

THE CANADIAN RED CROSS
AND RELIEF IN SIBERIA, 1918–1921

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts

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August 2004

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[acceptance form: not included in this version]

ABSTRACT

The Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) sent a small team to Siberia alongside the Canadian soldiers who sailed across the Pacific in late 1918 to take part in the Allied intervention in Russia. Once there, the relief workers looked after the supplemental medical needs of the troops and provided them with additional “comforts.” The last CRCS mission members left Vladivostok in January 1921, after distributing aid to Russian soldiers and refugees. This thesis explores the mission’s work and the efforts of its members, including Commissioner John Stoughton Dennis Jr., to expand the mission’s purview and extend its stay in the Russian Far East. The society’s involvement in Siberia is discussed in the context of the Canadian military venture, Canadian-Siberian economic relations, Britain’s Russia policy after the First World War, and the Russian civil war in Siberia. The motivations for the various kinds of humanitarian work undertaken are highlighted in this narrative account.

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PREFACE

When I first set out to investigate Canadian involvement in the Russian civil war, I intended to research and write about the reasons for the Canadian decision to participate in the controversial Allied intervention. I soon discovered this topic had already been explored several times by historians;¹ there seemed little I could have added to their explanations. Fortunately, I did not have to look far to find another focus for my research. As luck would have it, the Centre for Research on Canadian-Russian Relations had recently acquired photocopies of archival material from the Canadian Red Cross National Office relating to that organization's Siberian relief work during the civil war. These papers, copied by Anna Armstrong in February 2002,² were my first foray into this fascinating, obscure topic.

The presence of a small number of Canadian Red Cross representatives in Siberia from December 1918 to January 1921 is a little known aspect of Canadian-Russian (and

¹Most recently by Robert Bothwell, "Borden and the Bolsheviks," in *Canada and the Soviet Experiment: Essays on Canadian Encounters with Russia and the Soviet Union, 1900–1991*, ed. David Davies (Toronto & Waterloo: Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Toronto/ Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism, University of Waterloo, 1993), 25–37. The historiographical debate over the Canadian intervention in Siberia, the largest theatre of Allied activity in Russia, is covered by Whitney P. Lackenbauer in his "Why Siberia? Canadian Foreign Policy and Siberian Intervention, 1918–19" [article on-line] (Apr. 1998, accessed 15 Aug. 2002); available from <http://www.rootsweb.com/~canmil/siberia/siberia1.htm>. The standard sources on Canadian involvement in civil war Russia are Roy MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia, 1918–1919* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976) and John Swettenham, *Allied Intervention in Russia and the Part Played by Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967).

²Anna Armstrong, *Canadian Red Cross Society Records on the Siberian Expedition, 1918–1921*, CRCR Bibliographic Guide/Documents Series, no. 15 (Ottawa: Centre for Research on Canadian-Russian Relations, 2002).

Canadian-British) relations during the tumultuous Russian civil war period.³ This thesis is about the Canadian Red Cross in Siberia. It focusses on the society's relief mission, and the sometime-successful efforts of its members and supporters to expand the mission's purview and extend its operation.

Though my own discovery of Canadian relief activities in Siberia came by chance, it is a good time to be writing about the humanitarian side of Russian-western relations in the interventionist years. This is true both in terms of the international historiography on the Allied intervention in Russia, and the rise of philanthropic history in recent years. The present thesis, then, while building on traditional works which emphasize the politics of the intervention, and more recent accounts of western commercial interests in Siberia,⁴ was specifically inspired by (1) Norman Saul's book on Russian-American relations, 1914–1921, which includes discussion of American relief efforts; (2) Douglas Baldwin's article on one American Red Cross nurse's "adventures" in Vladivostok; (3) Bertrand Patenaude's marvellous account of the American famine relief workers in Soviet Russia, 1921–1923; and (4) John Hutchinson's path-breaking history of the international Red Cross.⁵ The last book, and others on the Red Cross

³The only published source to discuss the work of the Canadian Red Cross in Siberia is MacLaren's *Canadians in Russia*, 203–205. MacLaren states Red Cross work was ended by the withdrawal of the military force. This is not quite true.

⁴Leo J. Bacino, *Reconstructing Russia: U.S. Policy in Revolutionary Russia, 1917–1922* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1999); David N. Collins, "British Interest and Interests in Siberia 1900–1922," *Revolutionary Russia* 9, no. 2 (Dec. 1996): 219–228; Christine A. White, *British and American Commercial Relations with Soviet Russia, 1918–1924* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), especially 51–57 and 80–86.

⁵Norman E. Saul, *War and Revolution: The United States & Russia, 1914–1921* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), especially chap. 9; Douglas Baldwin, "The American Red Cross in Vladivostok: The Adventures of Nurse Mona Wilson," *Sibirica* 1, no. 2 (1994–1995): 85–107; Bertrand M. Patenaude, *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the Famine of 1921* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002); John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross* (Boulder, CO & Oxford: Westview, 1996).

movement outside Canada, were especially important to this thesis because there exists no history of the Canadian Red Cross. It is hoped that an account of the work of Canadian Red Cross workers in Siberia will enrich the story of Canadian interests and activities in Russia during the civil war years. A full accounting of this period in Canadian-Siberian and Canadian-Russian relations, that takes into account all the various levels of interest and action, remains to be written.⁶ The same is true of British-Russian relations during the revolutionary and civil war period, as became apparent during my research.⁷

Because almost no prior research had been conducted on the Canadian Red Cross in Siberia, the sources for this thesis were primarily archival. The most important repositories and records included (1) the National Archives of Canada, for the administrative records of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to Siberia, records relating to the Canadian Economic Commission to Siberia, and the papers of Sir Robert Borden, Sir George Foster, and others, including diaries and letters of several members of the military force; (2) the Canadian War Museum for the Douglas Marr Brown collection; and (3) the Canadian Red Cross National Office, where the minutes of national Red Cross meetings are preserved. Unfortunately, the records and correspondence generated

⁶The best book-length study that deals with Canadian participation in all four theatres of Allied intervention in Russia is MacLaren's *Canadians in Russia*. Though he did not have access to the Siberian force's administrative records, resulting in a few inaccuracies, Stuart Beattie's 400-page "Canadian Intervention in Russia, 1918–1919" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1957), is in some ways superior to MacLaren's study. Other relevant sources are listed in the bibliography.

⁷Richard H. Ullman's three-volume *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917–1921* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961–1972), is excellent, but it does not delve deeply into the policies and activities of the various British representatives in Siberia, both official and private.

by and related to the Siberian Red Cross mission were not preserved by the Canadian Red Cross Society. Contemporary newspaper reports were also invaluable. The many other sources consulted are listed in the footnotes and bibliography.

I have relied on the assistance of several institutions and individuals during the research and writing stages of this thesis. Most of the research for this project was carried out at the National Archives of Canada, to whose staff I am grateful. For access to archival material at other institutions, I wish to thank Prof. J. L. Black (Centre for Research on Canadian-Russian Relations), Dennis Fletcher (Canadian War Museum), Robert Gourgon (Canadian Red Cross National Office), Carol Reid (Canadian War Museum), and Yolaine Toussaint (BMO Corporate Archives). Some of the published sources consulted during the research, including key ones, were made available to me by Carleton's Inter-Library Loans Department. Thank you. I am also grateful to my thesis supervisor, Prof. R. C. Elwood; professors Alek Bennett, Norman Hillmer, Dominique Marshall, Duncan McDowall, and Susan Whitney; my fellow graduate students in the Department of History; and friends and family, for their assistance, advice, encouragement, and honesty over the past two years. Finally, as all graduate students in the department are, I am indebted to Joan White for her expertise, patience, and good humour.

Russian names are transliterated according to a modified Library of Congress system; diacritical marks are excluded. All dates are given according to the western (Gregorian) calendar, which was thirteen days ahead of the Julian calendar used in Russia until

February 1918. “Siberia” is used throughout the text as a general term to refer to the area of the former Russian Empire between the Pacific Ocean and the Ural Mountains, as well as that portion of Manchuria under Russian administrative control. Where appropriate, other terms, including “western Siberia,” “eastern Siberia,” and “the Russian Far East,” are also used to refer to smaller areas within the immense Siberian landmass.

“Bolshevik” and “Bolshevism” are used throughout in lieu of “Communist” or “Communism,” in keeping with contemporary usage. Russian place names are given as they were known to Canadians, with the appropriate spelling corrections.

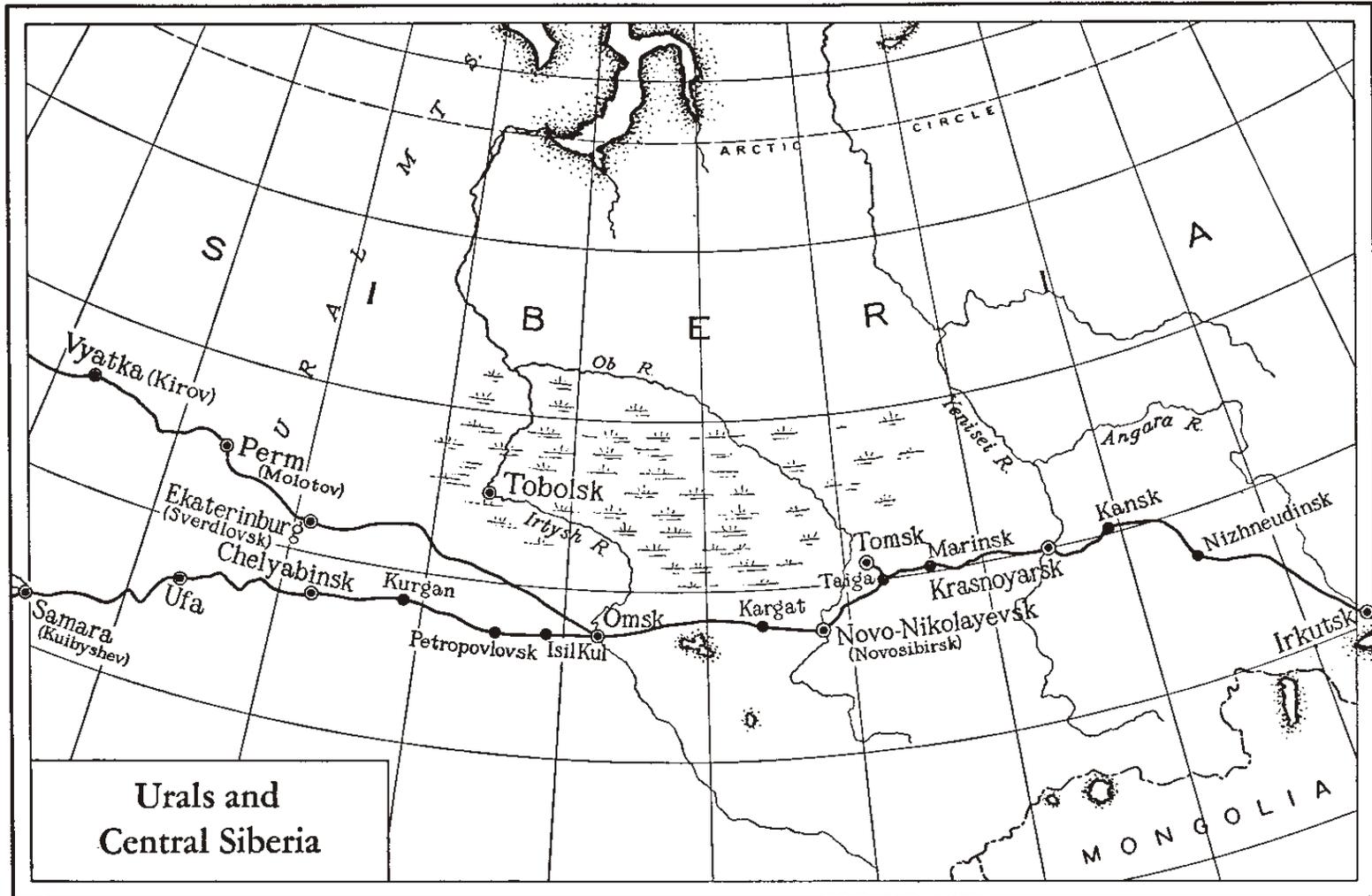
ABBREVIATIONS

In the Text

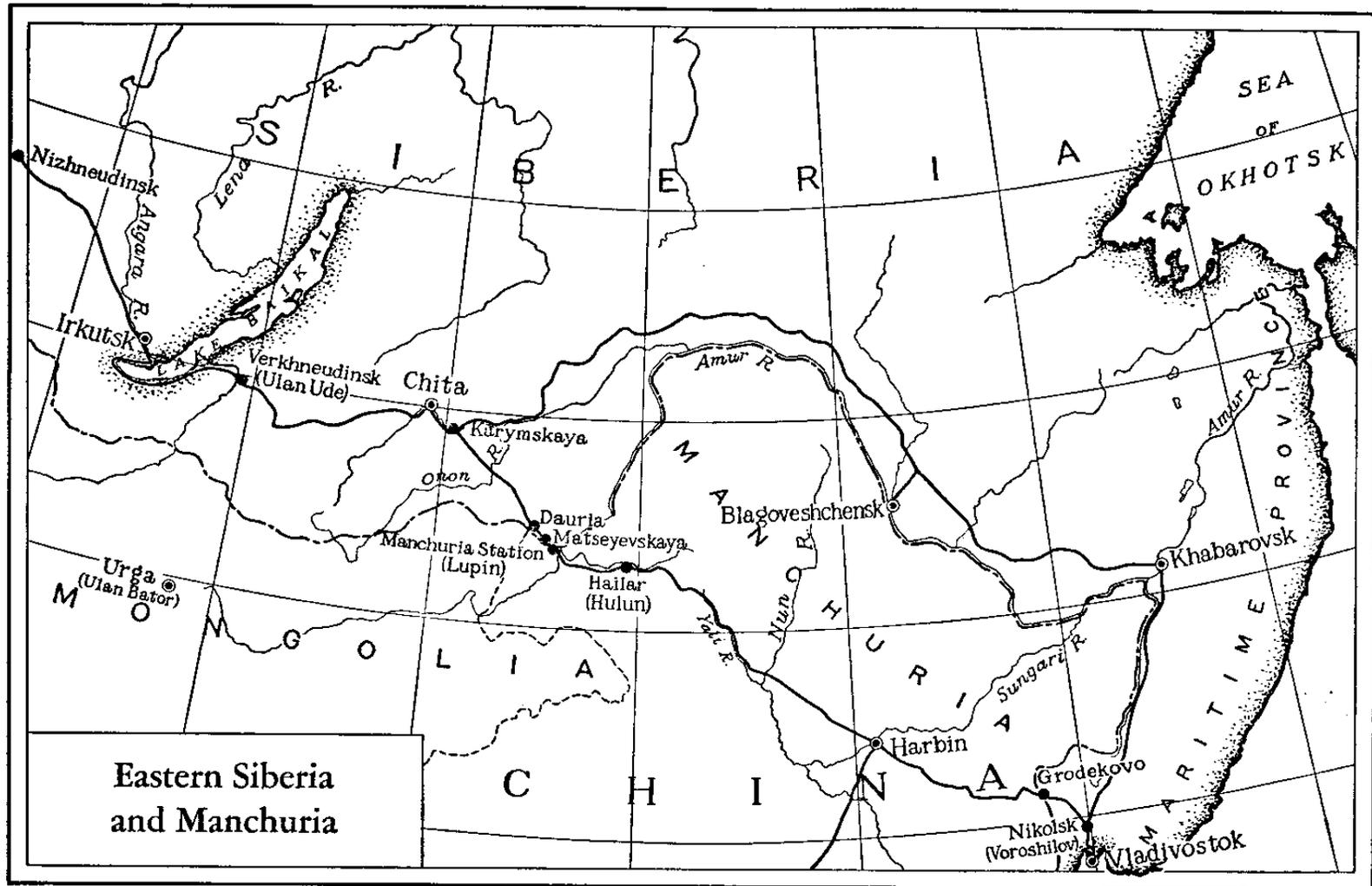
ARC	American Red Cross
BMM	British Military Mission to Siberia
BRCS	British Red Cross Society
CEC(S)	Canadian Economic Commission (Siberia)
CEF(S)	Canadian Expeditionary Force (Siberia)
CRCS	Canadian Red Cross Society
CWCA	Canadian War Contingent Association

In the Footnotes

ADMS	Assistant Director of Medical Services
CC	Central Council
CRCNO	Canadian Red Cross National Office
CWM	Canadian War Museum
DTC	Department of Trade and Commerce
EC	Executive Committee
ECBG	Executive Committee of the Board of Governors
NAC	National Archives of Canada



Reprinted from George F. Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920*, vol. 2, *The Decision to Intervene* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), 278.



Reprinted from George F. Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920*, vol. 2, *The Decision to Intervene* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), 410.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In late April 1920 two Canadian relief workers found themselves caught between opposing sides in the Russian civil war. It was an unexpected, though not entirely surprising, turn of events for the Red Cross men. After all, they were in Chita, the headquarters of the Japanese-backed Cossack ataman, General Grigorii Mikhailovich Semenov. He was the last anti-Bolshevik power in Russia's East. It had taken Sergeant Douglas Marr Brown, Lieutenant-Colonel David Douglas Young, and their local staff two weeks of travelling along the Chinese Eastern Railway to reach Chita, a town north of the Russian-Manchurian border in the Transbaikalian region. They were pleased to have gotten this far from their home base of Vladivostok, but their intended destination lay much further to the West,¹ where typhus was wreaking havoc and the roads were "covered with corpses" for hundreds of miles.²

When the Red Cross train arrived in Chita on 15 April, the town was sunny, quiet, and very dusty. As in all too many Siberian centres, food and supplies were scarce and expensive, and there were hospitals, military units, and civilians in need of assistance.

¹They were aiming for Krasnoyarsk and Tomsk. Canadian War Museum (CWM), Douglas Marr Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, 58A 1 103.3, file 7, item 178, D. M. Brown to C. M. Brown, 28 Mar. 1920. Except where otherwise noted, all references to items in the "Siberian correspondence" series are to "D. M. Brown to C. M. Brown."

²Francis McCullagh, *A Prisoner of the Reds: The Story of a British Officer Captured in Siberia* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1922), 31–35.

The men busied themselves handing out the medical supplies, medicines, and other goods they had brought from “Vladi.”³ Five days later they were still in Chita, still negotiating with the military authorities to allow them to continue their journey westward. Brown was anxious to get away. The next day, 22 April, the men were hard at work but no closer to departure. Earlier train trouble had delayed the distribution of medical supplies to a military hospital, but things were now running smoothly, or as smoothly as could be expected in the war-torn region.

Suddenly, the military situation took a turn for the worse. Brown awoke on the morning of the twenty-third to the sound of “a bursting bomb!”⁴ Rumours of an impending Bolshevik air raid on the train station and the nearby Japanese and Semenov barracks spread. “If that happens,” Brown recorded in his diary, “the poor old British & Canadian Red Cross Train is liable to catch a stray one.”⁵ The expected bombing never happened, but some of the thousands of incoming Japanese reinforcements reported that the town was surrounded by Bolsheviks. Brown, always level-headed and realistic, noted that “this should be the beginning of the end.”⁶ His concern was well-founded: Bombs and bullets were not the only threats to Red Cross personnel in Siberia. Several delegates from other countries had already been taken prisoner by Bolsheviks, and at least one had been killed.⁷

There was fighting around the Canadian train on and off for several days

³CWM, Brown collection, train diary, 58A 103.1-5, entries for 15 Apr.–5 May 1920.

⁴CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 180, 23 Apr. 1920.

⁵CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 23 Apr. 1920.

⁶Ibid., entry for 25 Apr. 1920.

