern front, discontinue further participation and expense. It seems clearly a task for nations more immediately interested in the finances of Russia. There is an extraordinary sentiment in Canada in favour of getting all our men home and at work as soon as possible.⁵¹

Indicating that opposition was not confined to labour circles, the *Toronto Globe* weighed in on the debate: 'Why should Canadians be forced into a service of which the purpose, if there is any definite aim, is hidden in the minds of public men? ... There has been no proposal to make Russia our enemy in any legal form. How can we say that our force in Siberia is being used for the defence of Canada?'⁵² On 22 November, a scheduled troop sailing was postponed indefinitely by Mewburn, but this position was reversed days later when the cabinet yielded to their prime minister and decided the Siberian Expedition would proceed – with the proviso that any soldier who desired would be permitted to return to Canada within one year of the armistice. 'We are advised that this will be satisfactory to the troops now in British Columbia,' White assured Borden, prematurely, as events revealed.⁵³

Morale among the troops at the Willows Camp waned in the face of vigorous propaganda by Victoria's labour movement, part of a national campaign against the Siberian Expedition. Socialists targeted their efforts at members of the CSEF. When the Victoria branch of the Federated Labour Party held its inaugural meeting on 8 December, 700 members of the Siberian force were in attendance, while 'hundreds were turned away.' As the *Federationist* reported, 'The way those boys applauded the Labor speakers showed in no uncertain manner where their sympathies lay.' Jim Hawthornthwaite, FLP member of the legislature, and party organizer J.R. Trotter took the platform, lambasting the 'capitalist press' and describing the violent overthrow of the Vladivostok Soviet the

51 White to Borden, 25 Nov. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC.

52 'The Siberian Riddle,' *Globe*, 3 Dec. 1918.

53 White to Borden, 22 Nov. 1918; Mewburn to Borden (via Kemp), 24 Nov. 1918; Borden to Mewburn, 25 Nov. 1918; White to Mewburn, 28 Nov. 1918; White to Crerar, 28 Nov. 1918; White to Borden, 29 Nov. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC. Also CGS to troopers, 24 Nov. 1918; and major-general for military secretary to naval secretary, 28 Nov. 1918, file NSC 1047-14-26 (vol. 1), vol. 3968, RG 24, Defence, LAC. The decision to proceed with the expedition, subject to the one-year limit on compulsory service, was made on 28 Nov. 1918. 'You may regard the matter as closed,' White informed Borden.

previous June.⁵⁴ The *Daily Times*, considered the more liberal of Victoria's two dailies, railed against 'certain elements of pronounced Socialistic tendencies' and claimed the Siberian Expedition was needed to 'maintain control of the trans-Siberian railroad along its whole length from the Pacific to the Urals.' A week later, a second protest meeting was held, under the auspices of the Victoria Trades and Labour Council. A group of CSEF officers attempted to disrupt the meeting, flooding onto the platform, singing 'God Save the King,' and accosting the speakers. The *Federationist*, however, reported that 'the majority of the soldiers present were with the labor speakers.' Labour's *Semi-Weekly Tribune* claimed 'the whole house, composed mostly of the Siberian contingent, were unanimous in expressing their sentiments to the withdrawal of the troops.'⁵⁵

The prospect of soldier-labour unity created much apprehension in senior ranks, foreshadowing the heavy-handed response to veteran-labour unity in Winnipeg the following spring. The lieutenant governor of British Columbia, Sir Thomas S. Barnard, sent a secret letter to Borden on 4 December, requesting the prime minister 'urge upon the Imperial Government the importance of keeping a few large Cruisers upon this Coast, if for no other reason, than for that of having a force to quell, if necessary, any rising upon the part of the I.W.W.' Barnard felt 'the presence of a warship' would 'do more than any local military force to settle any local trouble,' since 'the personnel of such force would not be subjected to the insidious socialistic propaganda which reaches the soldier – in other words, would be more amenable to discipline, and not affected by local influences ... In the event of labor strikes, with demonstrations leading to riots, a serious situation would arise if the soldiers were in sympathy with the strikers.'⁵⁶

From labour halls across the country, a flood of protest resolutions arrived in Ottawa. The Vancouver Trades and Labour Council placed itself 'on record as being against intervention in Siberia or interfering in Russia's internal affairs.' Ernest Winch, an SPC member and president of the council, warned that 'if the government desired evolution, and not what was called revolution,' it would halt its campaign of repression

54 Federated Labor Party launched at Victoria,' *Federationist*, 13 Dec. 1918; 'The Protest Meeting,' *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, 12 Dec. 1919; and 'Minutes,' 4 and 11 Dec. 1918, box 3, 80-59, Victoria Labour Council Fonds, UVASC.

55 'Help for Russia,' *Daily Times*, 10 Dec. 1918; 'Organized Attempt To Wreck Mass Meeting,' *Federationist*, 20 Dec. 1918; 'Free Speech,' *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, 19 Dec. 1919.

56 Barnard to Borden, 4 Dec. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC.

against radical labour.⁵⁷ In Winnipeg, the labour council entertained a proposal for a general strike to force the withdrawal of Allied troops from Siberia. Victoria's *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, meanwhile, suggested 'Ottawa should at once be notified by the Military Authorities of the real state of affairs at the Willows. It is common knowledge that the vast majority of the men in camp are strongly averse to embarking for Siberia.'⁵⁸

Evidence of discontent at the Willows Camp abounds. In November, eighty-seven soldiers in the Russian platoons of the 259th Battalion were moved across the city to the Work Point Barracks, 'these men not being anxious to proceed to Siberia.'⁵⁹ Bolshevik sympathies had developed among the men, as did an aversion to fight other Russians. A loyal soldier in the CSEF reported confidentially that the Russians at the Willows 'are all Bolsheviki'; they intended to join the Red Army if deployed to Russia and were 'debating all the time the social question and predicting the downfall of the rich': 'I am not afraid to fight the enemy ahead of me ... but I don't want to be shot from behind with our own machine guns.' Only eighteen of the Russian troops were deemed reliable for service in Siberia and permitted to leave Canada. Within the other units of the 259th, efforts were made to contain discontent: English-speaking troops were transferred out of 'D' company (which the War Diary describes as the 'French-Canadian Company'), while French-Canadians were transferred from 'C' company to 'D' company. In the 20th Machine Gun Company, seven soldiers were declared 'deserters' by a Court of Inquiry on 20 December 1918; every day, punishments were meted out for infractions ranging from 'breaking out of camp' to 'highly improper conduct in the ranks.' As Skuce observed, 'barrackroom

57 'Labor Council and Censorship of Literature,' *Federationist*, 22 Nov. 1918.

58 'The Siberian Expedition,' *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, 9 Dec. 1918. Developments in Winnipeg are discussed in Norman Penner, ed., *Winnipeg 1919: The Strikers' Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1975), 6–15. Sam Blumenberg advocated a general strike at a trades and labour council meeting in early December. On 22 Dec., the labour council and SPC jointly sponsored a mass meeting at the Walker Theatre, where R.B. Russell moved a resolution protesting 'the sending of further military forces to Russia' and demanding 'the allied troops already there be withdrawn.' Other resolutions against the Siberian Expedition were forwarded from the trades and labour councils of Toronto and Montreal, from the United Farmers of Ontario, from a mass meeting of workers in Prince Rupert, BC, and from the Mount Hope Grain Growers Association in Saskatchewan. See R.J.F. Rose to Borden, 6 Jan. 1919; Mr & Mrs A. Clay to Borden, 31 Mar. 1919, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC; also MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 170; Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia*, 153.