⁷“Imperial and foreign news items,” *Times* (London), 7 Mar. 1919, 9. See also below, pp.

thereafter. As April neared its end Brown believed he and the others were “pretty well hemmed in by the Bolsheviks,” and feared they would be in Chita “for the duration of the war.” The Bolsheviks had blown up the track to the West; Brown thought heading back east would prove equally impossible.⁸ Luckily, the military situation improved. The train finally left the city on 7 May, and the men headed back to Vladivostok, unable to help the soldiers and civilians dying by the thousands west of Lake Baikal. Brown was “disgusted” at not having gone any further than Chita, but everyone emerged unscathed, including a party of western civilians rescued by Young from Soviet Russia.⁹

How did these Canadians end up so far from home?

The International Red Cross and the Canadian Red Cross Society

Since the birth of the Red Cross movement over fifty years before the Canadians’ Siberian adventure, its representatives had found themselves in many troubling situations. It had all begun in the summer of 1859 when an idealistic Genevan, Henri Dunant, went to Italy in search of the French emperor. Dunant hoped that Napoleon III, who was then commanding his armies in the war against the Austro-Hungarian Empire, would help him solve his business woes. He never found his man. Instead, Dunant arrived on the scene of the recently fought battle of Solferino in time to witness the horrific aftermath of modern warfare. The residents of a nearby town were doing what they could to care for thousands of wounded soldiers from both sides, but a lack of medical supplies, equipment, and personnel seriously undermined their efforts. There was a great deal of needless suffering

⁸CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entries for 26–29 Apr. 1920.

⁹Ibid., entries for 28 Apr. and 1–7 May 1920. Brown’s comment about being “disgusted” is from CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 184, 13 May 1920.

and death among combatants. Dunant himself spent several days trying desperately to tend to the wounded, and became familiar with similar work being done by the residents of other towns near the battlefield.

Three years later, determined to do something to ensure wounded soldiers received the medical attention they deserved, Dunant published a moving account of his experiences. *Un Souvenir de Solferino* (1862) was soon required reading for Europe's elite. Dunant and four other wealthy, well-placed Genevans, inspired in part by this small book, formed what would become the International Committee of the Red Cross. This group spearheaded the drawing-up of the first Geneva Convention (1864), an international treaty which put into place rules to improve the care of wounded combatants and outlined the duties of "voluntary aid societies" to assist military medical services. A revised Geneva Convention was drawn up in 1906, and in 1912 the Red Cross movement decided to act as guardians of the 1907 Hague Convention, which specified rights for prisoners of war. Though some national military establishments and key individuals were initially cool to the idea of "volunteers on the battlefield," by the beginning of the twentieth century the value of both the Geneva conventions and Red Cross societies was widely recognized. It was not long before there were dozens of national Red Cross societies throughout Europe and around the world, all operating under the same sign, a red cross on a white background. These societies were involved in a wide array of activities, from disaster relief and health promotion during peacetime, to the care of wounded soldiers and prisoners of war during wartime.¹⁰

¹⁰For a discussion of the militarism and nationalism inherent in the Red Cross movement from the beginning, see Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity*. Caroline Moorehead's excellent *Dunant's Dream: War,*

Canada, perhaps because of the British military's reluctance to embrace the Red Cross movement, would not have its own society until the original Geneva Convention was already three decades old. The first time that the Red Cross flag flew in the growing dominion was during the 1885 North-West (Riel) Rebellion, when the future founder of the Canadian society, Colonel Dr. George Sterling Ryerson, put together a rough flag to fly above his horse-drawn medical wagon. After experiencing some difficulties in his efforts to improve and professionalize medicine in the Canadian militia, Ryerson organized Canada's St. John Ambulance Association in 1895.¹¹ This association, he knew, was a civil one; in time of war the more important auxiliary to the military medical services would be a Red Cross society. Admittedly "almost obsessed" with furthering military medicine, Ryerson asked the British Red Cross Society (BRCS)¹² for permission to establish a Canadian affiliate. The British society agreed, and in the fall of 1896 the Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) was born.¹³ Its purpose was to aid soldiers in hospital and provide supplemental assistance to the medical services of the army or to the BRCS. As stipulated in the Geneva Convention, it was also to help soldiers of any nationality who accepted the neutrality of the organization in wartime.¹⁴ Unlike other

Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross (London: HarperCollins, 1998), which looks at the Red Cross through the 1990s, is more sympathetic toward the movement's founders. The two-volume *History of the International Committee of the Red Cross* includes Pierre Boissier, *From Solferino to Tsushima*, 2d ed. (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1985) and André Durand, *From Sarajevo to Hiroshima* (Geneva: Henry Dunant Institute, 1984). An English version of Dunant's famous essay is available: Henry Dunant, *A Memory of Solferino* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1986).

¹¹George Sterling Ryerson, *Looking Backward* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1924), 81–82, 94–99, and 105.

¹²The British Red Cross's official name at this time was the National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War. It was not known as the British Red Cross Society until a few years later.

¹³Ryerson, *Looking Backward*, 117–118; McKenzie Porter, *To All Men: The Story of the Canadian Red Cross* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1960), 30.

¹⁴Ryerson, *Looking Backward*, 118.

national aid societies, it had no peacetime role.

As such, the first test for the CRCS came during the Boer War (1899–1902), when it collected and distributed supplies for “Briton, Boer and Colonial alike.” Ryerson remembered that “in those days the Government supplied the barest necessities for the sick; what was not in store they did without. Had the Red Cross not come to the rescue the plight of the sick, bad as it was, would have been much worse.”¹⁵ Though Ryerson had visited South Africa as a representative of the CRCS, the society’s wartime role was not formalized until several years later, when it was granted official status to work “in affiliation with the British Red Cross Society to carry out the purposes of the [Geneva] treaty.” The Canadian Red Cross Society Act (1909) also stipulated that the CRCS had to submit annual reports on its activities, including detailed financial statements, to the militia department. The minister of militia was, moreover, the society’s honorary president. Thus, while the Canadian Red Cross remained an independent organization, there was no mistaking its limited wartime role and close relationship with both the BRCS and the military.¹⁶

The newly-incorporated adjunct to the army medical services first became active after the outbreak of the Great War in 1914.¹⁷ During that long, devastating conflict the CRCS was one of the three largest auxiliary organizations working in Canada or elsewhere for the benefit of Canadian soldiers. As the “official channel through which voluntary gifts shall reach the Medical Service,” the Canadian Red Cross collected more

¹⁵Ibid., 170, 179.

¹⁶“An Act to incorporate the Canadian Red Cross Society,” in *Statutes of Canada*, 1909, 8–9 Edw. 7, c. 68.

¹⁷Ryerson, *Looking Backward*, 194–195.

than \$20 million in contributions of money and goods, mostly from Canadian residents.¹⁸ On the homefront the society organized shipments of goods needed in hospitals and by medical units overseas. In Britain and France it built and supplied hospitals, kept convalescing Canadian soldiers comfortable, and looked after the interests of Canadian POWs, keeping tabs on their whereabouts and ensuring that each received as many gifts from home as were allowed under wartime regulations. The CRCS worked in concert with hospital and other medical units in the armed forces, the British Red Cross, and military and political officials, including members of the royal family and the prime minister. After the armistice was signed on 11 November 1918, bringing a merciful end to the fighting, the CRCS chairman could proudly boast of his organization's importance to the war effort. "At the beginning of the war," he declared, "a promise was made that, supported by the people of Canada, the Canadian Red Cross Society would undertake that no sick or wounded soldier should suffer from lack of any comforts or attendance that they could supply. This promise, made over four years ago, has undoubtedly been kept."¹⁹

The CRCS was centralized and hierarchical, prized efficiency above all else, and, like a good dominion affiliate, took its cue from the policies and practices of its British parent society.²⁰ At the national level the CRCS was governed by a Central Council,

¹⁸CRCS, *What the Canadian Red Cross Society is Doing in the Great War: Being an Outline of the Organization and Work of the Canadian Red Cross Society* (Toronto: CRCS, 1918), 7; Department of Public Information, *Canada's Part in the Great War* (Ottawa: Department of Public Information, 1919), 43.

¹⁹Noel Marshall in CRCS, *Annual Report 1918* (Toronto: CRCS Head Office, 1919), 1. See Mary MacLeod Moore, *The Maple Leaf's Red Cross: The War Story of the Canadian Red Cross Overseas* (London: Skeffington & Son, 1919) for a popular contemporary account of the society's European work.

²⁰Problems were caused in the first months of the war by some branches acting on their own. The society appealed for uniformity and adherence to hierarchy. See CRCS, *Annual Report 1914* (Toronto: CRCS Head Office, 1915), 17–18. The CRCS continued to refer to itself in its annual reports as "in

whose members were elected and came from the country's business, medical, military, political, and social elites. This body met infrequently; when not in session, a smaller Executive Committee, made up of council members, made decisions. Though the society had a president, the chairman of the Executive Committee was, in practice, the organization's top official. In addition to the national branch, which had its headquarters in Toronto, there were eight provincial branches and many local ones. Over the course of the war, the number of local branches grew from 156 to just over 1,300,²¹ a clear reflection of the patriotism that moved people—especially women—to do their bit for the war effort.²² Many other so-called women's or ladies' auxiliaries also contributed to Red Cross work, their members knitting socks, making bandages, and collecting monetary donations and gifts for Canadian soldiers in hospital or in captivity. The activities of these and other patriotic associations that sprouted up during the war were prominently featured in the women's or society pages of Canadian newspapers. Because the war was fought in Europe the CRCS also had a large organization in Britain and a smaller one in France, both of which dealt more directly with the needs of soldiers overseas than did the branches in Canada. Whether in Canada or overseas, almost all of those who worked under the Canadian Red Cross banner were female volunteers. They formed what amounted to a unpaid civilian army providing many goods and services for their male friends and relatives in uniform that the military would otherwise have had to pay for.

affiliation with the British Red Cross Society" until 1920.

²¹Moore, *Maple Leaf's Red Cross*, 12.

²²For comments on Canadians' "patriotic response" to the war, especially when it came to the recruitment of soldiers, see R. Matthew Bray, "'Fighting as an Ally': The English-Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War," *Canadian Historical Review* 61, no. 2 (June 1980): 141–168.

The most important aspects of the Canadian Red Cross's work during the First World War involved the care, both directly and indirectly, of sick, wounded, or captured Canadian soldiers. Though Canadians were the primary targets of CRCS endeavours, considerable help was also extended to foreign combatants through donations of goods and money to relief societies in Allied countries. The BRCS benefited the most from these disbursements and, in addition, it collected more than \$5.6 million from Canadian residents in three special appeals. The French Red Cross and other French relief organizations were also important recipients, especially after October 1915 when the CRCS started supplying French military hospitals. Other European relief societies that benefited from Canadian Red Cross supplies and monetary gifts included those in Belgium, Italy, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia.²³ Though their share of total European disbursements was not large, the Russian Red Cross was also assisted. Between November 1914 and 1 November 1917, 2,850 cases of supplies were sent to the Russian society, and in 1916 a \$3,000 "special grant" was made to them.²⁴ There was no further wartime assistance to Russia after 1917. That year's tumultuous events were undoubtedly the reason.²⁵

²³On disbursements to other societies, see CRCS, *Annual Report 1914*, 21; CRCS, *Annual Report 1915* (Toronto: CRCS Head Office, 1916), 29, 31, 50; CRCS, *Annual Report 1916* (Toronto: CRCS Head Office, 1917), 29–30, 39, 44–45, 64; CRCS, *Annual Report 1917* (Toronto: CRCS Head Office, 1918), 39–43, 53; CRCS, *Annual Report 1918*, 29–30, 32, 38, 69. On the appeals for the BRCS in Canada, see CRCS, *What the Canadian Red Cross Society is Doing in the Great War*, 8. The 1915 and 1916 appeals came direct from the Joint Committee of the BRCS and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. The 1917 appeal was issued through the CRCS. Under normal circumstances only the national Red Cross society was allowed to raise funds in any country.

²⁴Moore, *Maple Leaf's Red Cross*, 222; CRCS, *Annual Report 1918*, 38; CRCS, *Annual Report 1916*, 64, 29.

²⁵For more on the work of the CRCS during the war, see, in addition to the sources already noted, the draft report prepared for the 1921 Geneva conference preserved at the Canadian Red Cross National Office (CRCNO), archives box 5, file 5.I; J. Castell Hopkins, *Canada at War: A Record of Heroism and Achievement 1914–1918* (Toronto: Canadian Annual Review, 1919), 248–252; and Sir George Perley,

The Russian Revolutions, Civil War, and Allied Intervention

The Russian Empire fought as an ally of the British and French during the first years of the Great War, but could not claim victory with the other Allies on Armistice Day. Russia's armies, though large, were poorly trained, terribly equipped, often incompetently led, and took heavy casualties. From late 1916 desertions were increasingly common. While Tsar Nicholas II was absorbed in military matters near the battlefield, conditions in his country worsened. It did not help that Russians had many outstanding grievances stemming from long before "Nicholas the Bloody" had first been crowned. In this context, what happened next is not surprising. In March 1917 there was a popular uprising in the capital city of Petrograd. The tsar was nonplussed at first, so far removed was he from the reality of popular discontent with his rule. But the unrest continued and, unable to quell the disturbances and backed into a political corner, Nicholas soon abdicated his throne. A newly-formed Provisional Government, made up of members of the tsarist parliament (the Duma), and supported by local soviets—councils representing grassroots and class concerns—took power amid widespread euphoria and high hopes for democracy.

Even though the war had been an important reason for the timing and success of this first Russian revolution of 1917, the ill-fated Provisional Government ensured that the eastern front remained officially active through the summer and early fall. In light of

"Practical Consolidation of the Empire," speech given before the Empire Club of Canada, Toronto, 29 Aug. 1916, in *The Empire Club of Canada Speeches 1916–1917* [speech on-line] (Toronto: Empire Club of Canada, 1917, accessed 15 June 2003), 193–204; available from <http://www.empireclubfoundation.com/details.asp?SpeechID=2490&FT=yes>.

future events it was an unwise move. In its weakened state, however, the new republic could ill afford to alienate its friends. A major offensive was planned and successfully launched in July. With conditions in the country in such disarray and revolutionary feeling permeating the army's ranks, the attack could not be sustained. Russia soon became a non-factor in the war. The entrance of the United States into the war on the Allied side in the spring of 1917 gave combatants a psychological boost, but fresh American soldiers were only slowly arriving on the battlefields. The Entente powers were worried. To make matters worse, the revolutionary Bolsheviks, under the leadership of Vladimir Ilich Lenin, took control of Petrograd in the name of the soviets in early November and other Russian areas soon thereafter. Not long after this second Russian revolution, they signed an armistice with Germany, suspending the fighting on the eastern front. Ideologically opposed to the war, the Bolshevik leadership also knew that peace with the Central Powers would allow them to concentrate on their struggle for political mastery at home. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which formally ended Russian-German hostilities, was signed on 3 March 1918. On the twenty-first the Germans, no longer forced to fight a war on two fronts, launched a major offensive against the western Allies.

The governments of the Allied powers had feared this outcome, and its greater significance for their war effort, for some time. After Brest-Litovsk, some people in the West believed that the Bolshevik Red Army might be convinced to turn against the Germans and rejoin the war on the Allied side. Soon enough, though, the British and French were committed to military intervention *against* the Bolsheviks. The British

hoped to reconstitute the eastern front; the French were determined to see regime change in Russia. Western publics were convinced that the Bolsheviks were German agents. Allied military planners knew that the treaty, which ceded an immense swath of population- and resource-rich territory to the Germans, had angered those elements in Russia that had little use for Lenin and his revolutionary plans. The outbreak of civil war in the country by early 1918 was evidence of that. Over the next several months the situation in Russia was watched closely. Ambitious plans were drawn up involving loyal Russian forces, helped along by Allied officers, troops, and military equipment. Small western forces were sent to the Caucasus and North Russia to protect, respectively, the Baku oil fields and the large stockpiles of Allied military equipment stored in the White Sea ports.²⁶ Canadians were involved in both campaigns.²⁷ But in the summer the most promising field for Allied activity in Russia became Siberia.

The first major breakthrough for those opposed to Bolshevism in Siberia came thanks to an unexpected source. On 14 May 1918 at Cheliabinsk, a city on the eastern slopes of the Ural Mountains, there was a deadly incident between a group of pro-Entente Czecho-Slovak troops and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war. The Czecho-Slovaks, members of the forty thousand-strong “Czech Legion,” were on their way out of Russia. They hoped to reach the western front, fight against their imperial overlords, and gain

²⁶On British policy toward Russia between the Bolshevik takeover and Nov. 1918, see Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917–1921*, vol. 1, *Intervention and the War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961) and Sir Curtis Keeble, *Britain, the Soviet Union and Russia*, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan, 2000), 19–54. For a discussion of French concerns and activities, see Michael J. Carley, *Revolution & Intervention: The French Government and the Russian Civil War, 1917–1919* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1983).

²⁷On Canadian participation in North Russia and the Caucasus, see MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 9–124.

themselves an independent state once the war ended. The POWs were headed in the other direction, awaiting transport home. The two clashed at the station, leaving a Czech seriously injured and, in retaliation, the Hungarian responsible was lynched. Local soviet authorities then arrested several Czecho-Slovaks. Tensions had been rising between the legionnaires and the Bolsheviks for some time; this action did not sit well with them. The Czechs occupied the city centre and forcibly freed their comrades.

The Czecho-Slovaks still had no wish to entangle themselves in the civil war. But this was exactly what happened when Bolshevik authorities over-reacted to the events at Cheliabinsk. Proof of Bolshevik hostility toward the Czecho-Slovaks arrived in the form of a telegram War Commissar and Red Army head Lev Davidovich Trotskii sent on 25 May ordering the disarming of the Legion and authorizing the immediate execution of any armed Czecho-Slovak discovered on the railway. Now, instead of trusting the Bolsheviks to protect them as they continued their journey along the Trans-Siberian Railway toward Vladivostok, the legionnaires fought back. In the space of a few weeks they took nearly all of the Siberian towns along the railway and allowed for the establishment of anti-Bolshevik, or “White,” administrations throughout Siberia and the Far East.²⁸ It was ostensibly the plight of these Czecho-Slovaks, feared stranded in Siberia, which brought the Americans on side with British and French plans for a military intervention in Siberia. In early July American President Woodrow Wilson finally

²⁸For more on the Czech Legion, see John F. N. Bradley, *The Czechoslovak Legion in Russia, 1914–1920*, East European Monographs, no. CCCXXI (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1991). On the events of May, the strained relationship between the Legion and Bolshevik authorities, and the Legion’s easterly advance, see 77–105.

decided to send troops and supplies to the region.²⁹ With the United States on board, the Japanese also agreed to participate.³⁰ Allied forces were soon on their way to Vladivostok.

The Canadian Decision to Intervene in Siberia

The British military was unable to send anywhere near the number of troops that the Japanese or Americans could field in Siberia, but they did want an imperial presence in this potentially important region. A solution was close at hand: They could appeal to Canada, the faithful elder dominion. On 9 July, before news of American participation had reached London,³¹ the British War Office cabled Newton Wesley Rowell, president of the Canadian Privy Council, and asked him to consult with Prime Minister Sir Robert Laird Borden about the possibility of Canadian soldiers being sent to distant Siberia.³² Rowell took the matter up with Minister of Militia and Defence Major-General Sydney Chilton Mewburn and Borden (all three men were in London) and replied two days later that “we believe the matter can be satisfactorily arranged.”³³ The idea was not without

²⁹Though Wilson publicly claimed that a desire to aid the Czech Legion was what had inspired his change of heart on the issue, his reasons for agreeing to the intervention have been fiercely debated ever since. See, for example, the widely different interpretations offered by David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); George Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations, 1917–1920*, vol. 2, *The Decision to Intervene* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958); and Betty M. Unterberger, *America's Siberian Expedition, 1918–1920: A Study of National Policy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1956).

³⁰On the Japanese decision to intervene, see James William Morley, *The Japanese Thrust into Siberia, 1918*, Studies of the Russian Institute (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957).