59 War Diary of 259th Battalion CEF (S), 16 and 20 Nov. 1918, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

lawyers fomented discord by pointing out the illegality of the government's intent,' which was highlighted by a government order of 7 December authorizing MSA troops for service in Siberia.⁶⁰ A soldier wrote to his sister-in-law from the Willows Camp, 'Well, things are beginning to look awful black over here. We are going to be railroaded to Siberia, and we cannot do a thing to help ourselves. They started to dish out our clothes to us the first day, and out of 78 of us 77 refused to take them.'⁶¹

Efforts to ameliorate the situation were unsuccessful. The YMCA provided regular recreation and entertainment for the troops, and the military organized a 'sports day' and a mandatory lecture on the geography and political climate of Siberia, attempting to counter the influence of the labour meetings. When gale force winds and driving rain forced the cancellation of rifle practice at the Clover Point Range, Brigade Commander H.C. Bickford addressed all ranks in the CSEF 'on discipline, complaints, etc. and propaganda against the Siberian Force.' As the brigade war diary records, 'So-called Socialistic meetings have been held in Victoria at which there were speeches made ... against the Siberian Force.'⁶² White wired Borden in London: 'There is a good deal of feeling in labour and other quarters here against our continued participation and my personal view is that a serious political situation may arise later unless some definite statement can be made as to the return of the expedition within a reasonable time.' Borden responded, insisting Canada had made commitments that had to be honoured, regardless of the armistice in Europe.⁶³

60 Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 23–28. Discontent within the Russian platoons of the 259th Battalion, as well as troop transfers in and out of 'D' Company, is recorded in the War Diary of 259th Battalion CEF (S), Nov. and Dec. 1918, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. For the testimony of the loyal CSEF soldier, a volunteer of Serbian ethnicity who shared his views with S.D. Scott, an acquaintance of Borden, see Scott to Borden, 22 Oct. 1918; Borden to Scott, 26 Oct. 1918; Borden to Mewburn, 26 Oct. 1918; Mewburn to Borden, 2 Nov. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC. Disobedience in the 20th Machine Gun Company is recorded in Daily Orders, 2 Dec. 1918 to 20 Dec. 1918, file 'Part II Daily Orders, 20th Machine Gun Co – Siberia,' vol. 4, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

61 'There Can Be No Peace,' *Federationist*, 20 Dec. 1918.

62 War Diary of 16th Infantry Brigade Headquarters CEF (S), 10 Dec., 16 Dec, and 17 Dec. 1918, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. The sports day, held on 16 Dec., included field events, hockey and a boxing match. The YMCA's activities are described in the 'Expeditionary Force Hears about Siberia,' *Daily Times*, 20 Dec. 1918. The lecture of 17 Dec. was delivered by James W. Davidson, former American consul-general at Shanghai, who had undertaken a detailed study of the resource wealth of the Russian Far East.

63 White to Borden, 7 Dec. 1918; Borden to White, 7 Dec. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC.

And so Departure Day arrived, 21 December 1918. A total of 856 enlisted men in the 259th Battalion and the 20th Machine Gun Company, along with Headquarters Detachment and several smaller units, left the Willows Camp for the six-kilometre march up Fort Street toward the outer wharf and the troopship *Teesta*. They were under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Swift, along with forty-two other officers.⁶⁴ The most detailed description of the events that followed appeared in a lieutenant's letter to his wife, mailed from Japan, which was published in the *Federationist* and is worth quoting at length:

Yesterday morning (Saturday, December 21) we turned out a reveille, 5 a.m., and turned in all our camp equipment at quartermasters' stores. We breakfasted at 6 a.m., and marched out of camp at 7:30 a.m. for the wharf, a distance of four and a half miles. When we got half way the signal came from the rear to halt, so we stopped for about ten minutes. Then the commanding officer blew his whistle as a signal for everyone to resume his place in the column, and we jumped into our places waiting for the further signal to advance, which was an unusually long time coming.

We could not see the rest of the column, as we had turned a corner of the road – and a few minutes later a shot rang out, but still we waited till eventually we received word to resume the march. In the meantime it appears that our gallant ... or a number of them, had absolutely refused to fall in again when the signal blew, or to go down to the boat at all. So then the colonel drew his revolver and fired a shot over their heads – in the main street of Victoria – when some more got into line, though there were still a large number who would not, so the other two companies from Ontario were ordered to take off their belts and whip the poor devils into line, and they did it with a will, and we proceeded.

While all this was happening the general staff car was flying round with good effect, so that after marching another half mile we came to a 'guard of honour' (fifty men in close formation, with rifles and fixed bayonets on either side of the road) who presented arms in the approved fashion to us – scouts, bugle band, and the Toronto company – but as soon as the other company was just nicely between them the order was given to the guard to 'Outwards turn,' with the result that this company continued the march virtually at the point of the bayonet, they being far more closely guarded than any group of German

64 The units aboard the *Teesta* are listed in Daily Routine Orders, Headquarters CEF (S), 14 Jan. 1919, 'Daily Routine Orders, Siberia,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; also in a telegram from Divisional Transports, Vancouver, to Naval Service, Ottawa, 23 Dec. 1918, file NSC 1047-12027, vol. 3969, RG 24, Defence, LAC.

prisoners I ever saw, and they were put under armed guard till we actually pulled out to sea, and even now a dozen of the ringleaders are in the cells – the two worst handcuffed together – awaiting trial.⁶⁵

‘MUTINY AND WILFUL DISOBEDIENCE’

Evidence to corroborate this story is sparse, the victim of military and press censorship, and a historiography that failed to ask the right questions while the participants were still alive.⁶⁶ The accounts of Rodney, MacLaren, Swettenham, and Skuce consign the events of 21 December 1918 to the margins, providing only passing references that are neither explained nor interrogated for meaning.⁶⁷ These interpretations do not extend beyond a superficial reference to French-Canadian anti-militarism. Mirroring the weakness of the larger literature on conscription in Canada, these accounts ignore the complex interplay of class and national cleavages, and the dual role of soldiers as workers; they confine opposition to conscription to the province of Quebec.⁶⁸ In framing anti-conscription sentiment and mutinous activity as purely French-Canadian phenomena, these accounts distort the experience, and deny the agency, of British Columbia’s working class, and simplify the motivations of the Quebecois troops.

65 ‘What a Muddle,’ *Federationist*, 28 Feb. 1919.

66 Censorship in Canada during the war is examined in Jeff Keshen, ‘All the News That Was Fit To Print: Ernest J. Chambers and Information Control in Canada, 1914–19,’ *Canadian Historical Review* 73 (1992): 315–43.

67 William Rodney reduced the mutiny to ‘a small number of French-Canadian troops of the 259th Battalion,’ a claim that is contradicted by contemporary accounts. MacLaren’s description of the incident is equally curt: ‘Following a brief rest halt on Fort Street in Victoria, six declined to march any farther. For their objections, they were promptly arrested and placed on board the ship under guard.’ He added that ‘many of the French-speaking soldiers mutely demonstrated that they did not regard service in Siberia as being within the terms of the conscription act.’ Swettenham quoted a *Toronto Globe* editorial dismissing ‘something very like a mutiny’ on ‘a Siberia-bound troopship,’ but provided no direct reference to the *Teesta*. He is more elaborate in his treatment of a mutiny of Canadian troops on the Murmansk front in February 1919. Skuce provides the most accurate description of the Victoria mutiny, but like the others provides little detail: ‘The serious charge of mutiny arose from events on December 22, 1918 [sic] when two companies of the 259th refused to board the transport SS *Teesta* at Victoria.’ See MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 175; Rodney, review of *Allied Intervention in Russia*, 186; Skuce, *CSEF: Canada’s Soldiers in Siberia*, 19; Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia*, 153, 205.