³¹Though Wilson decided to send troops to Siberia on 6 July, the British government only found out four days later. See Gaddis Smith, “Canada and the Siberian Intervention, 1918–1919,” *American Historical Review* 64, no. 4 (July 1959): 868n7.

³²National Archives of Canada (NAC), Newton Wesley Rowell fonds, MG 27 II-D-13, vol. 17, file 73, microfilm, reel C-941, 12020–12021, P. de B. Radcliffe to N. W. Rowell, 9 July 1918. Radcliffe was the War Office's director of military operations.

³³*Ibid.*, 12022, Rowell to Radcliffe, 11 July 1918.

merit, both in the context of the First World War and Canada's postwar concerns.

Swayed in part by British arguments about the importance of the military intervention for a successful conclusion to the war, as well as by their own considerations of the political and economic opportunities that might follow, the Canadian cabinet in Ottawa had approved of the intervention "in principle" by the end of July.³⁴ Preparations for the force were soon underway. Orders-in-council on 12 and 23 August, and 5 September, specified what units would be involved, and promised that about four thousand troops would come from Canada for the Siberian force.³⁵

The Canadian Red Cross and Siberian Relief

The Canadian Red Cross Society became involved in the military venture in Siberia soon after the decision to organize the force was publicly announced on 11 August,³⁶ and the society's work in the region ended almost two and one-half years later, long after the departure of western interventionist forces. The CRCS worked closely with the Canadian Army Medical Corps in arranging for the shipment and distribution of goods to Canadian and other imperial troops in hospital. Because of the general scarcity of supplies in Siberia, the society also agreed to provide "comforts" to all soldiers. From this limited initial mandate, the society's first commissioner, Colonel John Stoughton Dennis, expanded the mission's work to include civilian relief. After his arrival in the Far East in early 1919 Dennis set about trying to increase the scope of the Canadian Red Cross

³⁴Bothwell, "Borden and the Bolsheviks," 27. For more on the reasons behind the Canadian decision to participate in the Allied military venture in Siberia, see Smith, "Canada and the Siberian Intervention," 869–871. For more on the economic aspects of the decision, see below, chap. 3.

³⁵Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 1, 1909–1918 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967), 207, 208.

³⁶"Canadians for Siberia; special force authorized," *Toronto Globe*, 12 Aug. 1918, 1.

mission's resources and responsibility. When the Canadian government decided to withdraw its troops from Siberia in the spring, the mission members were unsure what their future would be. Most of them returned home with the troops. The last boat sailed on 5 June 1919, leaving a small Canadian rear party behind.

During the spring the British, whose own military mission and troops had relied on Canadian administrative and auxiliary services, urged the Red Cross to continue its work. With prodding and promises from British officials in Siberia that the work was valued and the men and supplies would be safe, the CRCS soon agreed to resume shipments of needed medical and other supplies. Young, the assistant commissioner, was sent back to Siberia in the fall with instructions to resume his activities in Vladivostok. For the next year the CRCS Siberian mission personnel continued their relief efforts, distributing supplies received from Canada and elsewhere. They worked closely with British officials and civilians in the Far East and, after the departure of the British military representatives, were among the last foreigners left in Vladivostok. They lost their battle with headquarters to keep the mission open in the fall of 1920. The three remaining CRCS personnel reluctantly returned to Canada early the next year.

* * *

This thesis discusses the Canadian Red Cross relief mission in Siberia and the activities of its members. Chapter 2 focusses on the mission's work among soldiers, emphasizing the relationship between the military and the CRCS, and the Red Cross's morale-boosting role. The difficulties that the CRCS and Canadian medical authorities experienced in their efforts to combat typhus in Vladivostok foreshadows the

disappointments chronicled in the next chapter. Chapter 3 covers roughly the same period of time as the second, going back to August 1918 and ending the following spring. It zeroes-in on Commissioner Dennis's Siberian activities, including the establishment and work of the economic commission, his campaign for civilian relief, and his ambitious plans to aid prisoners of war in Siberia. Dennis was convinced in large part that Canadian generosity would augur well for future trade relations. Chapter 4 deals with the events leading up to the decision to keep Canadian relief work ongoing after the withdrawal of the Canadian Expeditionary Force to Siberia (CEF[S]), and brings the story forward to the early fall of 1919. The importance of the CRCS mission to British policy in Siberia, a theme introduced earlier in the thesis, is emphasized, as is the reality that the Red Cross was not a neutral body. Chapter 5 concludes the narrative, focussing on the last three mission members and highlighting the personal reasons why they chose to remain in Siberia long after their imperial colleagues had sailed for home.

CHAPTER 2

MILITARY RELIEF, AUGUST 1918–SPRING 1919

During the six or seven months that the Canadians were in Siberia, the Red Cross carried on its usual work among the troops, making the bed of sickness easier, bringing Christmas cheer to the troops, and supplementing the army issue of clothing with warm socks, mufflers, mitts, and many other things made by the mothers, wives and sisters working at home in Canada.¹

Douglas Marr Brown

During the period of Canada's military presence in Siberia (October 1918–June 1919), the Canadian Red Cross played an important role in keeping sickness at bay and boosting troop morale. The primary responsibility of the CRCS Siberian mission, established in December 1918 with the arrival of the first Red Cross representatives from Canada, was to assist the Canadian military medical services by providing supplementary goods for the care of soldiers who were sick or wounded. This was just as it was on the western front. But the uniqueness of the Siberian theatre, and its distance from Europe, meant that the CRCS was called upon to expand its field of operations to include work normally carried out by other groups. First, as a matter of practicality and cost-effectiveness, Red Cross supplies and services benefited all soldiers, not just those in hospital or otherwise convalescing. Second, the CRCS looked after both Canadian and British troops, reflecting Canada's coming of age and desire to prove itself on a wider scale. Indeed, the competence of the dominion Red Cross personnel outstripped that of the British Red

¹CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, ca. March? 1921, 58A 1 103.15, p. 1.

Cross representatives, who subordinated themselves to the CRCS commissioner a few months into the expedition.

The Canadian Red Cross successfully supplied the Canadian Expeditionary Force and the British battalions in Siberia, and contributed materiel for the use of other military forces in the region. From the first shipment of Red Cross supplies sent in October, to the last goods which arrived in Vladivostok the following April, more than 300 tons of supplies, worth about \$250,000 and comprising almost 7,000 cases, were shipped from Canada for distribution by Red Cross workers.² The efforts of the CRCS's Siberian personnel and the items they gave out—including everything from bandages, socks, books, and plum puddings—helped keep men far from home healthy and in good spirits. It was not all smooth sailing for the small relief mission, which never had more than six officials attached to it. A lack of resources and difficulties of coordination and cooperation with others frustrated some of their plans. This was especially true of the anti-typhus efforts during the winter of 1918–1919. Despite these challenges, the CRCS mission earned the respect and admiration of soldiers and top British and Canadian officials in Siberia.

Organizing the Mission, August–November 1918

Immediately after hearing that Canada would be sending soldiers to Siberia, the chairman

²For evidence of the Red Cross supplies shipped to Vladivostok, see NAC, CEF(S) records, RG 9 III-A-3, vol. 372, files FORCE HQ 50-3, 50-4, 50-5, 50-6, 50-8, and vol. 363, file 122. The final case tally for this period is put at 6,869 in CRCNO, CRCS, Executive Committee of the Board of Governors (ECBG), Archived Minutes, 5:3, the minutes of the meeting of the Central Council (CC) on 13 May 1919. The dollar value is from “Some Serious Situations in Siberia Saved by Canadian Red Cross Society,” *Bulletin* 45 (June–July 1919): 12, where the total number of cases is put at 6,933. The same information appears in “Peace-time work of the Red Cross,” *Toronto Globe*, 18 June 1919, 10. These figures do not take into account the drugs that were sent.

of the CRCS, Lieutenant-Colonel Noel George Lambert Marshall, wrote to the Department of Militia and Defence offering his society's assistance.³ The first opportunity the Red Cross had to participate in the imperial military intervention in Siberia came a month later, when Major-General Willoughby Garnons Gwatkin, chief of the general staff of the Canadian army, asked the CRCS to send \$1,000 worth of "woollen comforts" to the British forces already in theatre. Marshall agreed to send the required supplies "as a free contribution."⁴ The matter of the CRCS sending its own personnel to Siberia first came up for discussion in the Central Council and Executive Committee meetings that month. On 17 September Marshall told his colleagues on the council that during a recent trip to England he had been informed that the British Red Cross would ask the dominion society to provide all supplies for the Siberian expedition. He had returned to Canada believing that the CRCS would be entrusted with this work when an unexpected message arrived.⁵ Colonel Harry Woodburne Blaylock, the CRCS commissioner in England, cabled Marshall that the BRCS was considering sending "a unit of Russian Doctors and Nurses to work with the Russians." If this came about, it would not impede the CRCS's ability to take on the job of supplying all imperial units, but there was more news. The BRCS was also thinking of organizing a British unit, Blaylock continued, presumably to work with the British battalions. The commissioner assured Marshall that his society would be consulted before the British finalized their

³CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:122, minutes of the CC meeting, 17 Sept. 1918.

⁴Ibid., 4:108, N. G. L. Marshall to W. G. Gwatkin, mid-Sept. 1918, cited in the minutes of the Executive Committee (EC) meeting, 16 Sept. 1918.

⁵Ibid., 4:122, minutes of the CC meeting, 17 Sept. 1918.

arrangements.⁶

Informed of the British Red Cross's apparent flip-flop, and before waiting for BRCS representatives to arrive in Canada—the trip from Europe to Siberia required passing through North America—the members of the Central Council took matters into their own hands. Undoubtedly proud of their organization's achievements during the war and confident in their ability to work on an imperial scale, the councillors may well have considered that their parent organization's lack of confidence in them smacked of colonialism. The CRCS had, after all, collected millions of dollars in cash and donations of supplies and carried out extensive work on two continents over the past few years. While in London the previous August, Mewburn and Borden had sung the society's praises. "In no business establishment," they were reported to have declared, "are administrative details more thoroly [*sic*] and efficiently worked out."⁷ One can forgive the Red Cross officials for believing they were qualified to take control of military relief in Siberia. The councillors agreed

That inasmuch as Canada is the portion of the Empire nearest to the base of Military operations in Siberia, and already preparations are being made for the despatch of Canadian Troops to that Country, it would seem fitting that this Society should take a leading part in the provision of Red Cross help to the members of the Expeditionary Force, and that the contribution of Canadian Red Cross work in Siberia should be measured by the service which can be rendered to the Empire because of the geographical position of the Dominion, rather than the bare necessities of the Canadian Forces.⁸

As upper-class, Anglophone Canadians working for a leading wartime patriotic organization, the members of the CRCS's decision-making bodies were British

⁶Ibid., 4:108, H. W. Blaylock to N. G. L. Marshall, 15 Sept. 1918, quoted in the minutes of the EC meeting, 16 Sept. 1918.

⁷"Borden gets word of battle progress," *Toronto World*, 10 Aug. 1918, 4.

⁸CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:122–123, minutes of the CC meeting, 17 Sept. 1918.

imperialists as well as Canadian nationalists. The councillors wished to take on the primary role in the provision of Red Cross supplies to Canadian troops in Siberia, and they looked forward to serving the empire in other ways.

These imperial ambitions were reinforced the next day as the practical business of organizing the CRCS's participation in the Canadian military expedition was undertaken. On 18 September the councillors met with Major-General Dr. John Taylor Fotheringham, director general of the Canadian army's medical services. This conference was called at the request of the militia department to discuss, in part, the cooperation of the CRCS with the department in the Siberian campaign. The first steps the society should take in setting up its mission were discussed, and Fotheringham provided specific suggestions and advice to the councillors. He also thanked the society for the "woollen comforts" donated to imperial units in Vladivostok. During the discussions the councillors offered to set up a base hospital in Vladivostok or Japan—something well within their area of expertise—to which Fotheringham replied that it was best to wait until it was known what medical services would be needed. Sharing the Red Cross's willingness to assist all imperial units, as well as other interventionist troops, the medical director stated that "the proposal [for the hospital] should be sympathetically considered in the light of the needs of the Allied Forces concerned, not only of the Canadians." Fotheringham also suggested that the society open a warehouse at Vancouver for storing supplies.⁹

The most important matter brought up by Fotheringham was the appointment of a commissioner for the Siberian mission. The CRCS had only one other commissioner—

⁹Ibid., 4:128–129.

Blaylock, who was responsible for the society's work overseas—and the position apparently carried some prestige. During the conference

General Fotheringham suggested that the Society should appoint a Commissioner to proceed to Vladivostock; that the Commissioner should hold Military rank, and that the Minister of the Department had empowered him to state that he would give the Society an Officer for this purpose, with military rank so as to facilitate the carrying out of his duties. He further suggested that it would be well to secure the concurrence of the British War Office by cabling them the selection, in order that the Canadian Commissioner might represent, practically, the sum and total of the Imperial Red Cross activities in that District and be able to act under recognition of the War Office as well as with simply Canadian authority.¹⁰

As evidenced by the scale on which Fotheringham foresaw the CRCS's work in Siberia, the militia department was buoyed by the British decision to grant the commander of the CEF(S) control over all imperial troops in Siberia. Since it would be providing the bulk of the troops, the Canadian military had felt it only fitting that their own generals have final say over their countrymen's deployment. As has been pointed out, this was a first: a colonial officer in charge of British troops.¹¹ The Canadians even threatened to pull out of the venture unless they were granted control,¹² a sure sign that the dominion had outgrown the old imperial structures. The British, who needed Canadian soldiers if they had any hope of following through with their Russian plans, were in no position to argue. Either way, the Canadian Red Cross officials in Toronto were happy to go along—at least while the war continued. Of course, the chance to show their value to the empire may not have been the sole reason why CRCS was eager to take charge. The society valued efficiency and clear hierarchy; the avoidance of overlapping missions would certainly simplify things in Siberia. The councillors perhaps also remembered that the

¹⁰Ibid., 4:129.

¹¹C. P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies*, vol. 1, 1867–1921 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 283.

¹²Smith, "Canada and the Siberian Intervention," 872.

BRCS was acting for the Canadian Red Cross in the Mediterranean, supplying Canadian hospitals in an area that CRCS supplies could not reach,¹³ and wished to return the favour. CRCS headquarters decided to consult the representatives of the western provinces before accepting Fotheringham's choice for commissioner: Colonel John Stoughton Dennis Jr.¹⁴

The man Fotheringham suggested was no stranger to the Siberian expedition, even at this early stage. Dennis had been in contact with Canadian authorities since August about potential trade benefits for Canada in Siberia, and was on his way to the West Coast to supervise the transport of CEF(S) members. He would later be appointed to the Canadian Economic Commission to Siberia (CEC[S]).¹⁵ On 1 October Dennis was provisionally accepted as commissioner for the mission. Marshall cabled Fotheringham to set up an appointment with Dennis, and was told the colonel would meet him in Toronto in a couple of days before heading west.¹⁶ Dennis's appointment was soon confirmed after the agreement of the CRCS provincial branches of Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, and his own acceptance of the position. The new commissioner was empowered to choose an assistant "in conference with the Executive" and "to make the necessary arrangements as to his staff."¹⁷ In keeping with Fotheringham's suggestion, Blaylock was directed to inform the War Office and the BRCS of Dennis's

¹³CRCNO, archives box 5, file 5.I, draft report prepared for 1921 Geneva conference, p. 12.

¹⁴CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:133, 113, minutes of the conference with J. T. Fotheringham and minutes of the EC meeting, 1 Oct. 1918.

¹⁵See the next chapter for more on Dennis and the CEC(S).

¹⁶NAC, John Taylor Fotheringham fonds, MG 30 E-53, vol. 3, file "M," Marshall to Fotheringham, 1 Oct. 1918 and Fotheringham's reply, same day.

¹⁷CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:136-137, minutes of the EC meeting, 11 Oct. 1918.

appointment.¹⁸ One impressed reporter later wrote that “Red Cross workers everywhere are congratulating themselves that a man of such proved organizing and executive ability as Colonel Dennis should add this [appointment] to his already onerous duties.”¹⁹

In the meantime, preparations for the relief mission had continued apace. On 30 September Marshall met with Colonel John Thomas Clarke, the Siberian force’s medical director, to discuss the society’s participation in his forthcoming work.²⁰ In a letter to the secretary of the CRCS, Fotheringham provided answers to some questions about the mission and stated that he would contact the medical officers who were in Victoria, British Columbia, waiting to sail for Vladivostok. He assured her that the society’s commissioner need not be a medical officer, “as this has not been found necessary in France or elsewhere.” Furthermore,

There is no reason for supposing that the supplies sent by the Red Cross to Siberia will differ in any essential from those sent to other parts of the world. Your reserve is doubtless large and I would suggest your waiting until the Commissioner is advised in Siberia of the requirements considered necessary by the Medical Officers on the ground. There will be, it is understood, a monthly supply boat to Vladivostock so that there need not be any great delay.²¹

In early October the western provincial branches were told by national headquarters what was expected of them for the Siberian expedition: Alberta was responsible for furnishing “hospital supplies and warm garments for the [CEF(S)]”; branches in British Columbia were also “asked to make regular shipments of hospital garments”; and Manitoba was to make surgical dressings, and was later asked to contribute “warm comforts.”²² All Red

¹⁸Ibid., 4:147, minutes of the EC meeting on 29 Oct. 1918.

¹⁹“Former boss of Trotsky to open Red Cross drive,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 6 Jan. 1919, 12.

²⁰CRCSNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:114, minutes of the EC meeting, 1 Oct. 1918.

²¹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Fotheringham to A. Plumptre, 1 Oct. 1918.

²²CRCS, Alberta Provincial Branch, *Annual Report 1918* (Calgary: CRCS Provincial Head Office, 1919), 2; “Sufficient now overseas,” *Toronto Globe*, 10 Dec. 1918, 8; CRCS, *Annual Report 1919* (Toronto: CRCS Head Office, 1920), 80.

Cross supplies from branches in the western provinces were allocated to the Siberian expedition,²³ at least until the armistice.

Dennis was invited to attend the Executive Committee meeting at the end of October to report on his progress and keep headquarters advised of developments in Siberia and with the military force. He reported that with the help of the militia department he had secured the appointments of Captain Dr. Herbert Richard Holme and Nursing Sister Grace Elrida Potter to assist him in Vladivostok.²⁴ Holme had recently been employed at the western section of the British-Canadian Recruiting Mission in Chicago, where he must have impressed his former boss: Colonel Dennis.²⁵ The committee approved the thirty-two-year-old's appointment as assistant commissioner. His availability for the mission was confirmed two weeks later by Clarke.²⁶ Potter, aged forty, was the wife of Colonel Dr. Jacob Leslie Potter; he had sailed with the Canadian advance party in October as commanding officer of the main CEF(S) medical unit, the No. 11 Stationary Hospital.²⁷ The *Toronto Globe* reported that she had previously been "connected with the American Red Cross in New York, and is an ardent worker."²⁸ It

²³"Red Cross in Siberia," *Toronto Globe*, 1 Nov. 1918, 10.

²⁴CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:147, minutes of the EC meeting, 29 Oct. 1918.

²⁵NAC, WWI personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 4454-15, Holme, Herbert Richard, CPT; NAC, Fotheringham fonds, vol. 1, file "A," Fotheringham to Senior Medical Officer, British-Canadian Recruiting Mission, 3 Sept. 1918. Dennis was the head of the Chicago branch of the British-Canadian Recruiting Mission before he was promoted to second in command of the New York HQ. See "British Canadian recruiting campaign as it is conducted in the United States," *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 15 Sept. 1918, 11.

²⁶CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:147, 166, minutes of the EC meetings on 29 Oct. and 19 Nov. 1918.

²⁷J. E. Skuce, *CSEF: Canada's Soldiers in Siberia 1918-1919* (Ottawa: Access to History Publications, 1990), 29, 57; Andrew MacPhail, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-19: The Medical Services* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1925), 298; NAC, WWI personnel file, RG 150 acc. 1992-93/166, box 7923-16, Potter, Grace Elrida, NS. There is a photo of her in Skuce, *CSEF*, 47.

²⁸"Plan to co-operate with U.S. Red Cross," *Toronto Globe*, 11 Jan. 1919, 13.

seems she contacted Fotheringham about the position after learning of her husband's destination. Perhaps because she was to work under the auspices of the Red Cross, Fotheringham made an exception to his own policy of not playing favourites when it came to the appointment of military nurses.²⁹ The committee approved her appointment as Matron in Charge of Stores.³⁰ One future participant in the Red Cross's Siberian work put a lighthearted spin on her addition to the mission:

As Matron was Mrs. Potter, the only woman who went with the Canadians to Siberia. She was one of these comfortable motherly women and I think decided to go across in the first place to see that her husband . . . put on dry socks when he came in with wet feet. As she had been a great Red Cross worker in Canada, the Society thought that she might as well see that the other soldiers had dry socks too, and so she was appointed Matron.³¹

Potter refused to accept a salary from the CRCS.³²

Also on the committee's agenda that late October day were Dennis's comments on the situation in Siberia and the reasons for the expedition, and his views on the first steps to be taken in Vladivostok. According to the minutes of the meeting, "He considered it of the utmost importance, in view of the magnitude of the work, that the various Red Cross societies operating in Siberia should come to an agreement to co-operate and work together, so as to avoid overlapping and other difficulties." A man of considerable high-level military and civilian managerial and bureaucratic experience, he no doubt foresaw trouble ahead if too many groups and individuals worked at odds. After the confusion generated by the BRCS, the committee members likely agreed with him.

²⁹NAC, Fotheringham fonds, vol. 3, file "P," G. E. Potter to Fotheringham, 15 Nov. 1918; CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:137, minutes of the EC meeting, 11 Oct. 1919. On Fotheringham's policy with regard to nursing appointments, see Fotheringham fonds, vol. 3, file "Mc," letters to T. B. McCorkindale, 21 Sept. 1918, and J. W. S. McCullough, 28 Sept. 1918.

³⁰CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:147, minutes of the EC meeting, 29 Oct. 1918.

³¹CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 1.

³²CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:209, minutes of the EC meeting, 21 Jan. 1919.

All supplies sent to Siberia were first sent to the CRCS warehouse in Vancouver, which Dennis was authorized to open.³³ It did not take him long to do so: The society's Vancouver warehouse was open by 1 November, and Captain W. B. Laycock was soon confirmed as transportation agent.³⁴ Laycock was a Boer War veteran, and had also served in the Sudan with Kitchener.³⁵ An indication of the kinds of supplementary goods that he would be responsible for shipping to Siberia was given in a Toronto newspaper advertisement. It claimed that the Toronto branch of the CRCS was actively seeking "cheer-up" donations for "those dauntless boys going to distant Siberia":

The military authorities . . . have asked us to obtain music, books, and other means of entertainment that will keep the soldiers in good spirits.

We'll gladly accept anything you can offer. Talking machines and records, mouth-organs, banjos, flutes, and other kinds of small instruments will be greatly appreciated.³⁶

The warehouse was a busy place over the next few months. In early January, for example, Laycock reported that almost 3,500 cases had already been loaded onto ships headed across the Pacific. The main articles sent were "bedding, hospital garments, bandages, dressings, socks, shirts, kit bags, canned chicken, property bags and candy." Thanks to the Canadian War Contingent Association (CWCA) and the Women's Patriotic League of Toronto, Canadian soldiers also received gramophones and records, puddings, briar pipes, writing pads, and socks. Indeed, socks must have been among the most shipped items, with tens of thousands of pairs sent to Siberia. Laycock's team also

³³Ibid., 4:146, minutes of the EC meeting, 29 Oct. 1918.

³⁴"Red Cross in Siberia," *Toronto Globe*, 1 Nov. 1918, 10; CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:155, minutes of the EC meeting, 12 Nov. 1918.

³⁵"Cases by thousand sent to Siberia," *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 8 Jan. 1919, 12.

³⁶"Troops for Siberia need books and music," advertisement, *Toronto Daily Star*, 26 Oct. 1918, 14.

handled supplies addressed to the British Red Cross in Siberia.³⁷ Laycock would remain transportation agent for the Vladivostok relief mission until the last CRCS goods were shipped to Siberia in 1920.

By the time the CRCS Executive Committee next met in Toronto to discuss Dennis's initial activities, the First World War was over. Most of the western world celebrated the merciful end of four long years of war; the committee members knew their work was far from over.³⁸ In the case of Siberia, until the government gave word that the men were coming home, relief shipments would continue. And there was no indication at this time that the Siberian venture would soon end: The main contingent went forward from Vancouver less than a week after the armistice was signed.³⁹ Accompanying this second group of Canadian soldiers, who sailed aboard the SS *Monteagle* on 17 November, were Matron Potter, Assistant Commissioner Holme, and the newest Red Cross representative, Lieutenant Arthur James Smith. Aged thirty, Smith was a former journalist and member of the Canadian Army Service Corps. He was to be the secretary and storekeeper for the CRCS mission.⁴⁰

As Laycock's activities in Vancouver suggested, the CRCS Siberian mission did more than simply distribute medical supplies and other goods earmarked for men in hospital. It was equally responsible for the shipment and distribution of non-medical

³⁷“Cases by thousand sent to Siberia,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 8 Jan. 1919, 12.

³⁸See CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:156, minutes of the EC meeting, 12 Nov. 1918.

³⁹Skuce, *CSEF*, 54.

⁴⁰NAC, WW1 personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 9012-40, Smith, Arthur James, LT/3470. His appointment was confirmed two days after he left the country: CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:166, minutes of the EC meeting on 19 Nov. 1918.

goods, including materiel from patriotic organizations such as the Canadian War Contingent Association. In his September meeting with members of the CRCS governing bodies, Fotheringham asked the society to cooperate with the CWCA in providing “extra comforts” not only to those who were ill, but to all CEF(S) troops in Siberia. This was a departure for the wartime medical organization. The CWCA had been formed early in the war at the request of the War Office by a group of Canadians living in London. Although it assisted the Red Cross in its work as an auxiliary to the Canadian Army Medical Corps, the association’s primary function was to provide goods to soldiers on the front lines. Its work thus complemented that of the CRCS on the western front.⁴¹ The CWCA shipped foodstuffs, writing material, gloves, soap, socks, and many other goods to Europe.⁴² Since there were few Canadians living in Vladivostok, or anywhere in the Far East for that matter, most of the donated supplementary goods for members of the CEF(S) had to come from Canada. All donations would be distributed by the CRCS commissioner in Siberia, while the Red Cross warehouse at Vancouver handled both Red Cross and CWCA supplies headed across the Pacific Ocean.⁴³

Aiding Military Forces, Fall 1918–Spring 1919

The initial destination for all these Canadian soldiers, supplies, and relief workers was the city of Vladivostok. Located on a swath of Russian territory between China to the

⁴¹Report of the CRCS commissioner in England, Col. C. A. Hodgetts, in CRCS, *Annual Report 1915*, 44–45; CRCS, *What the Canadian Red Cross Society is Doing in the Great War*, 10; and Perley, “Practical Consolidation of the Empire.”

⁴²See list of goods sent to the CWCA from the Alberta Red Cross in CRCS, Alberta Provincial Branch, *Annual Report 1918*, 78–79.

⁴³“Col. John S. Dennis, C.M.G., is Red Cross Commissioner to Siberia,” *Bulletin* 40 (Nov. 1918): 40.

West and Japan across the sea to the East, Vladivostok—“ruler of the East” in Russian—had an impressive natural harbour and was the far eastern terminus of the recently completed Trans-Siberian Railway. It had originally been established in 1860 as a base for the Russian Empire in the Far East, and was soon the heavily fortified home of Russia’s Pacific fleet. The First World War had, at first, been an economic boon for the city. Beginning in 1917, though, conditions worsened, and by the time the Canadians arrived Vladivostok was badly in need of repair and updating.⁴⁴ It was also overcrowded, as Major James Mackintosh Bell, a Canadian who visited the city in the fall of 1917, discovered:

Vladivostok . . . was jammed with refugees from the far-away interior, who poured in by every incoming train. The hotels had long since ceased to have any accommodation; even huge bribes failed to find one a bed. Every lodging house was filled. The station and other public buildings found room for hundreds who slept on the floor. The British Consulate was sometimes so crowded that as many as three people were parked on the billiard table⁴⁵

The arrival of the first fifteen thousand Czecho-Slovak troops in the city in May 1918 did not help the accommodation situation. It was they who, with the “fullest cooperation” of the Allied officials on the scene, overthrew Vladivostok’s pro-Moscow government on 29 June.⁴⁶ The strategic coastal city then came under Allied military control.

Beginning that summer, Vladivostok’s permanent residents—immigrants from European Russia, Siberian natives, and thousands of Asian labourers—had to contend with an onslaught of refugees and foreigners. Allied soldiers started arriving in droves in July, as did foreign civilians representing governments or organizations that either

⁴⁴Canfield F. Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule: Revolution and Counterrevolution in the Russian Far East 1920–1922* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1975), 3–5.

⁴⁵James Mackintosh Bell, *Side Lights on the Siberian Campaign* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1922), 49.

⁴⁶Morley, *Japanese Thrust into Siberia*, 248; Albert R. Williams, *Through the Russian Revolution* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967), 213–214.

wished to aid the anti-Bolshevik cause or establish business ties with the region. Bell noticed around this time that “the city assumed the atmosphere of a capital, with diplomatic representatives in its midst from all the principal allied nations.”⁴⁷ Refugees from the Siberian interior also continued to pour into the city. Clearly, Vladivostok was vastly different from what most Canadians were accustomed to. Life in Canada during 1918–1919 was interesting, to say the least, what with the postwar influenza epidemic sweeping the country and looming labour troubles. Despite these problems, it was still a far cry from the realities of life in the Russian Far East. The soldiers who would soon be en route to “Vladi” from their small Canadian towns could hardly have imagined what their new home would be like.

British officials and soldiers started to arrive in Siberia a few months before the first Canadians disembarked at Vladivostok. The new British high commissioner to Siberia, Sir Charles Norton Edgecumbe Eliot, set up shop in Vladivostok soon after he had been offered the position in early August 1918. The vice-chancellor of Hong Kong University, Eliot was a veteran diplomat who had spent five years in St. Petersburg prior to his Siberian appointment.⁴⁸ Major-General Sir Alfred William Fortescue Knox, the former military attaché at the British embassy in Petrograd, was appointed head of the new British Military Mission to Siberia (BMM) on 26 August. He arrived in Vladivostok in mid-September.⁴⁹ Both Eliot and Knox would spend much of their time at Omsk, the city far in the Siberian interior that was the capital of the anti-Bolshevik regime then

⁴⁷Bell, *Side Lights on the Siberian Campaign*, 91.

⁴⁸Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 1:270.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 1:30, 263; Robert Neil Murby, “Canada’s Siberian Policy 1918–1919” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1969), 45.

ostensibly governing the region. Both, but especially Knox, would author or support wild schemes for imperial assistance to the White Russian cause, none of which would, arguably, make any difference to the course of the civil war.

In addition to the British diplomatic and military missions in Siberia, there were two British battalions and two warships there during the Canadian military presence. The first land unit, the 25th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment, had been a garrison unit in Hong Kong before it was ordered to Siberia, where it arrived in early August. The young Canadian trade commissioner, Leolyn Dana Wilgress, newly dispatched to open his office in Vladivostok, later commented that the Middlesex battalion had appeared “rather bedraggled-looking”⁵⁰ as its members marched over the rough, muddy cobblestone streets of the city to their billets. These men spent some time in Vladivostok before being sent to Omsk to perform guard duty. In mid-November they witnessed the establishment of a new anti-Bolshevik government at Omsk under the leadership of Admiral Aleksandr Vassilievich Kolchak.⁵¹ A former commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Kolchak would now rule an “All-Russian” government from a capital thousands of miles from the nearest sea. Knox, who was determined to assist the anti-Bolshevik Russian forces crush the Red Army, and played a role in forming, training, and supplying the new White Russian army, was unhappy with the Middlesex troops. Made up of “C” class men declared unfit for strenuous combat, he believed that the force did not present a good example for the

⁵⁰Dana Wilgress, “From Siberia to Kuibyshev: Reflections on Russia, 1919–1943,” *International Journal* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1967): 365.

⁵¹On the role of the Middlesex and Knox in the coup and the latter’s support of Kolchak, see Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 1:279–284, and Jonathan D. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia: The Anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 74–75, 94–99, 236–238.

new Russian army, and called for another battalion to be dispatched to Siberia.⁵²

Acceding to Knox's wishes, the War Office sent the 1/9th Battalion of the Hampshire Regiment. Arriving in late November from India, it was originally intended to replace the Middlesex, but in the end both remained in Siberia until the fall of 1919.⁵³ The British also dispatched naval units to the port of Vladivostok during the revolutionary and civil war period. The HMS *Kent* and *Suffolk* were anchored in the harbour while the CEF(S) was in Siberia. They were there to protect British civilians should problems arise in the city, and participated in a small way in supporting the White Russian forces. For the Canadians, the *Kent* men were notable for playing soccer with other Allied troops and putting on theatre shows.⁵⁴

The CEF(S) advance party left Victoria aboard the steamship SS *Empress of Japan* and docked at Vladivostok on 26 October, after fifteen days at sea. The first order of business was to find quarters and office space for themselves and the four thousand men expected in short order. Although there were barracks galore in town and in the surrounding area, mostly built during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), locating suitable accommodation was no easy task: The Canadian troops were rather late getting to Siberia, compared to the balance of the Allied interventionist forces, and there were

⁵²Indeed, early in 1919 the Canadian military authorities sent 450 Middlesex men and officers back home after declaring them “unfit.” NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 374, file ADMS 3-7, J. T. Clarke to Fotheringham, “Report re Medical Services, CEF(S),” 10 June 1919. Some British personnel in Siberia referred to the Middlesex as the “Hernia Battalion.” See Peter Fleming, *The Fate of Admiral Kolchak* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), 92.

⁵³Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 1:31.

⁵⁴On the *Kent*, see Charles W. Bishop, *The Canadian Y.M.C.A. in the Great War: The Official Record of the Activities of the Canadian Y.M.C.A. in Connection with the Great War of 1914–1918* (Toronto: National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations of Canada, 1924), 309; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 202; and NAC, John Wightman Warden fonds, MG 30 E-192, diary, entries for 23 May and 1–3 June 1919.

troops from dozens of countries already in evidence in the region, including tens of thousands of Japanese soldiers and thousands of Americans. The Americans and Japanese had taken the best buildings in Vladivostok, complained the Canadian commander, the newly minted major-general, James Harold Elmsley,⁵⁵ and the Czecho-Slovak reversal of Bolshevik fortunes had not stemmed the tide of refugees streaming into the city. With the help of Wilgress and the BMM, it was not long before CEF(S) headquarters was established and barracks and other accommodation were secured. Unfortunately, relations with local Russians did not get off to a good start, a harbinger of things to come: The CEF(S) claimed a city theatre for its headquarters, which upset the building's owners, and when the Canadians took control of their new barracks, they dispersed some of the refugees who had been occupying them.⁵⁶ The force's engineers were kept busy rebuilding the barracks, while the sanitation officers disinfected them, and their new occupants undertook the herculean task of thoroughly cleaning them out.

The dispatch of a new expeditionary force to Siberia did not significantly alter the work of local Red Cross branches in Canada, except perhaps reinforce the necessity of their endeavours. Siberia, after all, was not western Europe. Though the latter had been devastated by war, Siberia was seen by many people in the western world as the tsars' penal colony, a frozen and uninviting wasteland for hardened criminals and ideological enemies of the state. The news that Canadian "boys" would be headed there—just in time

⁵⁵NAC, Rowell fonds, vol. 17, file 73, microfilm, reel C-941, 12123–12124, J. H. Elmsley to S. C. Mewburn, 2 Nov. 1918. Elmsley was specially promoted ahead of his new assignment, likely to give him greater standing among the other Allied commanders. On this see Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 1:278.

⁵⁶NAC, Rowell fonds, vol. 17, file 73, microfilm, reel C-941, 12124, Elmsley to Mewburn, 2 Nov. 1918; MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 151; Murby, "Canada's Siberian Policy 1918–1919," 36.

for winter, no less— likely encouraged the efforts of Red Cross volunteers. Reading about the exploits of Lenin, Trotskii, and the rest of the “blood-thirsty doctrinaires” in European Russia could only have added to their worry.⁵⁷ The first CRCS supplies were packed and shipped in October with the advance party. Ninety-five cases⁵⁸ reached Vladivostok, where they were distributed to the various Canadian and British units. Most contained socks, with shirts, “Trench caps,” “helmets,” scarves, gloves, and mitts rounding out the list of included items. Some of the goods were immediately sent to Canadian troops in hospital and at the various barracks, as well as to British soldiers and sailors. More than a third of the first shipment was set aside for members of the Middlesex battalion.⁵⁹

The British sent forces to Siberia as part of a larger imperial contribution to the Allied venture in the region. The bulk of the imperial force was made up of Canadians, and the commanding officer of the CEF(S) was meant to command all units, British and Canadian alike. Even so, Elmsley, though he had some say over the deployment of British troops in the interior, was hamstrung by the Canadian decision to stay out of Siberian affairs. Knox’s calls that Elmsley move his force headquarters to Omsk were

⁵⁷This phrase is from an editorial in the *Toronto Globe*, 18 Sept. 1918, 6, cited in Jean-Guy Lalande, “‘Russia and the Soviets as Seen in Canada’: une analyse de l’opinion politique de la presse canadienne, de 1914 à 1921” (PhD diss., McGill University, 1981), 328. For a discussion of Canadian press reaction to the Bolsheviks and the new communist state in Russia, see 327–457. Most Canadian newspapers were fiercely anti-Bolshevik.

⁵⁸Most accounts of Red Cross supplies in Siberia refer to “cases.” In a pamphlet produced by the Canadian Red Cross and other auxiliary societies in Oct. 1915, CRCS provincial and city branches were told that “cases should measure 27 in. x 15 in. x 15 in., with rope handles, and be bound with hoop iron.” National Relief Committee, *War Work*, pamphlet (n.p.: National Relief Committee, 1915), 21–22. There is a copy of this at the CRCNO.

⁵⁹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Clarke to H. R. Holme, 12 Dec. 1918; *ibid.*, “Consignment of Field Comforts Leaving Red Cross Headquarters for Vladivostock, Oct. 9, 1918”; and *ibid.*, “Receipts for Red Cross Comforts.” The CRCS packed 96 cases, but only 95 were accounted for in Siberia.

rejected and, on instructions from Ottawa, Elmsley never took direct control of the British units operating outside Vladivostok. Having intended to move west at one point, he sent a small Canadian advance party under Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Sydney Morrisey to Omsk in December. If Elmsley and his superiors in Ottawa thought that this would allow him to exercise practical command over the British units without having to venture far into the Siberian interior himself, they were mistaken: “The two British colonels . . . resented being placed under the command of a ‘colonial’ general [i.e. Elmsley], and would pay no attention to Morrisey, who at the time was only a young man of 28.”⁶⁰ Torn between the wishes of Knox and the War Office on the one hand, and Canadian authorities on the other, Elmsley soon made up his own mind about the foolhardiness of Allied interference in Russian affairs. The importance of the Canadians to the British did not end with Elmsley’s uncertain command, however: The “colonials” provided administrative and support personnel and auxiliary services for the Middlesex and Hampshire troops.⁶¹ This included Red Cross supplies and services.