68 This approach to conscription is exemplified in Jack Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), 24–99.

Research into the regimental records of the Siberian Expedition has produced scant evidence of the mutiny. According to the war diary of the 16th Infantry Brigade, 'On the march from the camp to the dock some of the French-Canadians of the 259th Battn. created trouble and objected to embarking. The trouble was soon overcome, however, and the delinquents placed under arrest to be dealt with.'⁶⁹ The diary of the 20th Machine Gun Company is even more vague: 'Parade formed up at 7:00 A.M. to march to Rithet's wharf. Made several halts en route and arrived at wharf at 10:30 A.M.'⁷⁰ A court martial later concluded that the trouble started 'at the date when the men were asked whether they were willing to volunteer for service in Siberia.' Brigadier-General Bickford admitted that only forty per cent of the troops agreed to go voluntarily. Due to a requirement of the Records Office, the troops march in alphabetical order. 'This completely changed the company organization so that the men were not under the command of their own Platoon officers and NCOs. There was one case of an officer who could not speak French being in charge of a platoon of men who could not understand English.'⁷¹ The commanding officer of the 259th, Lieutenant-Colonel Swift, described the troublemakers as 'French-Canadians, farmers and recruits' with 'very little education,' who were 'mislead by some civilians while stationed in Victoria, BC, in December 1918.'⁷²

Military censorship prevented contemporary reports from appearing in the local press. The labour council's *Semi-Weekly Tribune* alluded to 'recent happenings, the knowledge of which is common property in this community.' But no details of these 'happenings' are provided: 'The Tribune has no desire to infringe the regulations by giving publicity to these happenings unless forced to do so in self defence.'⁷³ In the mainstream press, the Toronto *Globe* was one of the few voices calling for the withdrawal of the Canadian troops, citing protests 'general throughout the country.' While the *Globe* acknowledged 'sixty to seventy per cent of the men despatched to Siberia went unwillingly,' it dismissed reports of 'some-thing very much like mutiny' aboard an unspecified troopship,

69 War Diary of 16th Infantry Brigade Headquarters CEF (S), 21 Dec. 1918, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

70 War Diary of 20th Machine Gun Company CEF (S), 21 Dec. 1918, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

71 Report of Field General Court Martial, Vladivostok, 2 Feb. 1919, file A3 SEF Courts Martial, vol. 378, series III-A-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; Bickford to Headquarters CEF (S), 5 Apr. 1919, file A3 SEF Force HQ MSA, vol. 373, series III-A-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

72 Swift to Brigade Headquarters, 8 Apr. 1919, file A3 SEF Force HQ 23, vol. 371, series III-A-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

73 'The Siberian Expedition,' *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, 6 Jan. 1919.

commending the men for embarking 'without serious disturbance.'⁷⁴ For a more detailed picture of the events that transpired in Victoria on 21 December 1918, we must turn to sources generated by the labour movement.

'In Victoria, if street corner reports are true, some members of the Siberian Expeditionary Force refused to go, and were compelled to do so by the use of forceable [sic] methods, amongst which was the use of revolvers by the officers,' the *Federationist* reported on 27 December, ignoring the censorship restrictions.⁷⁵ Two weeks later, an editorial asked rhetorically, 'Why is the Canadian government so bent on sending troops to Russia that unwilling men were forced to embark for Siberia at Victoria ... after leading protestors were put under arrest? Surely the answer is not in the announcement of the birth of the Canadian Siberian Development Company.'⁷⁶ J.S. Woodsworth addressed an FLP meeting in Vancouver, describing 'some disgraceful scenes' that had taken place 'when certain Canadian troops were only recently shipped at Victoria for Siberia. We had grown accustomed to hear of German and in the past of Russian troops being driven by force to the fighting front, but it was something new for Canada, and ... for the British Empire itself, to have troops driven aboard ship by bayonet and revolver.'⁷⁷ Having resigned from the Methodist Church, Woodsworth was working as a longshoreman in Vancouver, where, according to daughter Grace MacInnis, he 'downed tools and gave up his day's work and pay' when he discovered he was loading munitions bound for Siberia.⁷⁸ Another BC socialist, William A. Pritchard, discussed the Siberian Expedition with a Victoria

74 'The Siberian Expedition,' *Globe*, 28 Dec. 1918. This alleged mutiny that the *Globe* referred to likely pertained to the ship *War Charger*, rather than the *Teesta*, which returned to Vancouver in late December after encountering engine problems.

75 'The Unemployed Question,' *Federationist*, 27 Dec. 1918. Though subject to the same regulations as the *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, the *Federationist* appears to have taken a greater risk in reporting details of the mutiny in Victoria. Chief Press Censor Ernest Chambers had visited the Vancouver offices of the newspaper following the Ginger Goodwin general strike of 2 Aug. 1918, threatening to suppress the publication if the directors refused to sign a declaration against 'objectionable material,' a request with which they complied. Eleven months later, on the night of 30 June 1919, with Vancouver once again tied up in a general strike, members of the RNWMP raided the *Federationist* office in the Vancouver Labour Temple, smashing through the front door and seizing a number of documents. See 'Censorship,' *Federationist*, 9 Aug. 1918, and 'Mounties Raid Homes and Offices of Labor Men,' *Federationist*, 4 July 1919.

76 'Chewing the Cud,' *Federationist*, 10 Jan. 1919.

77 'Woodsworth Talks to a Capacity House,' *Federationist*, 17 Jan. 1919.

78 Grace MacInnis, *J.S. Woodsworth: A Man To Remember* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1953), 123.

audience in the wake of the mutiny: 'No matter how many millions of gallons of Allied blood' were spilt 'combating the Soviet regime, and no matter how successful it might be in subduing it, nothing could overthrow the conditions which had brought the Soviets into existence.'⁷⁹

Further insight into the Victoria mutiny can be gleaned from the proceedings of the Western Labour Conference, which convened in Calgary in March 1919. Helen Armstrong, representing the Women's Labour League of Winnipeg, asked the British Columbia delegates whether the troops aboard the *Teesta* had arrived in Siberia: 'Some of our members have not been heard from since Christmas ... and we heard ... that it took half a regiment at Christmas to put the other half on the ship for Siberia.' A Victoria delegate by the name of Flewin responded that as an organizer of the FLP meetings in the city, he had met personally with several soldiers, including some from Winnipeg: 'When these boys were given notice they were to leave for Siberia there was a plan among them that they would refuse to go. There was one man chosen to lead them, but when he struck down one of the officers the rest didn't give him support. However, it took 23 hours to get those men aboard the ship.'⁸⁰

Out of these fragmentary pieces of evidence the general contours of the mutiny emerge. Influenced by labour agitation, their morale weakened by poor weather and the Spanish flu, a company of francophone conscripts in the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force refused to leave Victoria for Vladivostok, and the military authorities used force – revolvers, canvass belts, and bayonets – to ensure their deployment to Russia.

At sea, the fortunes of the campaign failed to improve. One soldier died aboard the *Teesta*, as did a Chinese crewmember. Private Frank Joseph Kay, of the 259th Battalion, fell down a coal chute during a storm.⁸¹ Discontent continued during the crossing. Battered by rough weather, the *Teesta* pulled into the northern Japanese port of Muroan for bunkering on 9 January. The officers were allowed ashore, while the lower ranks were not. Thirty-eight men were subsequently found guilty

79 'Censorship Comes In for Criticism,' *Daily Times*, 13 Jan. 1919.

80 'Verbatim Report of the Calgary Conference, 1919,' *Winnipeg One Big Union Bulletin* (hereafter cited as *One Big Union Bulletin*), 10 Mar. 1927.