Clarke, the medical director of the Canadian force, handled Red Cross stores until the arrival of CRCS representatives in Vladivostok in early December.⁶² The goods shipped from Canada in October were handled by his office, as were all other Red Cross matters. The officers commanding the various barracks and units that received the supplies were informed by Clarke that medical officers were to handle the distribution of

⁶⁰Beattie, “Canadian Intervention in Russia,” 319 and 321. Beattie based his discussion on Morrisey’s personal papers and an interview he conducted with him.

⁶¹The CEF(S) administered and supplied the Middlesex and Hants until 19 and 26 May 1919, respectively.

⁶²NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Clarke to Dr. Christie, 19 Nov. 1918.

these items. In this Clarke was following CRCS regulations,⁶³ but the uniqueness of the Siberian campaign meant that this would not be a standard Red Cross supply operation. Clarke informed Colonel Potter that “it is necessary, of course, to keep in mind that the Red Cross articles are primarily intended for issue to those who are sick or injured. However, in this particular Expedition,” he noted, “it has been deemed advisable to make issues to personnel of Units who are not sick, with a view to preventing illness.”⁶⁴ As the Canadians did no fighting in Siberia, illness prevention took on a relatively more important role for the Red Cross and CEF(S) medical officers than had been the case in other theatres.

Assistant Commissioner Holme, Secretary and Storekeeper Smith, and Matron Potter arrived in Vladivostok on 5 December with the second (main) contingent of the CEF(S). Potter joined her husband at the Stationary Hospital; her colleagues found their new home less than welcoming: Holme and Smith had to spend the first couple of nights sleeping on a warehouse floor.⁶⁵ (All the billiard tables in town must have already been taken!) Thankfully, the military authorities soon gave them more suitable accommodation and office space in quarters also occupied by, among others, Elmsley; the senior chaplain; two YMCA secretaries; and the Canadian Press representative, Captain William Ernest Playfair.⁶⁶ On board the SS *Monteagle* with the CRCS representatives

⁶³Various documents in *ibid.* Regular military-issue supplies were handled by the quartermasters.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, Clarke to J. L. Potter, 5 Dec. 1918.

⁶⁵“Red Cross aid for Siberia,” *Toronto Globe*, 27 Mar. 1919, 8. Also in “Canadian Red Cross Society Played its Part in Siberia,” *Bulletin* 44 (Apr.–May 1919): 10.

⁶⁶See list of officers, their duties, quarters, and offices, in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 365, file B.H. 10-3.

were 119 tons of supplies for the mission.⁶⁷ In arranging the movement of supplies from the dock to the large CRCS warehouse the Red Cross staffers experienced something that would plague them in Siberia to the end: transportation headaches. Part of the problem was that military ordnance and Red Cross supplies were mixed together. The bigger annoyance was that the warehouse was five miles from the dock, requiring “lighters and a gang of 100 coolies” to move the materiel. “The coolies were not at all times amenable,” Holme reported drily, “and the transfer not without difficulties.”⁶⁸ On the day of their arrival in Vladivostok, supplies were distributed to Captain Dr. Adam Fisher Menzies, the CEF(S) cholera specialist who would soon depart for the interior in charge of a relief train. Over the next few days Canadian, British, and Russian military units, and a Russian hospital train received CRCS materiel. According to the CRCS *Bulletin*, “Captain Holme said that the newly-established Red Cross unit had justified its existence within a week.”⁶⁹

By early December the following procedures for dealing with the Red Cross stores were in place:

1. The Red Cross Stores to be kept entirely separate from Quartermaster Stores.
2. A Storeman to be appointed to keep the books and make the issues.
3. The books to show the dates and particulars of the various receipts, together with entries showing to which Departments of the Hospital the various issues have been made, with the dates.
4. The Storeman to keep exposed on his shelves samples of all the articles which he has for issue.

⁶⁷NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file FORCE HQ 50-3. The sources listed in n. 65 put the figure at 39 tons, but it is clear from the CEF(S) records that the SS *Monteagle* had 119 tons on board; a later supply ship brought 39 tons.

⁶⁸“Red Cross aid for Siberia,” *Toronto Globe*, 27 Mar. 1919, 8; “Canadian Red Cross Society Played its Part in Siberia,” *Bulletin* 44 (Apr.–May 1919): 10.

⁶⁹“Canadian Red Cross Society Played its Part in Siberia,” *Bulletin* 44 (Apr.–May 1919): 10; “Canadian Red Cross active in Siberia,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 27 Mar. 1919, 23. On Menzies, see NAC, WW1 personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 6117-41, Menzies, Adam Fisher, CPT, and Bill Rawling, *Death their Enemy: Canadian Medical Practitioners and War* (Ottawa: by the author, 2001), 111. He later received the Czecho-Slovak War Cross. See Skuce, *CSEF*, 22.

5. The Medical Officers and Senior N.C.O.'s to be instructed to visit the Red Cross Stores frequently, to keep themselves conversant with the articles which are available.

6. Officers, Senior N.C.O.'s or Nursing Sisters,⁷⁰ may requisition for articles required at any time, stating the purpose for which it is proposed to issue.

7. No requisition of any kind will be honoured by the Red Cross Storeman until it has been passed and initialed by the Commanding Officer or the Matron. The issue will then be made and entries made in the books.

Stores to be kept opened for very long hours, in order to give the Officers and Senior N.C.O.'s the opportunity of becoming familiar with the articles available.⁷¹

Soon after the first CRCS representatives arrived in Siberia, the mission began preparations for Christmas. On the western front the Canadian society had supplied gifts of wallets to officers in hospital over the holiday season.⁷² In Siberia, befitting the altered circumstances, this tradition was expanded to include many more goods and all imperial soldiers in Vladivostok. Not only were basic necessities difficult to obtain in theatre or from Japan, unlike in "Blighty," but transports from Canada carrying supplies sometimes ran into difficulties at sea and arrived rather later than expected. One ship carrying substantial quantities of Red Cross, medical, and BMM supplies, for example, docked in Vladivostok two months after initially setting sail.⁷³ These ships also carried mail from home for members of the CEF(S), making the postal service a constant source of frustration for the men. Mail never arrived less than a month after it had been posted in Canada and, much to the chagrin of its hopeful recipients, often took longer. Christmas packages, for one, arrived several days after 25 December,⁷⁴ making the efforts of the

⁷⁰The plans for the Canadian force originally called for forty nursing sisters and one matron to be included in the medical staff. Apart from Matron Potter, there were no Canadian nurses sent to Siberia, presumably because soon after the first troops sailed it became apparent that the CEF(S) would engage in little fighting, and that, in any case, it would be shortly recalled. For the original establishment plans, see NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 377, file No. 11 Stat. Hosp. E1.

⁷¹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Clarke to J. L. Potter, 5 Dec. 1918.

⁷²CRCS, *Annual Report 1917*, 26.

⁷³See documents on the SS *War Charger* in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file FORCE HQ 50-5.

⁷⁴For those who had arrived in Siberia in October with the advance party, the first letters from home had come only on 5 Dec. Those who had arrived with the second contingent had to wait until 29 Dec. for their first news from home. Frustration over the mail situation was a common theme in letters home

CRCS and other organizations all the more important for keeping troop morale up over the holidays.

The gifts distributed by the CRCS were greatly appreciated, as were the efforts of the Canadian YMCA unit and British civilians in Vladivostok and the Far East. For Christmas, the Canadian War Contingent Association supplied the CRCS with gifts and plum puddings,⁷⁵ the YMCA decorated barracks and mess halls, and local western civilians and military support organizations entertained the force's officers. Douglas Brown, then a non-commissioned officer with the CEF(S), hoped his mother "didn't waste any time pitying me, for we had a splendid Christmas here."

Presents? Of course. I received a cretonne bag, a pair of home-knit khaki socks, a pair of home-knit wristlets, a khaki handkerchief, and two packages of gum. How is that for a list? From whom? Oh, that would be telling, but since you are so curious, why it was from Red Cross. Do you know her?⁷⁶

This response was likely repeated in many of the 1,345 Canadian and British soldiers stationed in Vladivostok over Christmas.⁷⁷ Playfair wrote about the efforts of the CRCS to make Christmas more enjoyable for the troops:

Santa Claus—as represented by the Canadian Red Cross—saw to it that every British and Canadian soldier in Vladivostok had a reminder of the day, a little kit bag with toilet requisites, socks, or something needed In the office of the Canadian Red Cross Matron in the Y.M.C.A. headquarters, Mrs. Grace Potter and her assistant prepared upwards of 1500 Christmas bags for British and Canadian soldiers.⁷⁸

Clarke wrote for many when he addressed the following letter to Assistant Commissioner

from CEF(S) members. See comments in NAC, Harold Steele fonds, MG 30 E-564, H. Steele to J. Libby, 15 Mar. 1919; CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, 58A 1 103.2, file 5, items 103 and 112, 19 Jan. and 16 Mar. 1919; W. E. Playfair, "Few mails at Vladivostok," *Toronto Globe*, 29 Jan. 1919, 18; and NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 359, file 49, Playfair, draft article, 29 Dec. 1918.

⁷⁵CRCS, *Annual Report 1918*, 73.

⁷⁶CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, 58A 1 103.2, file 4, item 98, 27 Dec. 1918.

⁷⁷According to a statement of imperial troop strength, there were 1,047 CEF(S), 210 Middlesex, and 86 Hants men in Vladivostok, and 56 CEF(S), 803 Middlesex, and 889 Hants men in Omsk on 25 Dec. 1918. NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 369, file B.H. 44-2.

⁷⁸NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 359, file 49, Playfair, draft article, 29 Dec. 1918.

Holme on Boxing Day:

I wish to express to you my sincere appreciation of the very excellent assistance which the Canadian Red Cross have given toward Christmas Cheer for the Patients in Hospital, and also for the articles, which you so kindly distributed, from the Canadian War Contingent Association, among the Personnel of the Force.

It is desired that you express to the Societies at home the sincerest thanks of all Ranks.⁷⁹

The Christmas work of the CRCS was but one example of the mission's role in boosting soldier morale in Siberia. Although ostensibly an organization charged with improving the health and welfare of combatants, the "comforts" the society supplied did more than this. The goods distributed under the guise of the CWCA were clearly intended to improve the spirits of those serving on the front lines, but even in the case of strictly Red Cross supplies—clothing provided in the first instance to help stave off the spread of disease—this goal was also apparent. In mid-January Sergeant Douglas Brown was excited to receive a package from the CRCS branch in St. Martins, New Brunswick, near his home town. "Did you see the parcels that the Red Cross were sending out?" he asked his mother. "Mine contained two pairs of socks, two tins of cocoa, a tin of milk, a package of sugar, and a fruit cake."⁸⁰ These contents were a far cry from what would have been the standard medical supplies distributed in the early days of the war. The receipt of another Red Cross package two months later was apparently among the reasons that pushed Brown to volunteer to remain in Siberia: "Got some more Red Cross stuff this week—four handkerchiefs, two towels, two pairs of socks, and a suit of pyjamas. Have four suits of pyjamas now. Doing well in this country. Think I had better stay here."⁸¹

⁷⁹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Clarke to Holme, 26 Dec. 1918.

⁸⁰CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 5, item 102, 15 Jan. 1919.

⁸¹Ibid., item 112, 16 Mar. 1919.

Other Canadians also saw Red Cross goods in a positive light and understood their potential importance for making life a little better for the men in Siberia. Captain Harold Vernon Ardagh and his men, prior to proceeding “up the line” for the British mission, picked up supplies: “I got from the Red Cross yesterday socks, shirts, bags with many useful articles in them, also a box of tins of canned chicken and another of plum pudding. My men are all in high spirits at seeing all the things I have got for them.”⁸² Even hospital supplies could have non-medical value. After Clarke requested pillow slips and bed spreads from the CRCS for the CEF(S) hospitals, he asked the officers commanding the hospital units to use the supplied pillow slips and sheets “to make your Wards look more attractive.”⁸³ In a military mission often noted for its initial disciplinary problems and by a Canadian public upset over its deployment so long after the armistice,⁸⁴ the CRCS’s cheerleading role may have helped stay some of the potential trouble among soldiers. Once the troops were in Siberia there were few disciplinary problems,⁸⁵ though the mail situation and the uncertainty over the future of the expedition were sources of consternation.⁸⁶ Writing of the value that its own supplies had given imperial troops, the Manitoba branch of the CRCS noted that “some of the most

⁸²NAC, Harold Vernon Ardagh fonds, MG 30 E-150, diary 2, entry for 23 Mar. 1919.

⁸³This quote is from NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Clarke to Potter, 8 Feb. 1919. See also *ibid.*, Clarke to Dennis, 7 Feb. 1919, and Clarke to OC Camp Hospital, Second River, 8 Feb. 1919.

⁸⁴See below, p. 97, for a discussion of some of these problems.

⁸⁵There were some complaints about Canadian soldiers, but it is generally agreed the men were well-behaved, perhaps because most were quartered far from town. See Beattie, “Canadian Intervention in Russia,” 316; Murby, “Canada’s Siberian Policy 1918–1919,” 38–39; Dana Wilgress, *Memoirs* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967), 54–55. Elmsley claimed the Canadians were the most popular of all the Allied forces: “Few Canadians left in Russia,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 21 June 1919, 12.

⁸⁶The attitude of “home or fight” was also present. See Robert F. Nielsen, “Combating the Cold in Siberia,” *Maclean’s*, Oct. 1972, 58.

appreciative letters which the Red Cross received during the entire period of its work, came from men stationed far in the interior of Siberia who found in the Red Cross supplies the only comforts obtainable.”⁸⁷

There were several other organizations similarly dedicated to improving the comfort and morale of imperial soldiers. The most important of these groups was another Canadian military auxiliary, the YMCA. Several YMCA canteens were established in the Vladivostok area, including the popular Maple Leaf Café, which housed a movie theatre and cafeteria open to all soldiers. The association also sent representatives to Omsk in December 1918 to serve the CEF(S) and British troops stationed there. In the winter the YMCA loaned hockey equipment so an eight-league team could be organized by members of the CEF(S) in Vladivostok. It also provided goods such as magazines, games, records, and writing paper, and sold trinkets shipped in from Japan at cost.⁸⁸ The other major organization that worked in concert with the CRCS in some of its efforts was the Vladivostok British Patriotic League. This group of British civilians acted in a similar fashion as the CWCA did in England, doing what it could to improve the morale of British and Canadian troops. Colonel Potter noted that the league had a roster of “lady visitors who came to the Hospital twice weekly. Some of the visitors also invited the personnel of the Unit to their homes and took much trouble to entertain them in a social way.”⁸⁹ The league also operated the Suffolk Room, a “Recreation and Club Room for

⁸⁷“Manitoba Provincial Branch; Report of Women’s Auxiliary,” in CRCS, *Annual Report 1919*, 80.

⁸⁸For more on the YMCA in Siberia, see Bishop, *Canadian Y.M.C.A. in the Great War*, 305–311. See also the monthly reports of the Senior Chaplain in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file FORCE HQ 52; and documents in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 368, file B.H. 31-1, and vol. 371, file FORCE H.Q. 40.

⁸⁹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 374, file ADMS 3-7, report of No. 10 Stationary Hospital, 17 June

British Soldiers and Sailors and their friends among the Allied Forces,”⁹⁰ and supplied books and magazines so libraries could be established in several barracks.⁹¹ The American YMCA provided services and goods to Canadians at Christmas and throughout their time in Siberia, as did the Knights of Columbus and British groups in China and Japan. Canadian newspapers sent free copies of their publications to CEF(S) hospital patients.⁹² Local British organizations in the Far East would work much more closely with the CRCS mission in 1920, and the Vladivostok British Patriotic League would take over the refugee relief work of the mission once CRCS representatives left the region for good in January 1921.

The composition of the small Canadian Red Cross mission underwent some changes in February. Commissioner Dennis finally arrived in Vladivostok on the third,⁹³ and Holme (who had been in hospital since early January) and Smith sailed back to Canada nine days later.⁹⁴ Also arriving in Vladivostok aboard the SS *Madras* with Dennis was Captain Dr. Rufus John Whitby Brooke, the new CRCS medical officer.⁹⁵ Brooke,

1919.

⁹⁰See advertisement for the Suffolk Room in the *Siberian Sapper* 1, no. 4 (8 Feb. 1919), 4. A copy of this issue is preserved in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 363, file 119. The league was eager to remind CEF(S) members that though the rest house had been named for the HMS *Suffolk*, which had been anchored in the harbour during the uncertain winter of 1917–1918, it was open to all imperial troops. See the notice posted in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 377, file No. 11 Stationary Hospital O1, Daily Orders, Part 1, No. 32, No. 11 Stationary Hospital, 23 Jan. 1919.

⁹¹The CRCS took over the receipt of these goods from the British league in March. NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file FORCE HQ 52, McCausland, “Report of Senior Chaplain, C.E.F.(S) for February, 1919,” 28 Feb. 1919, and McCausland, “Report of Senior Chaplain, C.E.F.(S), for March, 1919,” 31 Mar. 1919.

⁹²In addition to the sources listed in nn. 88–91, see documents in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 377, file No. 11 Stat. Hosp. M2.

⁹³NAC, WW1 personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 2444-23, Dennis, John Stoughton, COL.

⁹⁴NAC, Holme and Smith personnel files; “Canadian Red Cross Society Played its Part in Siberia,” *Bulletin* 44 (Apr.–May 1919): 10.

⁹⁵Playfair, “No trade yet for Canada,” *Toronto Globe*, 3 Apr. 1919, 5.

aged twenty-eight, was officially a member of the British Red Cross,⁹⁶ but presumably worked under the auspices of the Canadian relief mission after the two organizations were amalgamated in mid-February. Two other Canadian BRCS representatives may have similarly suddenly found themselves working for Dennis.⁹⁷

The most important addition to the CRCS mission's ranks that winter was the new assistant commissioner, Lieutenant-Colonel David Douglas Young Jr., who arrived in Siberia with Brooke and Dennis. The two top CRCS men, though a generation apart, shared some commonalities, and likely knew each other before setting sail for Vladivostok.⁹⁸ Born in Quebec City in late 1881, Young was educated at Toronto's tony Upper Canada College.⁹⁹ When "studies became irksome," he, "along with several young Canadian friends, entered the Canadian volunteer forces for service in the Boer War."¹⁰⁰ He was awarded the Queen's Medal with three clasps for service during that conflict.¹⁰¹ By 1912 he was well-known enough to have an entry in the precursor to Canada's *Who's Who*, which noted he was then a captain in the Royal Canadian Dragoons and an adjutant

⁹⁶NAC, WWI personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 1098-3, Brooke, Rufus John Whitby, CPT.

⁹⁷The physicians Major David Harvey Boddington and Lieutenant Leonard Charles Purvis. NAC, WWI personnel files, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 838-53, Boddington, David Harvey, CPT; *ibid.*, box 8029-35, Purvis, Leonard Charles, LT/3060506. Boddington was in Siberia from 5 Dec. 1918 until 9 Mar. 1919. Purvis worked in Siberia for the Red Cross from 19 Feb. until 21 Apr. 1919. The CRCS seemingly reimbursed the BRCS for the services of Brooke and Boddington. See CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:294, list of expenditures included in the minutes of the meeting of the EC on 6 May 1919. On the amalgamation of the two Red Cross units, see below, p. 52.

⁹⁸This was true of most mission members: One had to have good contacts to secure an appointment. See below, p. 78, for more on Dennis. Young was apparently "a C.P.R. man," as was Dennis. CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, 58A 1 103.4, file 8, item 214, 6 Dec. 1920.

⁹⁹NAC, WW1 personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 10647-3, Young, David Douglas, LCL; "Col. D. D. Young Jr. weds in New York," *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 Feb. 1940, 26.

¹⁰⁰"Douglas Young, 69, horse-show judge," *New York Times*, 6 July 1951, 23.

¹⁰¹NAC, Boer War service files, RG 38, A-1-a, vol. 116, microfilm, reel T-2090, Young, David Douglas, 141.

at the Royal School of Cavalry in Toronto; was the official secretary of Ontario's lieutenant governor, 1908–1910; served on staff of the Quebec tercentenary celebration in 1908; and was “presented” to the King and Queen in 1909.¹⁰² According to his obituary in the *New York Times*, in 1913 Young was “the first North American to win the international military jumping championship at the Old Madison Square Garden.” He also took Canadian teams to the American National Horse Show and the International Horse Show in London in the years before the First World War.¹⁰³ Young served overseas on and off beginning in the fall of 1914, and was wounded in May 1915. By the time he celebrated his thirty-seventh birthday in the late fall of 1918, Young was director of remounts for the Canadian army. He spent some time in Vancouver in this capacity before setting sail for Siberia.¹⁰⁴ Upon his arrival in Vladivostok, the new assistant commissioner moved in with Wilgress and other members of the Canadian Economic Commission, and he met with Dennis each morning to discuss Red Cross matters.¹⁰⁵ Young maintained his connection to the remounts while in Siberia: He had a horse, and was in charge of preparations for the equestrian show staged by the CEF(S) on 1 May.¹⁰⁶ Young would become the longest-serving CRCS man in Vladivostok.

¹⁰²Henry James Morgan, ed., *The Canadian Men and Women of the Times: A Hand-book of Canadian Biography of Living Characters*, 2d ed. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912), s.v. “Young, Capt. David Douglas,” p. 1192.

¹⁰³“Douglas Young, 69, horse-show judge,” *New York Times*, 6 July 1951, 23; “A coronation horse show,” *Times* (London), 6 June 1911, 11.

¹⁰⁴NAC, Young's WW1 personnel file; Max Aitken, *Canada in Flanders: The Official Story of the Canadian Expeditionary Force*, vol. 1 (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916), 126. On Young's activities immediately prior to his arrival in Siberia, see NAC, War Diary, Remount Depot, Siberia, RG 9 III-D-3, vol. 5058, file 967, microfilm, reel T-11120.

¹⁰⁵Wilgress, *Memoirs*, 52–54.

¹⁰⁶NAC, War Diary, No. 6 Mobile Veterinary Section, Siberia, RG 9 III-D-3, vol. 5058, file 966, microfilm, reel T-11120, entry for 13 May 1919, and Playfair, “Vladivostok to witness big Canadian gymkhana,” *Toronto Globe*, 4 Apr. 1919, 4.

Playfair informed Canadian readers in an article written in mid-February that the CRCS mission was

carrying on a very active campaign, and the Canadian troops have been equipped with all possible comforts. . . . The organization has secured motor transport, and the various units are through this agency kept well supplied with necessaries. The Medical Officer visits every week each of the five small Canadian hospitals in the Vladivostok area to find out what supplies are required.¹⁰⁷

By now, the Red Cross had moved its base of operations out of the No. 5 Officers' Quarters. The new office—a “fine” one, according to Playfair¹⁰⁸—had formerly been a retail store, and was centrally located on the city's main street: Svetlanskaia. Perhaps to facilitate Dennis's handling of commissioner duties for both the CRCS mission and the CEC(S), the office was shared by both bodies.¹⁰⁹ It also had the potential to make the work of the Canadian agencies more visible to passers-by, an important reason why Wilgress had rented the space for the economic commission. “The premises we are taking over,” he informed the deputy minister of trade, “consist of one long room on the ground floor with a plate glass window facing the street. They are especially suitable for the exhibition of Canadian samples and the display of literature and it should be possible to fit up the whole quarters in the manner creditable to Canada.”¹¹⁰ In mid-February one Canadian officer noted that he and a colleague had “passed [the office of the CEC(S)] earlier in the day and were at once attracted by the map of Canada in the window.” When they went inside they were greeted by a “young lady behind the counter” and discovered

¹⁰⁷Playfair, “No trade yet for Canada,” *Toronto Globe*, 3 Apr. 1919, 5.

¹⁰⁸Playfair, “Canadian Mission in Vladivostok,” *Toronto Globe*, 3 Feb. 1919, 2.

¹⁰⁹Playfair, “No trade yet for Canada,” *Toronto Globe*, 3 Apr. 1919, 5, and Wilgress, “From Siberia to Kuibyshev,” 366.

¹¹⁰NAC, Department of Trade and Commerce (DTC) records, RG 20, vol. 1369, file 21916, Wilgress to F. C. T. O'Hara, 3 Dec. 1918.

more “literature.”¹¹¹ Whether the Red Cross displayed much of its own propaganda is unknown, and seems unlikely, but doing so would not have been completely out of place. Said “one fellow” of the work of the American Red Cross (ARC) in Vladivostok: “They have a fine large office with about twenty desks in it. Each desk is labelled with what work it does. One had ‘Soldiers’ Comforts’, another ‘Russian Aid’, and the rest of them ‘Publicity’.”¹¹²

To do their military relief work, the Red Cross representatives were heavily dependent on the resources and goodwill of the CEF(S). The CRCS mission was always short-staffed; it had to rely on the military to provide it with “fatigue parties” of men to unload and transport supplies from the dock to the warehouse. When no help was available, the CRCS mission was forced to hire local Chinese labourers to move stores. This was sometimes a problem, as there was not always enough money on hand to pay for “coolie” labour.¹¹³ Although the Red Cross unit was not officially part of the CEF(S), Holme and Smith were granted permission “to draw personal clothing and equipment from Canadian Ordnance on same scale as other CEF(S) officers.” More importantly, they were both taken on strength at CEF(S) headquarters so they would be entitled to rations and quarters while in Siberia.¹¹⁴ Brooke was similarly entitled to rations and

¹¹¹Stuart Ramsay Tompkins, *A Canadian's Road to Russia: Letters from the Great War Decade*, ed. Doris H. Pieroth (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1989), 402, S. R. Tompkins to E. Tompkins, 15 Feb. 1919.

¹¹²Quoted in CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 5, item 125, 16 June 1919.

¹¹³This information was comes from documents in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 365, file B.H. 14-2 and *ibid.*, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, H. W. Lewis to Holme, 17 Jan. 1919. See also *ibid.*, vol. 363, file 120, Elmsley to Defensor, 18 Jan. 1919. Elmsley complained that the CRCS unit was “useless” because it had no money; he asked for credit. There are many examples in the military records of correspondence regarding fatigue parties to assist the CRCS.

¹¹⁴NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-2, Lewis to R. J. Brook, 11 Dec. 1918; *ibid.*, vol. 374, file ADMS 3-6, Lewis to Brook, no date. Smith was attached to Base HQ for clothing, equipment,

quarters.¹¹⁵ It is unclear what arrangements the CRCS had with the military authorities in Ottawa about the equipping, feeding, and housing of its representatives, but the former was neither completely independent of nor dependent on the latter.

In addition to the support given by Canadian military personnel who helped transport goods, there was one branch of the force that was an important collaborator in the CRCS's work. This was the Chaplain Services, which acted "as a requisitioning and distributing agency" for the Red Cross. In his monthly report for December, the senior chaplain, Major Harold McCausland, reported that "this work has been carried out so far as the various hospitals are concerned—gramophones, reading and writing materials, etc., having been distributed. It is hoped soon to have a good supply of these for the effective troops also." Two CEF(S) chaplains were particularly helpful to the CRCS. In Omsk the CRCS entrusted its supplies to Captain George Farquhar, the Presbyterian clergyman who accompanied Morrisey in December. Farquhar was to "establish a relief depot, and indent through his office for further supplies as the need arises." Anglican clergyman Sergeant John Dundas Mackenzie-Naughton arrived aboard the *Monteagle* with the first CRCS staffers, and in December he gave "almost daily assistance to the Red Cross Officers at their go-down and at the docks. They speak of his work as invaluable." McCausland noted that "on the arrival of the second clerk to the Chaplain Services, it may be possible for some time to lend one or other almost continually for this work. The demand for help is very urgent, because of the insufficiency of the regular staff."

and rations from 5 Dec. 1918 to 12 Feb. 1919. See NAC, WW1 personnel file for Smith.

¹¹⁵The BRCS representative Boddington was as well, though only after he had been in Vladivostok for some time. See NAC, WW1 personnel files for Brooke and Boddington.

Mackenzie-Naughton may well have become a de facto mission member, at least for a time: Holme told the press upon his return to Canada that Dennis was being “assisted” by Sergeant Mackenzie-Naughton and Mrs. Potter.¹¹⁶ This “close and constant co-operation” between the CRCS, the YMCA, and the Chaplain Services was simplified because Holme, McCausland, Smith, and the senior YMCA representative were together in the same mess.¹¹⁷ In January, the troops at the Gornostai and Second River barracks, as well as their hospitals, were supplied with Red Cross “comforts” thanks to the efforts of the chaplains stationed there.¹¹⁸ The Chaplain Services also distributed the books and magazines that arrived through the Vladivostok British Patriotic League, the CRCS, and from other sources.¹¹⁹

The CRCS staffers worked with the British Red Cross Society as well, which did send representatives to Siberia, despite the confusion and concern about their role at CRCS headquarters. Chairman Marshall and his colleagues had decided to organize supplies as if their mission would be the primary imperial relief unit. This decision turned out to have been a farsighted one. The BRCS Siberian commissioner, Major-General Sir C. Herbert Powell, arrived at Vladivostok shortly before the first CRCS personnel. He may have arrived first, but Powell showed up without any Red Cross supplies, and initially had to draw on CEF(S) ordnance and medical stores for his work, an unorthodox

¹¹⁶“Red Cross aid for Siberia,” *Toronto Globe*, 27 Mar. 1919, 8; “Canadian Red Cross Society Played its Part in Siberia,” *Bulletin* 44 (Apr.–May 1919): 11.

¹¹⁷NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file FORCE HQ 52, McCausland, “Report of Senior Chaplain C.E.F.(S)., to 31-12-18,” 1 Jan. 1919. Mackenzie-Naughton’s WW1 personnel file is in NAC, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 6989-37, Mackenzie-Naughton, John Dundas, SGT/2140169.

¹¹⁸NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file FORCE HQ 52, McCausland, “Report of Senior Chaplain C.E.F.(S) for January, 1919,” 31 Jan. 1919.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, McCausland, “Report of Senior Chaplain, C.E.F.(S) for February, 1919,” 28 Feb. 1919, and McCausland, “Report of Senior Chaplain, C.E.F.(S), for March, 1919,” 31 Mar. 1919.

turn of events.¹²⁰ This inauspicious beginning did not augur well for the future success of the BRCS mission. Other BRCS representatives followed, including Canadian doctors and support staff, several English nurses, and Russian doctors, nurses, medical officers, and orderlies. These men and women formed two groups—a “British Unit” and a “Russian Unit”—and worked in ARC hospitals in Vladivostok (Russian Island), Omsk, Tiumen, and perhaps other places in Siberia among Russian and Czecho-Slovak troops. The British also shipped Red Cross supplies to Siberia, all of which were handled by the Canadian society.¹²¹ By mid-February the Canadian and British Red Cross organizations in Siberia had “amalgamated,” and Powell’s mission was “demobilized” by early March. The CRCS took over its work and supplies.¹²² It must have given Marshall a certain amount of satisfaction to report to Prime Minister Borden the following summer that the CRCS had worked “in concert with the British Red Cross,” but that its “representatives, I am sorry to say, were a failure, and were recalled.”¹²³

Even while the British Red Cross operated in Siberia, the Canadian society took primary responsibility for the handling of supplies for British soldiers and sailors, and not only at Christmastime. From the first October shipment to the withdrawal of the CEF(S) in June 1919 the CRCS collected and distributed goods for British naval and army

¹²⁰NAC, War Diary, Assistant Director of Medical Services (ADMS), Siberia, RG 9 III-D-3, vol. 5058, file 965, microfilm, reel T-11119 entries for 5 and 7 Dec. 1918. See also NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 369, file B.H. 55-2, W. G. Gwatkin to Elmsley, 13 Dec. 1918, and Elmsley to C. H. Powell, 14 Dec. 1918.

¹²¹See NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 12-7, letters from Powell to Clarke, 8 and 9 Feb. 1919; *ibid.*, vol. 374, file ADMS 3-5, Clarke to T. Morrison, 10 Feb. 1919; *ibid.*, file ADMS 3-6, Young to Clarke, 9 Mar. 1919; NAC, Florence Farmer fonds, MG 30 C-182, correspondence file, F. Farmer to mother, 17 Mar. 1919; and “Sufficient now overseas,” *Toronto Globe*, 10 Dec. 1918, 8.

¹²²Playfair, “Red Cross staffs are amalgamated,” *Toronto Globe*, 15 Feb. 1919, 5; Playfair, “To relieve sufferings of Russian prisoners,” *Toronto Globe*, 13 Mar. 1919, 2.

¹²³NAC, Robert Laird Borden papers, MG 26-H, vol. 61, microfilm, reel C-4309, 30861, Marshall to Borden, 5 July 1919.

personnel. Regular Red Cross shipments were made to British troops stationed in Omsk and Krasnoiarsk, whose medical officers included Canadians. In mid-November, Clarke informed the Middlesex's medical officer at Omsk about the special Red Cross policy in Siberia and made it clear that the Canadian society was there to assist the British:

I am sending in care of Canadian Army Service Corps Officer, 20 cases of Canadian Red Cross Supplies, consisting largely of warm socks, which I would like you to distribute to the Middlesex Battalion, without reference to whether they are Hospital patients or not.

We expect a further consignment of Red Cross supplies of various kinds in about two weeks time, so if you will send down a list of requirements I will see that as much as possible is sent up.

Would you be good enough to write me as how the Middlesex stand as regard to Medical affairs and also let me know kn [*sic*] good time when medical supplies are required.¹²⁴

The specific needs of the British may have been taken into account when ninety-six cases including, among other goods, medical supplies, soap, and various articles of clothing were made available to each of the Middlesex and Hampshire battalions a month later.¹²⁵

It became standard practice for the CRCS to give stores to officers departing for the interior under the auspices of the CEF(S) or the BMM, for themselves and their men, as well as for any British troops that they might encounter scattered throughout the vast region. Staff Sergeant Ephraim Herbert Coleman, while accompanying Clarke on a train mission for the British, distributed supplies to the Canadian-run hospital for the Middlesex at Krasnoiarsk. He noted that on the afternoon of 21 March, "I helped in the unloading of 73 cases of Canadian Red Cross supplies, pyjamas, shirts, socks, towels, dressing gowns, handkerchiefs, jam, etc., for the hospital here."¹²⁶ Often stuck in isolated

¹²⁴NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Clarke to Regimental Medical Officer, Middlesex, Omsk, 16 Nov. 1918.

¹²⁵Ibid., Holme to Clarke, 11 Dec. 1918.

¹²⁶[E. H. Coleman,] "In the Footsteps of Robinson Crusoe," pamphlet (n.d., n.p.), 8. A copy of this is in NAC, Ephraim Herbert Coleman fonds, MG 30 E-139, file 3. See also V. A. Cazalet to Young, 4 June 1919, reproduced in "Our Supplies in Siberia Assist Kolchak to Conquer Bolshevism," *Bulletin* 46 (Aug.-Sept. 1919): 14-15.

places for long periods of time,¹²⁷ and with little understanding of why they were in Siberia, British soldiers were likely grateful for such gifts both for their own value and as reminders that they had not been forgotten.

Though imperial units were the primary targets of Canadian Red Cross largesse, Siberia was an Allied theatre of war, something underlined by the list of recipients of CRCS goods. Many, if not all, of the foreign forces had their own Red Cross organizations in Siberia, but there was at least some sharing of resources. Upon his return to Montreal, Dennis told a reporter that CRCS supplies had helped the Polish legion, the Czecho-Slovaks, and the White Russian army.¹²⁸ These latter two forces were undoubtedly the foreign armies that received the most assistance from the CRCS. When called upon to do so, the CRCS assisted the Czech Legion, both directly and indirectly through the BRCS. At least two carloads of supplies were furnished to them,¹²⁹ and the CRCS may have also sent clothing after asking for Powell's advice on their needs.¹³⁰ The Canadian society later assisted in the repatriation of thousands of Czecho-Slovaks who travelled through Canada on their way home from Siberia.¹³¹

Of all the interventionist and belligerent forces in Siberia, the new White Russian

¹²⁷One CEF(S) officer who met a company of Middlesex troops at Krasnoiarsk in Apr. 1919 noted that "they are all 'fed up' properly, having been here since last August." NAC, Ardagh fonds, diary 3, entry for 20 Apr. 1919.

¹²⁸"Siberia can use Canadian goods," *Montreal Gazette*, 23 Apr. 1919, 6. Polish units, consisting of former Austro-Hungarian POWs who, like the Czecho-Slovaks, had turned against their imperial masters, fought with the Whites in the civil war. See Serge P. Petroff, *Remembering a Forgotten War: Civil War in Eastern European Russia and Siberia, 1918–1920*, East European Monographs, no. DLX (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2000), xii.

¹²⁹Playfair, "No trade yet for Canada," *Toronto Globe*, 3 Apr. 1919, 5. A letter of thanks was received from Dr. Girska of the Czech National Council.

¹³⁰CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:209, minutes of the EC meeting, 21 Jan. 1919.

¹³¹See below, 175–176.

army was the one most in need of supplementary medical and other supplies. The CRCS assisted in a small way in Russian military relief. Some of the first supplies distributed by the mission in December went to a Russian military hospital and “a Russian hospital train, sadly in need for drugs and surgical supplies.”¹³² For Russian Christmas on 7 January Matron Potter prepared gifts and handled eight hundred packages provided by the British Patriotic League destined for Russian officers in the Siberian interior.¹³³ The president of the Harbin Department of the Russian Red Cross, Camilla Khorvat, expressed her thanks to Young in a letter written shortly before the assistant commissioner left Vladivostok in early July 1919:

. . . I feel it my pleasant duty to express to you from the Russian Red Cross our deep thankfulness for the hearty and generous assistance which the Canadian Red Cross in your person rendered us at the front, at the base, in the hospitals and sanitary trains, supplying our needs and helping us to re-establish the work of the Russian Red Cross.

Intending to open in Harbin a hospital of 200 beds, I asked for your assistance, being sure that the generous Canadian Red Cross will do everything in their power to meet my requirements. Your kind help surpassed all my expectations, and I am happy to express the feelings of general sympathy and deep respect which are in the hearts of all those who were benefited by the Canadian Red Cross.¹³⁴

The man who was presumably her husband, General Dmitrii Leonidovich Khorvat, the former governor of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the “Supreme Representative in the Far East of the Russian Government,” was similarly moved to praise the “generous and efficient assistance rendered by the Canadian Red Cross in Siberia to all suffering and indigent at the front and in the rear,” and expressed his “deep gratitude for the inestimable services . . . rendered to Russia in the difficult time of her trials, and in the

¹³²“Canadian Red Cross active in Siberia,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 27 Mar. 1919, 23.

¹³³NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 359, file 49, Playfair, draft article, 29 Dec. 1918.