81 'Officers & Others Ranks, CEF (Siberia) who have died,' file 'Correspondence – Vladivostok,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, LAC; Militia and Defence, Daily Routine Orders, Headquarters CEF (S), 17 Jan. 1919, 'Daily Routine Orders, Siberia,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; War Diary of 20th Machine Gun Company CEF (S), 29 Dec. 1918, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. Kay died 29 Dec. 1918, and was buried 18 Feb. 1919. MacLaren writes that the Chinese crewmember 'died in another accident.' See MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 176.

of being absent without leave, and penalized fourteen days forfeiture of pay.⁸² The *Teesta* arrived in Vladivostok on 12 January, followed by the *Protesilaus* three days later. In these two ships, carrying 899 and 1808 men respectively, nearly three-quarters of the Canadian force reached Siberia.⁸³ When the *Teesta* docked, ordnance personnel discovered 'all blankets etc [were] infested with lice,' and provided the troops, who lacked winter kit, with fur caps. According to the war diary of base headquarters, 'All troops on board the S.S. "TEESTA" had to be bathed on arrival owing to men [being] lousie.' Determined to avoid a disturbance similar to the one at Victoria, officials had prepared a careful plan for the disembarkation of the men. Major-General Elmsley and other senior officers boarded the ship upon its arrival in Vladivostok, while fifty troops were detailed 'to act as a guard' as the 259th unloaded in two stages – 'C' Company and one platoon of 'D' Company on 13 January, and the remainder of 'D' Company the next day. This strategy appears to have worked, but the unloading of cargo proceeded less smoothly: Cranes, derricks, and other hydraulic equipment had frozen, so 1700 tons of

- 82 Daily Orders, 12 Jan. 1919, 'Part II – Daily Orders 20th Machine Gun Company,' vol. 3, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. Also 'Our Stay in Muroran,' *Siberian Bugle*, 6 Mar. 1919, in War Diary 259th Battalion Canadian Rifles C.E.F. (S), vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 176.
- 83 The arrival of the *Teesta* and *Protesilaus* is recorded in Daily Routine Orders, Headquarters CEF (S), 14 and 16 Jan. 1919, 'Daily Routine Orders, Siberia,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. The *Protesilaus* left Victoria 26 Dec. 1918, arriving in Vladivostok 15 Jan. 1918 after a horrendous crossing in which a propeller was lost and the ship got stuck in the ice. Sea sickness was rampant, even among the horses. A Court of Inquiry to investigate the crossing took place at base headquarters in Vladivostok 27 Mar. 1919. Dawn Fraser provides a colourful account of the voyage in 'Boulion a la S.S. Proteslaus [sic],' in *Songs of Siberia*, 20–21: 'A certain steamship company operating in the Pacific [the Blue Funnel Line], secured a contract from the government to transport the Siberian Expeditionary Forces from Vancouver to Vladivostok in Russia. This contract included the rationing of the Troops en route. War profiteers like so many others they half starved the soldiers for the duration of the voyage, a thin soup or stew being the chief diet for twenty-six days.' See 'Cheering Troops Leave for Siberia,' *Daily Times*, 26 Dec. 1918; Daily Routine Orders, Headquarters CEF (S), 16 Jan. 1919 and 26 Mar. 1919, 'Daily Routine Orders, Siberia,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; also Interview with Eric Henry William Elkington, June and July 1980, SC 141 and 169, Military Oral History Collection, UVASC. By mid-January 1919, there were over 3400 troops in Siberia, the vast majority in Vladivostok, with fewer than 100 in Omsk. On 3 Feb., a handful of supporting troops arrived on the supply ship *Madras* from Vancouver, while a final 314 troops arrived on the *Empress of Japan* on 27 Feb. See MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 151, 175; Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 23–28. Also Daily Routine Orders, Headquarters CEF (S), 28 Feb. 1919, 'Daily Routine Orders, Siberia,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

ammunition and 398 tons of other supplies were unloaded by hand, by Chinese labourers.⁸⁴

On 24 January 1919, ten men belonging to the 259th Battalion appeared before the deputy judge advocate general in Vladivostok, on charges of 'mutiny and wilful disobedience.' The men, judging by their surnames, were all French-Canadian, and all held the rank of rifleman. All had been drafted under the authority of the Military Service Act. They were Onil Boisvert, Sylvio Gilbert, Joseph Guenard, Alfred La Plante, Egard Lebel, Adore Leroux, Edmond Leroux, Edmond Pauze, Arthur Roy, and Leonoe Roy. Over five days of hearings, the military judge found nine of the men guilty, one innocent, and delivered sentences ranging from three years penal servitude to twenty-eight days forfeiture of pay. Arthur Roy, a twenty-three-year-old from Montreal, who listed his occupation as saw-maker and resided in St Catharines at the time he was conscripted, received a three-year sentence; Boisvert, a farmer from Drummond, QC, and La Plante, a mechanic from Richelieu, both aged twenty-three, received two years hard labour; Edmond Leroux, a twenty-two-year-old lumberjack from St Apolline, was sentenced to one year hard labour. The sentences imposed on these working-class Quebecois youth were designed to have a deterrent effect within the CSEF. In April, however, as the Canadians prepared to evacuate Vladivostok and questions arose over the legality of deploying conscripts, the judge advocate received an application to release on suspended sentence the 'men convicted of mutiny at Victoria, BC' – a request that Elmsley authorized.⁸⁵

84 Conditions aboard the *Teesta* are recorded in War Diary of A.D.O.S. CEF (S), 12 Jan. 1919, and War Diary of Base Headquarters CEF (S), 13 Jan. 1919, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. The procedure for the disembarkation of the *Teesta* can be found in 'Secret Administrative Instruction No. 1,' 4 Jan. 1919, War Diary of Base Headquarters CEF (S); also War Diary of 259th Battalion CEF (S), 13 and 14 Jan. 1919, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. The unloading of the *Teesta* is recounted in War Diary of A.D.O.S. CEF (S), 13 Jan. 1919, and War Diary of Base Headquarters CEF (S), 13 Jan. 1919. Cargo aboard the *Teesta* is itemized by weight in Divisional Transports, Vancouver, to Naval Service, Ottawa, 23 Dec. 1918, file NSC 1047-14-27 (vol. 1), vol. 3969, RG 24, Defence, LAC.

85 The sentences were as follows: Rfn. Onil Boisvert, two years hard labour; Rfn. Sylvio Gilbert, ninety days F.P. #1; Rfn. Joseph Guenard, six months hard labour; Rfn. Edmond Leroux, one year hard labour; Rfn. Egard Lebel, twenty-eight days F.P. #1; Rfn. Alfred La Plante, two years hard labour; Rfn. Edmond Pauze, six months hard labour; Rfn. Leonoe Roy, thirty days F.P. #1; Rfn. Arthur Roy, three years penal servitude. Rfn. Adore Leroux was found innocent. The sentences were suspended on 14 Apr. 1919, after Elmsley received a wire from Ottawa asking whether 'any draftees objected to doing Military Service in Siberia.' Elmsley replied that 'no objection on part draftees to doing military service in Siberia brought to notice.' However the commanding officer of the 16th Infantry Brigade, H.C. Bickford, wrote that 'At

VLADIVOSTOK AND THE RETURN HOME

In their main barracks at Gournestai Bay, at the East Barracks, and at Second River, eight kilometres west of Vladivostok, members of the Siberian Expedition remained restive. The first week in February, British Colonel John Ward, second in command of British forces in Siberia, wrote in his diary, 'I heard news of general insubordination among the Canadian troops that had just arrived at Vladivostok. If all the information received could be relied upon, the sooner they were shipped back to Canada the better. There is enough anarchy here now without the British government dumping more on us.'⁸⁶ The daily routine orders from force headquarters in Vladivostok reveal regular incidents of courts martial and breaches of conduct. The soldiers' perspective, however, is difficult to discern, as censorship restrictions were not lifted until mid-February, and military regulations dictated that only officers could keep personal diaries. In a letter home from Vladivostok, Private Harold Steele described an officer in the 260th Battalion, Lieutenant Alfred Henry Thring, who was 'either murdered or committed suicide here last night.' In another letter, Private Steele described Vladivostok as 'this God forsaken hole.' Lieutenant Eric Henry William Elkington, a doctor in the 16th Field Ambulance from Duncan, BC, confirmed this view in an interview six decades later: 'That was a tough place, Vladivostok,' he recalls. 'It was wintertime, and there were always people getting shot or killed in the streets.'⁸⁷

Victoria, BC, the men were asked if they would volunteer for service in Siberia. Approximately 40 per cent did so.' For biographical information on the occupation, age, and place of origin of the accused, consult the Attestation papers in Accession 1992-93/166, boxes 8522-20, 852-24, 5392-80, and 5587-64, RG 150, LAC. See also Defensor to Elmsley, 1 Apr. 1919; Bickford to Headquarters CEF (S), 5 Apr. 1919; Elmsley to Defensor, 10 Apr. 1919, file A3 SEF Force HQ MSA, vol. 373, series III-A-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; Swift to Brigade Headquarters, 8 Apr. 1919; Barclay to Elmsley, 11 Apr. 1918; Barclay to Elmsley, 12 Apr. 1919; 'Suspension of Sentence,' 14 Apr. 1919; file A3 SEF Force HQ 23, vol. 371, series III-A-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; 'Courts Martial, C.E.F. (Siberia), file A3 SEF Courts Martial, vol. 378, series III-A-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; War Diary, deputy judge advocate general, CEF (S), Jan.-Feb. 1919, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; also 'Summary of Events and Information, Apr. 1919.'

86 John Ward, *With the 'Die-Hards' in Siberia* (London, New York, Toronto, and Melbourne: Cassell, 1920), 162.

87 Daily Routine Orders, Headquarters CEF (S), Jan.-Apr. 1919, 'Daily Routine Orders, Siberia,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. Despite evidence of discontent, when a request arrived from Ottawa asking whether there was any truth to a report that 'serious discontent exists amongst troops in Vladivostok,' Base Commander Lieut.-Col. R.J. Brook answered in the negative. See War Diary of A.A. &

A siege mentality developed among the troops and within the Canadian command, as the occupying armies came into conflict with the local population. The RNWMP commander in Vladivostok, a city of 160,000, conceded that 'the inhabitants are about ninety percent Bolshevik.' In March, two White Russian officers were found murdered, their bodies showing signs of torture and mutilation. The incident prompted an emergency meeting of the Inter-Allied Council, and CSEF headquarters ordered 'all Officers to be careful when leaving main streets' and that other ranks 'carry bayonets.' Amid rumours of 'disturbances and rioting which are expected from Bolshevik sympathizers,' CSEF base headquarters released 'Instructions in Case of Riotous Disturbances in Vladivostok Area,' outlining a procedure to quell any Bolshevik rising. As anxiety mounted, the judge advocate was requested to investigate 'alleged Bolshevik activities of a Private in the 259th Battn.'⁸⁸

Q.M.G. Branch CEF (S), Feb. 1919, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. Censorship is discussed in a letter from Harold to Josie, 21 Feb. 1919, 'Correspondence 1 Dec 1918-1 May 1919,' E564, MG 30, Harold Steele. Pte Steele wrote that 'as they have lifted the censorship I can tell you a little more about where I am. As you know we landed in Vladivostok on the 15th of January and left the boat the next day.' He proceeds to describe the weather, as well as conditions at the Gournestai Barracks. For the prohibition on diaries among the other ranks, see Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 19; Thring's death is discussed in several sources, including Harold to Josie, 19 Mar. 1919; War Diary of A.A. & Q.M.G. Branch CEF (S), 18 Mar. 1919, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; 'Nominal Roll - Officers & Other Ranks, CEF (Siberia) Who Have Died,' file 'Correspondence - Siberian Force,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; War Diary of 16th Infantry Brigade Headquarters CEF (S), 18 Mar. 1919, vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; and Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Russia*, 16-17. Thring's body was discovered in a ditch beside Gournestai Road, between Gournestai Barracks and East Barracks, on 18 Mar. 1919; he held his service revolver in his right hand. Letters and photos of his wife lay scattered on the ground. Lieut.-Col. R.J. Brook wrote that Thring's body was found 'with bullet hole in temple.' While a Court of Inquiry concluded that Thring had taken his own life, his service records stated that he had been 'accidentally killed,' 'a gentle whitewash,' according to Skuce. Descriptions of Vladivostok can be found in Harold to Josie, 16 Mar. 1919, and Interview with Eric Henry William Elkington, June and July 1980, SC 141, 169, and 170, Military Oral History Collection, UVASC.

- 88 The extent of Bolshevism in Vladivostok is discussed in G.F. Worsley Report on 'B' Squadron RNWMP, 11 Oct. 1919, file G 989-3 (vol. 2), vol. 3179, RG 18, RCMP Collection, LAC. The murder of the White Russian officers is described in a memorandum, dated 21 Mar. 1919: 'Two days ago, two Russian Officers were murdered in the vicinity of First River. Their bodies were afterwards submitted to mutilation of the worst description, their ears having been cut off and their hands nailed to their shoulder blades. Signs of torture before death were also evident.' Memorandum, Vladivostok, 21 Mar. 1919, vol. 5057, series III-B-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. For the response of the Canadian Command, see 'Instructions in Case of Riotous

Tension was evident in Vladivostok, but few of the 4000 Canadians actually saw active engagement. Only a fraction moved 'up country' to Omsk, serving as headquarters staff for the 25th Middlesex Regiment and providing protection on transport trains; some troops in the 259th Battalion were deployed to Shkotova, a village on an important rail line north of Vladivostok, to join Japanese, Italian, French, and Czech forces in repelling a Bolshevik advance. Most of the CSEF never left Vladivostok. Beyond guard duty, policing, and training White Russian troops, members of the CSEF occupied themselves in the local bazaar and at dances organized for members of the force. The YMCA and Knights of Columbus, which had assigned representatives to the Siberian Expedition, opened canteen huts and movie theatres at the Canadian barracks, and held concerts, lectures, boxing matches, and church services. An eight-team hockey league was established, as were two brigade newspapers, the *Siberian Bugle* and *Siberian Sapper*. On occasion, the men marched to a central bathhouse for a hot shower. As spring approached, Lieutenant Elkington was deployed inland with a contingent bound for Omsk, to aid the British forces defending the White governor of Siberia, Admiral Kolchak. However, as the troops made their way along the Trans-Siberian Railroad toward Lake Baikal, the rail-workers went on strike: 'We had a Russian train, and Russian drivers. And eventually they refused to go any further. Despite being prodded in the backside with bayonets.'⁸⁹

- Disturbances in Vladivostok Area,' 15 Mar. 1919, and 'Special Operation Orders,' 13 Mar. 1919, War Diary of Base Headquarters CEF (S), vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. The allegation of Bolshevik activities by a soldier in the 259th Battalion appears in 'Summary of Events, 1st of March 1919 to 31st of March 1919,' 17 Mar. 1919, War Diary of Deputy Judge Advocate General, CEF (S), vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.
- 89 See Interview with Eric Henry William Elkington, June 1984, Military Oral History Collection, 170, UVASC. Pte Harold Steele also sheds light on developments with the railway: 'They are wanting volunteers now to stay here and operate the Siberian railway. The British government is taking it over and of course they want a lot of men to run it, but I haven't got any particulars yet. I guess they will do the same as they did at Victoria if they can't get volunteers – they will just keep the whole works.' Harold to Josie, 16 Mar. 1919, 'Correspondence 1 Dec 1918–1 May 1919,' E564, Harold Steele, MG 30, LAC. A second unsuccessful attempt to move troops up the Trans-Siberian Railway is recounted in Maj. G.F. Worsley Report on 'B' Squadron RNWMP, 11 Oct. 1919, and 'Diary of Echelon. 2209,' file G 989-3 (vol. 2), vol. 3179, RG 18, RCMP Collection, LAC; also Vladivostok to Canadian General Staff (Ottawa), 11 June 1919, vol. 103, H(1)a, Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC. A transport train that left Vladivostok on 18 May under British and Russian guard, carrying 154 horses, three British officers, and 112 Canadian soldiers (including five RNWMP troops) destined for the British Military Mission at Omsk was wrecked near the village of Zamzor, 1450 miles west of Omsk, on 5 June 1919. According to these reports, the crash was either the result of