¹³⁴C. Horvat [Khorvat] to Young, no date, reproduced in “Our Supplies in Siberia Assist Kolchak to Conquer Bolshevism,” *Bulletin* 46 (Aug.–Sept. 1919): 15.

moment of her regeneration.”¹³⁵

Most of the CRCS supplies sent to Russian forces probably arrived care of the BMM, which was in Siberia to assist in the formation of a new Russian army. The White Russians—referred to as “loyal” Russians because of their support of the Allies against the Central Powers—were heavily supported by the French and especially British governments. The British sent military equipment and clothing to Siberia for the Russian army, and the BMM supplied advisors and instructors. The British even established an officer training school in December 1918 on Russian Island, off the coast of Vladivostok. Coleman, who was travelling at the behest of the British, gave out CRCS supplies to Russian soldiers in Irkutsk:

March 19.—All this morning I have been occupied in handling and opening Red Cross boxes, and a distribution to Russian soldiers took place about noon, each man receiving a suit of pyjamas (to be used as underwear), a towel, a pair of socks, a shirt and a handkerchief. The regiments which participated were the Za-Baikal, Irkutsk and Verkheudinsk Cossacks, and the Siberian Cadie Regiment. One battalion had a band and at the conclusion of the distribution, the regiment was instructed by General Knox who addressed them briefly in Russian. The British and Russian National Anthems were played by the band and cheers were given for General Knox and Great Britain. It is of interest to note that the supplies were Canadian Red Cross supplies and that more than one-third of them were marked “From Winnipeg.” I had several Cossacks detailed to assist my fatigue party in lifting boxes and one of them gave me accidentally a biff in the eye which, had I not dodged in time, might have made me the first casualty of the C.E.F. (Siberia), or should it be the B.M.M.?¹³⁶

More supplies were distributed for Russian use a few days later. After leaving Krasnoiarsk, Coleman noted that “the only interesting stop of the day was at Achinsk, where we remained an hour. 10,000 cigarettes and 120 officers’ presents were given to the Russian Commandant.”¹³⁷ Knox’s young aide-de-camp, Captain Victor A. Cazalet,

¹³⁵D. Horvat [Khorvat] to Young, 27 June 1919, reproduced in *ibid.*, 15–16. For more on Khorvat, see Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 560.

¹³⁶[Coleman,] “In the Footsteps of Robinson Crusoe,” 7.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 8.

wrote a long, gushing letter to Young about this and other distributions to the Russians:

I want to take this opportunity to tell you how grateful we all are to the “Canadian Red Cross.” I have just come down the line after a three months’ tour with General Knox, during which time we have visited nearly every town in Siberia, and nearly everywhere we have been the means of relieving distress of some kind, owing to the plentiful supplies, etc., which the Canadian Red Cross gave us to distribute.

Our work has chiefly been among soldiers and officers of the new Russian army—and it is impossible to exaggerate the comfort and joy which the various donations have occasioned. I speak with some authority, as it lay to me to distribute all the stores, from cigarettes to ladies’ underwear.

At Ekaterinburg¹³⁸ I inspected every hospital in the town and found them all in an awful state. We gave here some 6,000 pyjamas, 20,000 socks, shirts, etc., and a few days after I had given them, I went to see if they were properly used, and if you could have seen the comfort the clean pyjamas and pillow slips gave the poor, suffering wounded soldiers, I think any trouble and work you have been caused would have been amply repaid. General [Rudolf] Gaida, G.O.C. Siberian Army, wired his thanks.

At Omsk I forgot to mention we gave 1,000 of women’s presents to the families of officers—the materials coming from the English but which you so kindly did up into parcels.

All through I emphasized that they came from the British-Canadian Red Cross, and, apart from the material comfort and benefit the gifts occasioned in themselves, the moral propaganda inspired by the kind thought of the British Empire towards Russia in such a substantial form did much to assist us in our task of inspecting and encouraging.

I trust you received these various telegrams, also one from General Knox to yourself, thanking you and Mrs. Potter for all the pains and trouble you had taken, and begging you to convey to all concerned his most grateful thanks on behalf of himself and the British Mission. He went on to say how the gifts were appreciated and what comfort they brought—material and moral.¹³⁹

The importance of the CRCS for the BMM would be one of the reasons why Red Cross headquarters began shipping supplies to Siberia again in the summer of 1919 and returned Young to Vladivostok that fall.

The help that the CRCS gave to Kolchak’s forces was one of the only ways in which Canadians actively contributed to the White cause. It was also in keeping with the policy of other relief agencies in Siberia, including that of the American Red Cross.

Canadian officials did not see this assistance as a violation of the otherwise non-

¹³⁸Medicine donated by the (British?) Red Cross and distributed in Ekaterinburg sometimes ended up in for sale in local pharmacies! See Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 463, citing T. Preston, *Before the Curtain* (London, 1950), 127.

¹³⁹Cazalet to Young, 4 June 1919, reproduced in “Our Supplies in Siberia Assist Kolchak to Conquer Bolshevism,” *Bulletin* 46 (Aug.–Sept. 1919): 14–15. For more on Cazalet’s time in Siberia, see Robert Rhodes James, *Victor Cazalet: A Portrait* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), 51–68.

interventionist attitude of their government vis-à-vis Russian military affairs after the armistice. The same cannot be said of the commander of the American Expeditionary Force, Major-General William Sidney Graves. In his memoirs of Siberia, the staunchly neutral Graves accused the ARC of “acting as a supply agent for Kolchak.”¹⁴⁰ Like Graves, the Canadians refused to involve their troops in internal Russian affairs as long as their safety was not threatened. Unlike Graves, Elmsley had no problem with the Red Cross aiding the Russian military. Indeed, Elmsley himself intervened to secure “a considerable number of [CEF(S)] men” to help pack “some Red Cross Comforts, for distressed Russian Officers, who are now serving in the ranks of the new Russian Army, which is being organized by General Knox.”¹⁴¹ Other members of the CEF(S) also supported CRCS aid to the Russian army. The Canadian regimental medical officer attached to the British unit in Krasnoiarsk, Lieutenant John M. Munro, left thirty-five cases of Red Cross supplies in the hands of the British Consul there; the CEF(S) asked him to give the supplies to the Russian army medical authorities.¹⁴² There were less official ways in which Canadians contributed to the White Russian cause, too. For example, donations for the Russian Red Cross were collected at CEF(S) religious services in April.¹⁴³ After becoming acquainted with the situation in Siberia, Elmsley was convinced that Canada should be militarily neutral—and even chastised the British War

¹⁴⁰William S. Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure 1918–1920* (New York: Peter Smith, 1941), 205. See also comments on pp. 85–86, 316, and 330–331. On the policy of the ARC, see T. J. Edmonds, “The Red Cross amid Revolution in Siberia,” *Survey*, 3 July 1920, 486.

¹⁴¹This is according to an officer on Elmsley's staff. See NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 377, file No. 11 Stat. Hosp. M2, Staff Captain, Base HQ to J. L. Potter, 12 Dec. 1919. The letter was marked “URGENT.”

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Morrison to British Consul, Krasnoiarsk, 10 May 1919.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, vol. 372, file FORCE HQ 52, H. McCausland, “Report of Senior Chaplain, C.E.F.(S)., for April 1919,” 30 Apr. 1919.

Office for its and Japan's reckless policy in Siberia¹⁴⁴—but he supported the distribution of Red Cross medical relief to the Russian forces, including goods intended to prevent the spread of disease.

Anti-Typhus Efforts, Winter 1918–1919

As was the case in many parts of postwar Europe and Asia, the ravages of typhus and other contagious and deadly diseases hit Siberia hard in the winter of 1918–1919. In November, reports came into Vladivostok of hundreds of people on a train at a nearby town suffering from typhus; American Red Cross officials investigated. When they reached the railway junction at Nikolsk-Ussuriisk, where the Trans-Siberian offshoot, the Chinese Eastern Railway, began in the East, they discovered a train of fifty boxcars that had left Samara six weeks earlier. Originally carrying 2,100 Bolshevik prisoners and others under the guard of White Russian officials, more than 800 passengers had since died of starvation, typhus, or had frozen to death. It was soon dubbed the “train of death,” a macabre but, sadly, all too realistic label.¹⁴⁵ Alerted to this and other outbreaks of typhus in Siberia and the Russian Far East, an emergency meeting of the Inter-Allied Sanitary Commission was called to consider the situation.¹⁴⁶ The commission, composed of the senior medical officers of the Allied forces, Vladivostok's medical health officer, and representatives of Red Cross societies,¹⁴⁷ was told of the “train of death” and of

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, vol. 363, file 118, app. VIII, 100–107, Elmsley to Radcliffe, 11 Feb. 1919. A copy is also included in NAC, Coleman fonds, file 1.

¹⁴⁵Parts of ARC worker Rudolf Bukely's diary is reproduced in “The Train of Death,” in Albert Rhys Williams, *Through the Russian Revolution* [book on-line] (New York: Boni & Liveright Publishers, 1921, accessed 2 Oct. 2003), app. II; available from <http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/memoir/RusRev/RR7.htm#app2>. See also “Trainload of human misery,” *Toronto Globe*, 26 Nov. 1918, 2, and Playfair, “Free Siberia from typhus,” *Toronto Globe*, 8 Feb. 1919, 13.

¹⁴⁶NAC, War Diary, ADMS, Siberia, entry for 25 Nov. 1918.

¹⁴⁷NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 374, file ADMS 3-7, Clarke to Fotheringham, “Report re Medical

reports of typhus among Czecho-Slovak and White Russian troops in Cheliabinsk. The ARC quickly agreed to equip and staff an Inter-Allied Anti-Typhus Train, with expenses shared by the Allies. Clarke, the CEF(S) medical director, who represented the British Empire on the commission, noted that “the Disease appears to be confined to civilian population and refugees, but as the health of the ARMY is endangered, it is necessary for the MILITARY AUTHORITIES to act.”¹⁴⁸ The Allied and anti-Bolshevik military forces in the Siberian interior, where the disease was reported, were not the only ones at risk: Because the disease travelled along the Trans-Siberian Railway, Vladivostok and other centres throughout the region were threatened with a looming epidemic.

Preparing the anti-typhus train took longer than expected. In the meantime, the situation at Nikolsk-Ussuriisk improved after the quick action of the ARC and local Russian authorities.¹⁴⁹ On 9 December the American and Japanese representatives told their colleagues on the sanitary commission that they did not wish to bear the cost of the train, as plans now called for it to work in western Siberia, where none of their troops were stationed. It was soon agreed that the train should first help clear up typhus cases in the provinces around Vladivostok, and would then be free to move westward, though without the financial support of the US or Japan.¹⁵⁰ The same day, the surgeon-in-chief of the Czecho-Slovak forces reported typhus was “generally prevalent” in Omsk and points

Services, CEF(S),” 10 June 1919.

¹⁴⁸NAC, War Diary, ADMS, Siberia, entry for 27 Nov. 1918.

¹⁴⁹“Trainload of human misery,” *Toronto Globe*, 26 Nov. 1918, 2; NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 374, file ADMS 3-7, Clarke to Fotheringham, “Report re Medical Services, CEF(S),” 10 June 1919. See also *ibid.*, vol. 368, file B.H. 27-1, Lewis to Elmsley, “Summary of Typhus Situation in Siberia,” late (after 23) Jan. 1919. Lewis credited the ARC “in large measure” as well as the Allies, who assisted financially.

¹⁵⁰NAC, War Diary, ADMS, Siberia, entries for 9 and 16 Dec.

further west; he requested urgent help. British High Commissioner Eliot feared serious epidemics would break out at Omsk once the weather improved.¹⁵¹ With so many Allied troops stationed in Kolchak's western Siberian capital and Allied, Czecho-Slovak, and White Russian troops spread out all along the railway from Vladivostok to the Ural Mountains, outbreaks of typhus were a serious concern for the Allied commanders.

The Inter-Allied Anti-Typhus Train finally departed Vladivostok for a short trial run on 28 December.¹⁵² Upon its return Clarke noted in his war diary that it "appears to have worked rather badly, in some respects, on its trial trip." More specifically, the sterilizer did not sterilize and the train's operator was apparently unequal to the task.¹⁵³ The ARC requested the services of the Canadian hydrological engineer Captain Frederick Alfred Dallyn, who had helped prepare the train, to command it; he was released by Canadian authorities for this work.¹⁵⁴ An agreement was reached between the ARC and the four interested Allies—the British, Czechs, French, and Italians—in late January.¹⁵⁵ There was now a "severe epidemic" in places such as Omsk, Cheliabinsk, and

¹⁵¹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 12-7, Lewis, "Report on general conditions relative to Typhus Fever in Vladivostok," 19 Jan. 1919.

¹⁵²Playfair, "Free Siberia from typhus," *Toronto Globe*, 8 Feb. 1919, 13.

¹⁵³NAC, War Diary, ADMS, Siberia, entry for 2 Jan.; NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 374, file ADMS 3-7, Clarke to Fotheringham, "Report re Medical Services, CEF(S)," 10 June 1919. See also NAC, War Diary, No. 10 Sanitary Section, Siberia, RG 9 III-D-3, vol. 5058, file 966, microfilm, reel T-11120, entry for 2 Jan. 1919; and comments in [Coleman,] "In the Footsteps of Robinson Crusoe," 18.

¹⁵⁴NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 359, file 49, Playfair, draft article (censored section), 28 Dec. 1918; NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 12-7, F. P. Manget to Elmsley, 4 Jan. 1919, and Clarke to Manget, 6 Jan. 1919. He was "on command" to the Inter-Allied Anti-Typhus Train from 15 Jan. to 23 May 1919. See NAC, WW1 personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 2270-65, Dallyn, Frederick Alfred, CPT.

¹⁵⁵NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 12-7, "Minutes of Meeting Convened by the Commissioner of Siberia The American Red Cross Re: Allied-Anti-Typhus Campaign Western Siberia at the American Consulate Vladivostok 10:30 A.M. 25th January 1919."

Krasnoiarsk,¹⁵⁶ and the train departed for the West early the next month.¹⁵⁷ Upon its arrival in the “danger zone,” it was to “first clear up Soldiers, then civilians who were endangering soldiers.”¹⁵⁸ According to a former ARC commissioner in Siberia, “This train can easily be comprehended by imagining the bath house and delouser . . . with its parts separated into various railroad carriages, put on wheels and going to the people over a stretch of seven thousand miles from Vladivostok to Ekaterinburg, instead of requiring the people to come to it.”¹⁵⁹ Dallyn himself fell victim to the dreaded typhus louse in April, and spent some time in an ARC hospital in Omsk before recovering. He returned to Canada with the last of the CEF(S) in June 1919.¹⁶⁰ Though the train was financed by the four concerned Allies until May 1919,¹⁶¹ the ARC was not shy in announcing who staffed and equipped it. In early April Coleman reported that at Cheliabinsk

Here we saw the Inter-allied Typhus Train, organized at Vladivostok in January, financially supported by ALL the Allies [*sic*], commanded by Capt. Dallyn of the Canadian forces (who, by the way, was asked to take it over after the American Medical or Sanitary experts had fallen down), though most of the personnel are Americans. Somewhat to our indignation, the cars are all labelled in small letters “Inter-allied Typhus Train,” while in much larger letters appear the words “OF THE AMERICAN RED CROSS.” More will be heard of this which, unfortunately, is but typical of much of the work of our good friends south of the 49th parallel.¹⁶²

The ARC was not the only relief organization keen to publicize its work in Siberia. At the same time as preparations were underway for the inter-Allied train, Canadian authorities discussed equipping their own sanitary train to combat infectious

¹⁵⁶NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 363, file 120, Elmsley to Defensor, 21 Jan. 1919.

¹⁵⁷I have not been able to ascertain the exact date, but it was either on or shortly before 10 Feb. 1919. See NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 374, file ADMS 3-5, Clarke to Morrison, 10 Feb. 1919.

¹⁵⁸NAC, War Diary, No. 10 Sanitary Section, Siberia, entry for 24 Jan. 1919.

¹⁵⁹T. J. Edmonds, “The Red Cross amid Revolution in Siberia,” *Survey*, 3 July 1920, 485.

¹⁶⁰CWM, Dr. Adam Fisher Menzies, “Diary of Advanced Hospital Unit Proceeding to Omsk,” 58A 1 31.5, entries for Apr. 1919; NAC, Dallyn’s WW1 personnel file.

¹⁶¹See correspondence in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 12-8.

¹⁶²[Coleman,] “In the Footsteps of Robinson Crusoe,” 18.

diseases among civilians and soldiers in the vicinity of imperial troops. In this project the Canadian Red Cross was asked to play an important role, and not only in providing medical and other supplies, as it had for Dallyn's train.¹⁶³ In early January Elmsley cabled his superiors in Ottawa to ask for \$20,000 to build and equip a Canadian Anti-Typhus Train, provided the CRCS would pay for half of all costs.¹⁶⁴ The Canadian military officials agreed to the plan, and quickly contacted the CRCS. The CRCS Executive Committee, though twice prompted for action by Fotheringham, made no decision until Dennis could submit a report on the typhus situation.¹⁶⁵ (Fotheringham probably regretted his earlier suggestion that the society wait on word from Siberia before shipping supplies.) Since Dennis did not arrive in Vladivostok until almost a month after the initial request, the Canadian train did not get off to a good start. The CRCS Central Council finally discussed Fotheringham's proposal on 25 February. The councillors agreed that "if the cost of the proposed Anti-typhus train amounts to twenty-thousand dollars (\$20,000.) the Canadian Red Cross Society pay the full cost and that the train be called the 'Canadian Red Cross Train.'"¹⁶⁶

Borden would have been pleased with this last condition. From Paris a month later, where he was attending the Peace Conference, he complained about an earlier case of Red Cross financial generosity. He believed that Canadians had not received due credit:

¹⁶³Playfair, "Heroic work by Red Cross," *Toronto Globe*, 7 Apr. 1919, 13; Playfair, "No trade yet for Canada," *Toronto Globe*, 3 Apr. 1919, 5.

¹⁶⁴NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 12-7, Elmsley to Defensor, 6 Jan. 1919.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*, vol. 363, file 121, Gwatkin to Elmsley, 9 Jan. 1919; CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:209, 217, minutes of the EC meetings, 21 Jan. and 4 Feb. 1919.

¹⁶⁶CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:248, minutes of the CC meeting, 25 Feb. 1919.

Some months ago Canadian Red Cross sent two hundred fifty thousand dollars to President Poincare who simply distributed it through various French organizations as part of the national fund for such purposes. . . . Canadian people who have contributed these gifts are entitled to have them so presented that the spirit and sympathy of Canada will be appreciated. Please suggest to these and similar organizations that such gifts should be presented through the representative of Canada in Paris who would see that due publicity is given. Nothing could be more maladroit or unfortunate than the method hitherto pursued.¹⁶⁷

This grant had been made to the French president on 12 October, prior to the end of the war.¹⁶⁸ If national promotion was less important before the armistice, the CRCS may have come around to Borden's views on the subject since then. In any case, once the offer of financial aid for the train was made, Fotheringham quickly accepted it.¹⁶⁹ Preparations for the train continued over the next month, but in the end it was left—unfinished—in the hands of the British Railway Mission upon the Canadian evacuation in early June.¹⁷⁰ The CRCS never incurred any cost.¹⁷¹

While Allied medical officers and commanders were worried about the spread of typhus in the Siberian interior as a threat to Allied troops, there were also serious concerns about a potential outbreak of the disease in and around Vladivostok. These fears were realized when sixty typhus fever cases were discovered in the Vladivostok jail in early January.¹⁷² When more cases came to light over the next few days, all commanders

¹⁶⁷NAC, Borden papers, vol. 61, microfilm, reel C-4309, 30824, Borden to T. A. White, 27 Mar. 1919.

¹⁶⁸CRCS, *Annual Report 1918*, 70. Borden may have been mistaken about the method of distribution: The CRCS did receive letters of thanks “from some of the societies and towns benefiting” from their donation.

¹⁶⁹CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:231, Fotheringham to Marshall, 28 Feb. 1919, cited in the minutes of the EC meeting, 7 Mar. 1919.

¹⁷⁰See various correspondence in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 12-7; NAC, War Diary, ADMS, Siberia, entries for Mar. 1919; NAC, War Diary, No. 10 Sanitary Section, Siberia, entries for Mar. 1919; and NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 374, file ADMS 3-7, Lewis, Report of No. 10 Sanitary Section, 28 May 1919.

¹⁷¹CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:15, minutes of the EC meeting, 10 June 1919. There is incorrect information on this and on Dallyn in MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 203.