The troops returned to Vladivostok, as the Canadian government scrambled to find ships to bring the force home.⁹⁰ When exactly the Borden government resolved to end the Siberian Expedition remains unclear, as does the precise rationale. From the beginning, Canadian officials were unable to decide on a clear policy, vacillating between the ambivalent position of Japan and the United States, and the more aggressive stance of France and Britain. The prime minister's failed attempt to organize a peace conference between Bolshevik and White Russian forces at the Turkish island of Prinkipo also influenced the decision to withdraw Canadian troops. At the beginning of January 1919, with the *Teesta* and *Protesilaus* still at sea, the cabinet cancelled a planned deployment of troops aboard the ship *Madras*, citing 'increasing popular

sabotage by Bolsheviks, who removed pins from the sleeping cars, or the result of direct Bolshevik fire. Two White Russians and eighteen horses were killed. The activities of Canadian soldiers in Omsk, Shkotova, and along the Trans-Siberian Railway are illuminated in several sources, including 'The Force Despatched to Siberia,' file 15 'Cdn Exped Force, Siberia,' vol. 1872, RG 24, Defence, LAC; War Diary of A.A. & Q.M.G. Branch CEF (S), Dec. 1918 to Apr. 1919, vol. 5057, series III-B-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; and Interview with Eric Henry William Elkington, June 1984, 170, Military Oral History Collection, UVASC. For details on the Shkotovo engagement, see various intelligence reports and communiqués attached as appendices to the War Diary of 16th Infantry Brigade Headquarters CEF (S), April 1919, vol. 5057, series III-B-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC, in particular, 'Appendix No. 17, "B" Company, 259th Battalion, Canadian Rifles, CEF (S), Detailed for duty under the Japanese Command at SHKOTOVO, Siberia, on 13th April, 1919,' also 'Canadian Detachment, Daily Orders No. 1, Shkotovo Barracks, April 14, 1919.' The Canadians returned to Gournestai Bay on the night of 21 Apr. 1919, and were rewarded with a gift from Japanese Gen. Otani, commander of Allied forces in eastern Siberia: ninety-six bottles of wine, eighteen bottles of whiskey, and three casks of sake. The recreational activities of the CSEF while in Vladivostok are described in Bishop, *The Canadian YMCA in the Great War*, 304–10, and MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 198. The cinema at the Second River Barracks was called British Columbia Hall. Existing copies of the CSEF newspapers include *Siberian Bugle*, 6 Mar. 1919, in War Diary of 259th Battalion Canadian Rifles CEF (S), vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC, and *Siberian Sapper*, 8 Feb. 1919, file 119, vol. 363, series III, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC, as reproduced in Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 142.

- 90 With Canadian forces dispersed over Europe, the British Isles, and the several fronts encircling Soviet Russia, the Dominion government requisitioned steamers from the Canadian Pacific Ocean Services (CPOS) fleet. 'The cables we have from Vladivostok are very disturbing,' A.K. MacLean, acting minister of naval affairs, wrote in March. 'It is absolutely essential that these troops should be returned early in April.' See Mewburn to Maclean, 25 Mar. 1919; also Memorandum of Agreement, 1919; Mewburn and Maclean to governor-in-council, 4 Apr. 1919; R.M. Stephens, 'Memo: For the Military Secretary, Naval and Military Committee,' 27 Mar. 1919, file 1048-61-2, vol. 3778, Department of Naval Service, Naval Intelligence Records, RG 24, Defense, LAC.

opposition' and Japan's decision to reduce its commitment in Siberia. Elmsley informed unit commanders that Canadian government policy in Siberia had changed, and rather than move 'up country,' the troops would be confined to Vladivostok. An 'Operation Plan for Evacuation of Vladivostok' was drawn up, couched in hypothetical terms but betraying the fears of the Canadian command: 'The whole country has risen in revolt and large Bolsheviki irregular forces, indifferently armed, are preparing to attack this detachment.' Waning Japanese, American, French, British, and Czech support – influenced by domestic opposition to the campaign, the conflicting agendas of the Allied powers, deteriorating conditions in Vladivostok, and the growing strength of the Red Army – sealed the fate of the Siberian Expedition.⁹¹

In Canada, the labour situation grew increasingly tense. In February 1919, the Victoria Trades and Labour Council voted seventeen to two to endorse 'the aims and purposes' of the Russian and German revolutions, empowering its executive 'to call general strikes should the Allies continue to oppose [the Bolshevik regime] or oppose a Soviet government that may be formed elsewhere' – a stand affirmed by the 234 delegates at the Western Labour Conference in Calgary. Fearing the domestic incarnation of Bolshevism, the Canadian government strengthened its security apparatus, extending the jurisdiction of the RNWMP into

91 Shifts in Canadian policy, culminating in the decision to withdraw the troops, is reflected in various correspondence in file NSC 1047-14-26 (vol. 2), vol. 3968, Department of Naval Service, Naval Intelligence Records, RG 24, Defense, LAC; also Aug. 1918–Feb. 1919, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC. The diverging strategies of the Japanese, American, French, British, Czecho-Slovak, and Canadian forces in Siberia is evident in a report from 'British General Staff on Siberian situation,' 22 Nov. 1918, vol. 103, H1(a), MG 26, Borden Papers, LAC; also 'Memorandum on the Subject of United States Intentions as to Siberia,' n.d., vol. 103, H1(a), MG 26, Borden Papers, LAC; Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 6–10; Swettenham, 'Allied Intervention in Siberia 1911–1919,' 5–25. The idea of the Prinkipo conference is discussed in Borden, *Memoirs*, 2:171–2; Silverlight, *The Victors' Dilemma*, 143–8; and Swettenham, 'Allied Intervention in Siberia 1911–1919,' 19. Borden was to be the representative of the British Empire at the Prinkipo conference, which was cancelled, according to Silverlight, under pressure from White Russian leaders. The decision to cancel the planned deployment aboard the *Madras* can be found in C.G.S. to War Office, 5 Jan. 1919, vol. 103, H1(a), MG 26, Borden Papers, LAC. For a copy of a secret cablegram between Ottawa and London, containing the directive that 'the troops should not move inland,' see C.G.S. to Troopers, 6 Jan. 1919, file NSC 1047-14-26 (vol. 2), vol. 3968, RG 24, Defense, LAC. The apprehension of the Canadian command is revealed in 'Operation Plan for Evacuation of Vladivostok,' 1–28 Feb. 1919, War Diary of 259th Battalion CEF(S), vol. 5057, series III-D-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC; and Maj. G.F. Worsley Report on 'B' Squadron RNWMP, 11 Oct. 1919, file G 989-3 (vol. 2), vol. 3179, RG 18, RCMP Collection, LAC.

British Columbia and initiating rigorous surveillance of the working-class leadership. The Privy Council was 'much concerned over [the] situation in British Columbia,' White informed Borden: 'Bolshevism has made great progress among the soldiers and workers there.' Warning of 'a revolutionary movement' associated with the One Big Union, White repeated the lieutenant governor's earlier request that a British cruiser be deployed to Victoria or Vancouver. Borden dithered, unwilling to sully the reputation of the Dominion by calling on British forces to suppress 'purely local Canadian riots, or insurrection': 'As far back as 1885 we have attended to our own rebellions.'⁹²

Borden was not oblivious to the domestic situation, however. On 13 February, he informed Lloyd George that Canadian troops would be withdrawn from Siberia, and wired Mewburn, minister of militia and defence, instructing him to withdraw the troops in early spring. At a meeting of the British Empire delegation to the peace talks on 17 February, 'I adhered absolutely to my determination to withdraw our troops from Siberia in April,' Borden wrote. A month after the main body of the force arrived in Vladivostok, the order was issued to demobilize the units still in Canada and bring the troops home.⁹³

92 For the resolution passed in Victoria, see Minutes, 24 Feb. 1919, Victoria Labour Council Fonds, 80-59, box 3, UVASC. This resolution was forwarded from the Alberta Federation of Labour. Descriptions of the Western Labour Conference can be found in 'Verbatim Report of the Calgary Conference, 1919,' *One Big Union*, Jan.-Mar. 1927; 'Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Convention,' *Federationist*, 4 and 11 Apr. 1919; and Winnipeg Defence Committee, *Saving the World from Democracy: The Winnipeg General Sympathetic Strike, May-June, 1919* (Winnipeg: Defence Committee, 1920), 26-7. The expansion of RNWMP activities into BC can be found in 'Certified Copy of a Report of the Committee of the Privy Council,' 12 Dec. 1918; 'Monthly Report,' F.J. Horrigan to the commissioner, 13 Mar. 1919, vol. 1930, RG18, RCMP Collection, LAC. Also correspondences in 'Labour Organizations and Communism,' vol. 878, series A-2, RG 18, RCMP, LAC; and White to Borden, 16 Dec. 1918, vols. 93/94, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC. The deployment of British warships to the BC coast is considered in White to Borden, 16 Apr. 1919, vol. 112, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC; also Borden to White, 18 Apr. 1919; White to Borden, 22 Apr. 1919; White to Borden, 28 Apr. 1919; Borden to White, 29 Apr. 1919.

93 The withdrawal of troops from Siberia is discussed in Borden to Lloyd George, 13 Feb. 1919; Borden to Mewburn (via White), 13 Feb. 1919; CGS Ottawa to War Office (London), 16 Feb. 1919; also Borden to Lloyd George, 7 Feb. 1919, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC; Memo from major-general for military secretary (Naval and Military Committee) to naval secretary (Naval and Military Committee), 27 Feb. 1919, file NSC 1047-14-26 (vol. 2), vol. 3968, Department of Naval Service, Naval Intelligence Records, RG 24, Defense, LAC. For the British government's response to the withdrawal of Canadian troops, see Werner to Borden, 16 Feb. 1919, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC. On 17 Mar. 1919, Winston Churchill, who had been appointed secretary of state for war in January, finally accepted Borden's

On 21 April 1919, 1076 Canadians boarded the *Monteagle*, and by June, the last Canadian units left Vladivostok for the voyage across the Pacific.⁹⁴ They returned to a country divided along the lines of social class. Victoria, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Amherst, and several other cities were tied up in general strikes. Members of RNWMP 'B' Squadron arrived in Vancouver on 22 June, to a barrage of bricks and stones from angry longshoremen, and were promptly ordered to serve strike duty in the city. A day earlier, their counterparts in 'A' Squadron had broken the back of the Winnipeg strike, and RNWMP agents from Victoria to Montreal raided the homes and offices of socialist and labour leaders at the end of June. Working-class militancy reached a high-water mark in Canadian history, as the Canadian state expanded its war against radical labour on the home front, part of the 'Red Scare' that set in across the Western world. Under the banner of One Big Union, a substantial layer of Canadian workers employed industrial methods in what they viewed as an international movement to usher in the New Democracy. The Russian revolution had provided them with an interpretive framework,

decision to withdraw, writing that 'in view of the very decided attitude taken up by Canada, the War Office have no option but to acquiesce, as they have felt it impossible to continue to urge the Dominion Government to share, against its will, in a task of much difficulty and anxiety.' However, on 1 May 1919, shortly after the first group of Canadians was evacuated from Vladivostok, revealing the vulnerability of the Allied position in the region, Churchill made a final appeal for a 'small contingent' consisting of a 'few hundred Canadian volunteers' to relieve Allied units in North Russia and participate 'in our mission to Admiral Koltchak [sic]': 'I no longer feel that I am asking you to share in a failure. The hopes of success are sufficient to justify me in appealing to you to participate in a hopeful and prosperous policy ... If Canada takes the lead, Australia will be bound to follow.' Churchill's optimistic tone failed to move the prime minister, however, particularly since the Canadian cabinet remained steadfast in its opposition to any further Canadian participation in Russia. See Churchill to Borden, 17 Mar. 1919; Churchill to Borden, 1 May 1919; Sifton to Borden, 5 May 1919; Borden to Churchill, 5 May 1919; Creighton to Yates, 7 May 1919; Borden to Churchill, 18 May 1919, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC.

94 Sixty-two Canadians remained in Siberia after June 1919. Twenty-three troops were seconded to the British Military Mission, while a rear party of thirty-three troops returned to Canada via Yokohama on 29 Aug. 1919. There were six deserters. See 'Statement According to Record of Siberian Expeditionary Force,' and 'Nominal Roll -Rear Party, CEF (S),' file 'Correspondence - Siberian Force,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. A curious twist to the return voyage was the discovery of eight Russian stowaways aboard the *Monteagle*, and accusations against several members of the 260th Battalion of smuggling Bolshevik propaganda, in English, in their gear aboard the *Empress of Japan*. See 'Stowaways Believed To Be Bolshevik Agents,' *Daily Times*, 20 June 1919; MacLaren, *Canadian in Russia*, 204-207; and Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia*, 19.

and an example of agency, to challenge the authority of employers and the legitimacy of the state.⁹⁵

In Siberia, the once-reliable Czecho-Slovak Legion had grown restless, its members increasingly unwilling to prolong their return to the new homeland. They clashed with Japanese and White Russian forces, and surrendered Kolchak to the Bolsheviks. The Red Army seized the remnants of the Imperial Russian Gold Reserve and asserted Soviet authority over the Russian Far East.⁹⁶ The Czecho-Slovaks were finally permitted to leave Vladivostok in May 1920. They sailed to Vancouver, arriving on 9 June 1920, and marched through the city, fully armed, before travelling across Canada by train for the voyage home.⁹⁷ Battered

95 The sympathetic strikes of spring 1919 are examined in Kealey, '1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt,' and Heron, *The Workers' Revolt in Canada: 1917-1925*. For details of the Victoria General Strike, see Chow to Ackland, 1 Aug. 1919, 'Strikes and Lockouts File,' vol. 315, RG 7, Department of Labour Collection, LAC; also 'Workers Threw Down Tools When Strike Order Went Forth,' *Daily Times*, 23 June 1919. The return of 'B' Squadron from Siberia is discussed in Maj. G.F. Worsley Report on 'B' Squadron RNWMP, 11 Oct. 1919, file G 989-3 (vol. 2), vol. 3179, RG 18, RCMP, LAC. The long-shoremen's action in Vancouver, spurred by press reports that the RNWMP had returned to Canada to suppress strikes, is recounted in Alan Phillips, *The Living Legend: The Story of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (Toronto and Boston: Little, Brown, 1954), 86. The role of the RNWMP and Canadian military in the Winnipeg Strike is explored in Norman Penner, ed., *Winnipeg 1919: The Strikers' Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1975). For the RNWMP raids in various Canadian cities, see 'Reds Coats Busy,' *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, 30 June 1919; 'Think Police Acted beyond Their Power,' *Daily Times*, 2 July 1919; 'Mounties Raid Homes and Offices of Labor Men,' *Federationist*, 4 July 1919. International dimensions of the postwar labour conflict are discussed in Larry Peterson, 'The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism 1900-1925,' *Labour/Le Travail* 7 (Spring 1981): 41-66; and Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*.

96 Discontent within the Czecho-Slovak Legion is recounted in several sources, with Victoria's *Daily Times* reporting some Czech regiments had become 'infected with Bolshevism and a general spread of Red ideas is feared if the men are kept from their homes another winter.' 'Wish To Return to Czecho-Slovakia,' *Daily Times*, 24 June 1919. Also Pereira, *White Siberia: The Politics of Civil War*, 148-50; Jonathan D. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 667; and Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia*, 246. Kolchak was captured, tried, and shot by Bolshevik forces in Irkutsk on 7 Feb. 1920.

97 'Will Attempt To Lower the Standard of Living,' *Federationist*, 28 May 1920, 'Czecho-Slovaks Pass through City,' *Federationist*, 11 June 1920; 'Note & Comment,' *One Big Union Bulletin*, 19 June 1920; 'A Masterly Retreat,' *Vancouver Western Clarion*, 16 June 1920; A. Balawyder, 'The Czechoslovak Legion Crosses Canada, 1920,' *East European Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (June 1972): 177-91. A proposal that the Czecho-Slovaks be employed as railway labourers in Canada, and also a tense exchange between Canadian and British officials over the cost of transporting and provisioning the Legion, can be

by the corrosive force of time and elite history, the story of the Siberian Expedition was forgotten.⁹⁸

CONCLUSION

A total of 4197 Canadians served in Russia with the Siberian Expeditionary Force. Nineteen never returned home.⁹⁹ This study has attempted to

found in correspondence April–June 1920, vol. 103, H1(a), Borden Papers, MG 26, LAC. As the *Federationist* reported, the Czecho-Slovaks arrived in Vancouver amid fears from organized labour that they would be employed by the city's economic leaders to drive down wages and break the power of the unions. They marched through Vancouver on Sunday, 9 June 1920, and promptly boarded trains toward Valcartier, QC, and then Halifax. When a *Federationist* correspondent questioned an armed Czech soldier on the fact that the war was over, and that he was passing through a friendly country, the man replied, 'Yes, they wanted us to lay down our arms in Siberia before we came here, but we refused. So long as I have my rifle and equipment, I am a free man; when I part with them, I am a slave.'

- 98 As the Historical Section of the Department of Militia and Defence undertook the formidable task of compiling the official history of the Canadian war effort, the Siberian Expedition remained peripheral. In the mid-1920s, official documents were provided to Elmsley to write an article for *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, but this article never materialized. In 1931, A.F. Duguid, director of the historical section, received a request from Col. C.H. Morrow, a US military commandant at Fort Niagara, NY, for information on the CSEF. He admitted to a colleague, 'In our work on the Official History we have not quite reached Siberia yet.' Writing to Lt-Col. T.C. Evans of Military District No. 2 (Toronto), Duguid lamented having received the request: 'Sometimes I wish that fewer people were interested in what happened in 1914–1919, or rather that they could possess their souls in patience yet a while; then we could go straight ahead with the work of the official History which will contain replies to all questions in proper order.' See Duguid to Morrow, 28 Mar. 1931; Duguid to Evans, 28 Mar. 1931; Matthews to Duguid, 27 Mar. 1928, file DHS 4-18, vol. 1741, RG 24, Defence, LAC.
- 99 The strength of the force, 4197 men in total, consisted of 304 officers and 3893 other ranks. See 'Statement According to Record of Siberian Expeditionary Force,' file 'Correspondence – Siberian Force,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. These data are contradicted slightly by an exchange in the Senate on 25 June 1919, when Sir James Lougheed stated 'the number of those who proceeded from Canada to Siberia was 4,214.' See Canada, *Debates of the Senate of the Dominion of Canada: Session 1919* (Ottawa: Ottawa: J. de Labroqueire Taché, 1919). For fatalities within the CSEF, see 'Officers & Others Ranks, CEF (Siberia) Who Have Died,' file 'Correspondence – Vladivostok,' vol. 2, series II-B-12, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC. Two soldiers died in accidents, sixteen died of illnesses such as influenza, meningitis, smallpox, and pneumonia, and Lt Alfred Thring of the 260th Battalion, as noted earlier, committed suicide. The Canadians who died in Siberia were buried at Cherkov Naval Cemetery, Vladivostok, where a monument was dedicated on 1 June 1919. The four soldiers who died at sea were buried at sea, and Pte Wilfred Lane, who belonged to the Headquarters detachment and died of pneumonia in March, was buried in Hong Kong. See Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Russia*, 16–17; also

provide fresh insight into the complex motivations behind the Siberian Expedition; to highlight the forgotten mutiny of 21 December 1918; to explore the connection between class and national cleavages in relation to the mutiny; and to contextualize the departure of the force within conditions in Victoria and British Columbia. This Canadian story must be integrated into the larger picture of Allied intervention in 1918–19, and into the Canadian historiography of the First World War and post-war labour revolt. The fields of military history and labour history must enter into a closer dialogue with one another, and extend their terrain of inquiry beyond Armistice Day and the Western Front.

Out of the disparate sources that comprise this study, the picture emerges of Vladivostok as a beachhead of Western interests, established and maintained by the force of Allied armies, and grudgingly surrendered amid the mounting unrest of soldiers and workers in Russia, Canada, and beyond.¹⁰⁰ From Victoria to Vladivostok, the Canadian government engaged in a battle against labour radicalism – Bolshevism, in the lexicon of the day – a failed attempt to alter the outcome of the Russian revolution and install a more sympathetic government in Russia. In the unstable climate following the war in Europe, geopolitical patterns were contested in Siberia and in the streets of Victoria. Decades before the Cold War, the battle lines were drawn. Located at the confluence of class and national cleavages, the Victoria mutiny of 21 December 1918 provides a window into the social history of the First World War – and the complex motivations driving the historical actors at the time.

French-Canadian antipathy to the war aims of the British Empire combined with growing sympathy for the Bolshevik government of Russia – a relationship that was encouraged by the active intervention of Victoria's labour movement. War weariness, and discontent generated by poor camp conditions and influenza, eroded morale among the troops. The presence of pro-Bolshevik Russian soldiers within the ranks of the 259th Battalion provided a direct connection to the Russian working class and its radical mood. These factors coalesced into mutiny. The

'Memorial Service Unveiling Ceremony, Marine Cemetery, Vladivostok, Siberia, Sunday, 1st June, 1919,' War Diary of General Staff CEF (S), vol. 5057, series III-B-3, RG 9, Militia and Defence, LAC.

100 For resistance to the Siberian Expedition in Britain and France, see R. Page Arnot, *The Impact of the Russian Revolution in Britain* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1967); Michael Jabara Carley, *Revolution & Intervention: The French Government in the Russian Civil War, 1917–1919* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983). The campaign against intervention in Scotland is discussed in 'Is It Peace or More War,' *Vancouver Red Flag*, 28 Dec. 1918. In December 1918, a large protest meeting was held in Albert Hall, London, where several thousand workers issued the demand 'Hands Off Russia.' See 'The Albert Hall Labor Meeting,' *Federationist*, 10 Jan. 1919.

fragmentary historical record – a reflection of military and press censorship, and the tendency to understate dissent within the armed forces – makes it difficult to determine with precision the individual motivations behind this collective act of resistance. However, evidence supports the conclusion that class *and* ethnicity drove the conscripts to mutiny. The Siberian moment exposed deep fissures in Canadian society, as the latent discontent of Quebecois soldiers was translated into collective resistance in an encounter with the radical section of British Columbia's working class. While the mutiny was suppressed, the leaders jailed, and the 259th Battalion deployed to Vladivostok, this flash of soldier–labour unity has much to tell us of the Canadian experience during the war. The agency of the working-class Quebecois youth who mutinied in Victoria, and the socialists they encountered in British Columbia, suggests that a more penetrating narrative is in order, one that combines the class and national bases of anti-militarism. The *Federationist* recognized the historical significance of the events unfolding at the time:

When the true history of the machinations of the Allied countries in their efforts to overthrow the Soviet regime is written, it will disclose such an amazing story of intrigue and duplicity as to make honest people shudder ... Not half of the story has been told, and never will be told if the ruling class of the Allied nations can prevent it.¹⁰¹

As Cold War passions fade into the past – and working-class movements in Canada and Russia develop fresh responses to enduring questions of power – this story of resistance from Victoria to Vladivostok deserves attention.

101 'Lessons To Be Learned,' *Federationist*, 17 Oct. 1919. This study does not purport to provide the final word on this subject. Soviet sources may reveal aspects of the Canadian experience in Russia that have hitherto evaded Western historians. Correspondence within branches of the Canadian and British forces may explain the complex motivations behind the deployment and withdrawal of the force. The Victoria mutiny of 21 Dec. 1918 may be illuminated through dispersed personal histories.

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