¹⁷²NAC, War Diary, No. 10 Sanitary Section, Siberia, entry for 9 Jan. 1919.

of CEF(S) troops were alerted to the danger and told to limit the number of men sent into the city on duty or given daily passes for their time off.¹⁷³ All CEF(S) personnel were to have a full bath every week, when they would receive fresh underwear, and would have their clothes laundered at the expense of the army.¹⁷⁴ Even with precautions such as these, Canadian authorities, as well as the other Allied officials whose troops were quartered in Vladivostok, could not ignore the risk of infection to their soldiers. After all, many Russian refugees and some prisoners of war—the people blamed for the spread of the disease—were housed in barracks in and near those occupied by the CEF(S) troops. A Canadian memo noted that “the route of invasion [of typhus] has been through Refugees and Red Guard Prisoners in the forward areas. The Disease has gradually spread along the Railway lines, and may now be said to extend from Ekaterinburg to Vladivostock.”¹⁷⁵

Efforts to prevent the spread of typhus among the Canadian troops stationed in Vladivostok continued through the winter and spring of 1919. Soldiers were provided with advice on the disease and how to prevent it in lectures given by medical officers and chaplains. In a February issue of the *Siberian Sapper*, the paper published by the 16th Field Company, Canadian Engineers, they were warned about the seriousness of typhus fever “as the percentage of mortality sometimes reaches as high as 40.”

It is transmitted to man either by the bite of the louse, or by its infected excreta gaining entrance to the body. It is therefore very necessary to take every precaution to prevent its spreading to the troops, as its appearance amongst them would amount to a disgrace.

To avoid infection the following precautions should be taken by all:—

1. Bathe frequently and change your underwear.
2. Avoid close contact with those who have lice, or who live in unclean surroundings.

¹⁷³NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 368, file B.H. 27-2, Brook to A. H. H. Powell, 14 Jan. 1919.

¹⁷⁴NAC, War Diary, ADMS, Siberia, entry for 11 Jan. 1919.

¹⁷⁵NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 12-7, Lewis, “Report on general conditions relative to Typhus Fever in Vladivostock,” 19 Jan. 1919.

3. Keep out of congested buildings, picture shows and street cars.
4. Help keep your barracks clean and prevent any accumulation of rubbish.
5. If in spite of all precautions you do happen to get lousy, take immediate steps to get rid of them.¹⁷⁶

If a soldier followed these recommendations to the letter, he might have to keep out of Vladivostok altogether, staying holed up in his barracks! As the disease spread through the city CEF(S) regulations were tightened and some locales, including the Vladivostok railway station, were placed “out of bounds” to the troops.¹⁷⁷ In their unhealthy surroundings, the men probably needed little reminding that they should be careful to avoid attracting unwanted guests to their person. Commenting on the change of seasons then taking place, Sergeant Douglas Brown noted that “the only trouble with the warm weather coming is that it is thawing out the various odors down town and believe me there are a few to thaw out. It is absolutely the dirtiest city I ever hope to see—the most unsanitary. Am glad our Barracks is out in the suburbs, even beyond the race track.”¹⁷⁸ By this time, Playfair reported, “Sanitary precautions, always severe, have been stiffened still more, and there is an order prohibiting Canadian soldiers from riding on street cars or mixing with native crowds. There is war to the death on the ‘cootie,’ through whose wanderings typhus is spread.”¹⁷⁹

The Canadian Red Cross helped the military authorities in their efforts to reduce the risk and incidence of typhus. Playfair informed readers that “a late departure on the part of the [Canadian] Red Cross is to furnish complete new outfits of underwear and

¹⁷⁶Capt. [Charles Harvey] Hair, “Typhus fever—and its prevention,” *Siberian Sapper* 1, no. 4 (8 Feb. 1919): 5.

¹⁷⁷NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 374, file ADMS 3-7, Lewis, Report of No. 10 Sanitary Section, 28 May 1919.

¹⁷⁸CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 5, item 109, 16 Feb. 1919.

¹⁷⁹Playfair, “No trade yet for Canada,” *Toronto Globe*, 3 Apr. 1919, 5.

socks to men at the several bath parades. When the soldier is finished with his bath¹⁸⁰ he is given a new and clean change.”¹⁸¹ And Red Cross help was also needed outside Vladivostok: Lieutenant Munro, as the medical officer in charge of the small hospital in Krasnoiarsk, requested CRCS supplies after a member of the 25th Middlesex battalion contracted the disease. Clarke arranged “to send up a lot of supplies, including Red Cross,” to Munro.¹⁸² Canadian, British, or other Allied troops were not the only recipients of CRCS help in the battle against the typhus louse. Munro had only one case of typhus on his hands in Krasnoiarsk, but the disease seriously affected the White Russian troops stationed in the area. Munro gave the CRCS supplies sent to Krasnoiarsk to the Russian military to help relieve their typhus cases. He asked Clarke to pass on their gratitude:

Will you kindly convey to the Canadian Red Cross the thanks of the Russian Military which have been sent to me through the Russian Commandant and Chief Medical Officer. I hold a receipt from them of the articles forwarded. Your gift arrived safely and in excellent condition.

The Typhus situation is being gradually brought under control. . . . Cases now reduced from 300 & over to 150. A great number of the latter are out of danger. There has only been 5 deaths. The local situation may be said to be controlled¹⁸³

A letter from the British Consul at Irkutsk arrived at the medical director’s office in December asking for CRCS supplies to relieve hundreds of local typhus cases.¹⁸⁴ It read as follows:

I beg to enclose list of drugs, etc., which has been handed to me by the civil representatives of the Government residing in Irkutsk, and which are badly wanted by spotted typhus patients in the various prison infirmaries in the town.

There are 690 patients suffering from typhus in the prisons alone. Most of them are Red

¹⁸⁰Baths were supposed to be a weekly event for all units, but problems with equipment and access to water disrupted the schedule. This was true of both CEF(S)-run baths and facilities in the city where officers paid for baths. Baths were also “the most expensive luxury in” Vladivostok: Playfair, “Is boom town of the Orient,” *Toronto Globe*, 28 Jan. 1919, 7.

¹⁸¹Playfair, “No trade yet for Canada,” *Toronto Globe*, 3 Apr. 1919, 5.

¹⁸²NAC, War Diary, ADMS, Siberia, entry for 12 Feb. 1919. See also NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Clarke to J. M. Munro, 16 Feb. 1919.

¹⁸³NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Munro to Clarke, 15 Mar. 1919.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*, Clarke to Holme, 12 Dec. 1918.

Guards and in spite of the linen recently received (from Canadian Red Cross) and for which the Government representative asks me to convey his heartfelt thanks to that organization, I wish to add my support to the appeal now made by the authorities here for more linen to be sent through as quickly as possible. There are several cases where prisoners have not had any clean underwear, etc., since last May, and their condition is pitiable in the extreme. It is extraordinary that the epidemic is not more serious than it is, and preventive measures should be taken at once to cope with the disease.

There are no drugs or linen in the town and I sincerely trust the Canadian Red Cross will give the matter its very serious consideration if only for the sake of humanity.¹⁸⁵

Thirty-two cases of CRCS supplies were sent up in the care of Captain Menzies in response to this appeal; he dropped off the cases on 1 January.¹⁸⁶ Although the CRCS was sent to Siberia to assist the medical services of the CEF(S) and supply British and Canadian troops, the organization was quick to help out in other situations when called upon to do so. As the above example shows, the mission even supplied goods intended to relieve the suffering of Bolshevik prisoners.

To help stave off the spread of the disease in Vladivostok, Clarke and his colleagues on the Inter-Allied Sanitary Commission attempted to cooperate with local Russian authorities to establish a special typhus hospital. By early February the disease had spread through the city and the civic hospital could handle no more cases. The city was home to many refugees who occupied every available space in an attempt to escape the cold. According to Clarke, there were one thousand refugees sleeping in the main railway station, and many cases of typhus had developed in these crowded and unsanitary quarters. The Allies proposed to equip and run a temporary hospital, but there was one problem: They did not have a building. Dennis, who had just arrived, was eager to help, but he could do little without the proper facilities. "Great efforts" were made over the

¹⁸⁵Playfair, "Heroic work by Red Cross," *Toronto Globe*, 7 Apr. 1919, 13.

¹⁸⁶NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, Clarke to British Consul, Irkutsk, 17 Dec. 1918; CWM, Menzies, "Diary of Advanced Hospital Unit Proceeding to Omsk," entry for 1 Jan. 1919.

next few days to obtain a building but, despite the interest of the Allied medical officers and three Red Cross societies, nothing could be done without Russian cooperation in the venture.¹⁸⁷ Powell, the BRCS commissioner, was exasperated when he wrote to Clarke on 8 February, a Saturday evening:

That hopeless [Town] Major has arranged nothing! Not having received the promised summons to the meeting tonight, I rang him up just now, & he laconically replied that he had been unable to arrange a meeting, nor would he be able to tomorrow, Sunday, either.

I then offered to go to him tomorrow myself & discuss the matter further, but his reply was that he intended going home to his family!!

Typhus increasing (142 cases today), he—the Major—the responsible official to take measures to combat it. Yet proposes to do nothing tomorrow because its Sunday! True Russian style!!

I can only suggest now that the Allied Sanitary Committee should immediately take action against this needless delay and obstruction—for that is what it is, and take the matter out of their hands by Commandeering whichever building be thought most suitable. It is only preemptory action which will bring these incompetent officials to their senses.¹⁸⁸

Prospects for the hospital apparently improved thereafter. Five days after Powell's desperate letter Elmsley told the militia department that the "Canadian Red Cross, organizing Civilian Anti-Typhus Hospital at Vladivostock, require[s] two officers and 25 other ranks for this purpose."¹⁸⁹ In the end, though, the hospital never materialized. Playfair, whose reports tended to downplay the difficulties that the Canadians encountered in Vladivostok, explained that "an effort was made by the British and Canadian Red Cross organizations, acting jointly, to establish a hospital here for the treatment of the disease, but the Russian authorities decided that they would prefer to attend to the matter themselves, and the project was abandoned."¹⁹⁰ It would be the first of several disappointments for CRCS staffers.

¹⁸⁷NAC, War Diary, ADMS, Siberia, entries for 4, 7, and 9 Feb. 1919.

¹⁸⁸NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 12-7, C. H. Powell to Clarke, 8 Feb. 1919.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., vol. 363, file 120, Elmsley to Defensor, 13 Feb. 1919.

¹⁹⁰Playfair, "Heroic work by Red Cross," *Toronto Globe*, 7 Apr. 1919, 3.

This was not the only time that the Canadians came across unwilling or incompetent local officials who, in their view, thwarted their plans or otherwise caused problems. In the case of typhus incidence and prevention the CEF(S) sanitation officer, Major Harry William Lewis, found the local authorities a source of frustration. After typhus was discovered in Vladivostok he noted that “it is difficult to obtain any definite information from the Municipal Health Board. They are prone to cover up any Diagnoses of Typhus by calling them Unknown Pyrexia or Non-infectious abdominal Typhus.”¹⁹¹

Later in January he again complained:

The chief difficulty met with had been due to the laxity of the native Doctors. The Canadian Medical Authorities have brought considerable pressure to bear on the Municipal Health Authorities in this regard, and have offered any aid that may be necessary. Cases of doubtful diagnosis have been visited and exhaustive clinical and bacteriological examinations made.¹⁹²

Clarke encountered similar difficulties when he tried to address the problem of venereal diseases, the most prevalent health problem among the troops. His disbelief and exasperation comes across in this matter-of-fact military report:

Efforts were continually made to work with the Russian Civic Authorities to limit the opportunities of infection from these diseases. The Russian Authorities were absolutely supine in the matter. They claim that since the Revolution they have no laws effecting these things, and that the Municipality has no power to make such laws. They also claim that before the Revolution they had laws, similar to those existing in France, but that the police were able to take advantage of these laws to such an extent for the purpose of graft, that they were much better off without the laws.¹⁹³

The economic commission seems to have come up against similar problems. Trade Commissioner Wilgress later remembered that there had been “little consultation” with Russians. “The general philosophy,” he wrote, “appeared to be that the Russians had

¹⁹¹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 12-7, Lewis, “Report on general conditions relative to Typhus Fever in Vladivostock,” 19 Jan. 1919.

¹⁹²Ibid., vol. 368, file B.H. 27-1, Lewis to Elmsley, “Summary of Typhus Situation in Siberia,” late (after 23) Jan. 1919.

¹⁹³Ibid., vol. 374, file ADMS 3-7, Clarke to Fotheringham, “Report re Medical Services, CEF(S),” 10 June 1919.

made such a bad mess that it was necessary for foreigners to take over and try to restore order.¹⁹⁴

* * *

When the Canadian government decided to send their soldiers to Siberia during the final months of the Great War, there was no doubting that the Canadian Red Cross would be involved. Except for in the Mediterranean theatre, wherever there were wounded Canadian soldiers or military medical units, Red Cross supplies or personnel were also in evidence. So the arrangements were made, the supplies packed, and the Siberian relief team departed for the Russian Far East along with the CEF(S). But Siberia would prove rather different from the western front, for both the military and the Red Cross. The lack of combat operations diminished the importance of CRCS supplies for the treatment of wounded soldiers. As such, most CRCS medical supplies would be used for the treatment, and especially prevention, of diseases, mostly of the venereal kind. Though the military and Red Cross authorities would never equip a special typhus hospital to treat civilian cases in Vladivostok, a creative solution was put into practice to prevent the spread of this and other serious diseases along the all-important railway. Many of those who would have been otherwise ignored by the foreign Red Cross societies were helped in this way. CRCS supplies were put to more traditional use when distributed to forces that were involved in fighting.

The CRCS's medical relief work in Siberia was not radically different than had been true of the society's work on the western front when it came to the treatment of

¹⁹⁴Wilgress, "From Siberia to Kuibyshev," 367.

illness. The same can be said of the CRCS's role as troop cheerleader. Canadian soldiers were far from home and many were upset at being sent to Siberia but, apart from boredom and grumbling about slow mail, there were no major disciplinary problems among members of the CEF(S) while they were in Siberia. The "Christmas cheer" provided by the Red Cross, the CWCA, and other groups likely assuaged some anger, especially since in the absence of CRCS efforts and gifts it would have been a much gloomier holiday season. Supplies furnished by CRCS officers also lifted the spirits of at least some imperial soldiers, whether in hospital, on train missions, or stuck in a far-away Siberian town where goods were unprocurable. Members of the British Military Mission believed strongly in the value of Red Cross work for boosting morale among White Russian soldiers. Acting for the CWCA and other patriotic organizations was not something the CRCS had done before Siberia, but contributing to the overall comfort level of Canadian soldiers was in keeping with the general thrust of the Red Cross's work.

A third reality of the Siberian military relief work that was similar but different to earlier experiences was the Canadian society's decision to care for all imperial soldiers. It was in Siberia that CRCS national headquarters saw an opportunity to show off how far the dominion affiliate had come during the war. Not simply about duty to the empire, the Toronto officials' decision was an unmistakable nod to Canadians' newly-discovered national confidence. The Siberian expedition would be led by Canadians: Elmsley for the military; Dennis for the Red Cross. Though the CRCS had to overcome some problems in its Siberian work, including personnel and money shortages, the mission was a success

when it came to military relief. Marshall, the CRCS chairman, could even boast that his society's representatives had proved themselves superior to those of its parent organization. For many in Canada it would have been further proof that the dominion, though still part of the British Empire, was ready and willing to take on the challenges of fuller membership in the international arena.

CHAPTER 3

J. S. DENNIS, RELIEF AMBITIONS, AND CANADA'S SIBERIAN MOMENT

As a port of exit, Vladivostok was full of Russian émigrés coming out. As a port of entry, it was full of Allied capitalists going in. It was a key to the El Dorado beyond. With its vast unexploited natural riches and labor power, Siberia was a loadstone drawing the agents of capital from around the world. From London and Tokio, from the Paris Bourse and Wall Street, they came flocking hither, lured by dazzling prospects.¹

Albert Rhys Williams

I never saw such a country for dogs. The poor things look half-starved. Speaking of half-starved, some of the sights I have seen would bring tears to a good many peoples eyes. One sees box-cars with as many as 20 to 30 refugees—men, women & children—even babies—in one car. Nothing to sit on except the floor & little or nothing to eat.—At Nikolsk I saw a line of “wild-eyed” men at the station & found that they were prisoners lately returned from Germany.—They looked the part!²

Captain Harold Vernon Ardagh

The military relief work that the Canadian Red Cross mission did in Vladivostok was not a significant departure from past practice for the auxiliary organization. Though circumstances in Siberia required some adjustments to the Red Cross's standard procedures and areas of interest, there was nothing extraordinary about this aspect of the mission's work. More surprising were the efforts of the first CRCS commissioner, Colonel John Stoughton Dennis, to undertake humanitarian assistance for civilians and prisoners of war in civil war Siberia. From the late summer of 1918 until early the next year Siberia loomed large in the minds of some Canadian politicians and businessmen. Dennis was among the strongest proponents of Canadian involvement in Siberia.

¹Albert R. Williams, *Through the Russian Revolution* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967), 198.

²NAC, Ardagh fonds, diary 2, entry for 2 Apr. 1919. Ardagh was then travelling just north of the Russian-Manchurian border.

Between August and April he expended a great deal of emotional energy and spent much time on the cause of non-military relief in this land which, for him, held so much economic promise. If Canadians were to play a leading role in the development of the Siberian market, as was hoped, sending relief to the region's residents was a good way of getting the foot in the door. In the end, little would come of Dennis's efforts, but they did set the stage for continued Canadian Red Cross activity in the Russian Far East after the withdrawal of the CEF(S).

The Canadian Economic Commission to Siberia

After the British contacted the Canadian government about the dominion's participation in a proposed military venture in Siberia, visions of postwar economic positioning in the North Pacific region and greater political influence within and without the British Empire danced through Prime Minister Borden's head. By August 1918 both the Imperial War Cabinet in London, on which he was sitting, and the Canadian cabinet in Ottawa had approved the Siberian military intervention. Borden was soon convinced that, despite the rhetoric of his wartime colleagues, the British and Americans had ulterior motives for dispatching their own troops, ones that only indirectly had to do with fighting the German menace on Russian soil. He informed his cabinet that the United States and Great Britain were sending economic commissions to Siberia along with their military forces. Keen not to start the coming postwar era a step behind his powerful Atlantic partners, Borden instructed his ministers to follow course. "I consider it essential that Canada should take like action," he wrote, and hoped cabinet would "give the subject consideration and reach favourable decision immediately, in order that necessary careful

preparation and organization of proposed Commission should be made with least possible delay.”³ Borden’s request should not have come as a surprise. That the American government saw Siberia as more than simply another theatre of war would have been readily apparent to anyone scanning the headlines of recent editions of US newspapers.⁴

One observer who shared Borden’s perspective was the former Canadian trade commissioner in Petrograd, Conradin F. Just. He had already been in contact with his boss, Minister of Trade and Commerce Sir George Eulas Foster, about the American plans and possible Canadian participation in them. Responding to the news that the United States had “authorized the forwarding of a Red Cross Supply ship,” he wondered “whether Canada is likely to have any proportionate share in the publicity or other forms of commercial benefit which may accrue from this action.” Just anticipated that the Americans would try and make the most out of any assistance provided to the Russian people, and he was eager that Canada not miss out on an opportunity to do the same, especially since Siberia was “the most promising field in Russia for Canadian trade penetration.” Siberia’s needs also fit perfectly with what Canadians could deliver, as he explained to Foster:

I might add that much of the essential requirements of Siberia for primary production is represented by the lines of Canadian machinery and other “specialities” for agricultural operations, mining, lumbering, etc. to which I have been drawing the attention of our manufacturers. The guarantee of substantial orders of this character would greatly assist the demobilisation of industry in Canada.⁵

³NAC, Rowell fonds, vol. 17, file 73, microfilm, reel C-941, 12025, Borden to White and cabinet, 8 Aug. 1918.

⁴For example, “U.S. and Japan give plan to aid Russia,” *Washington Post*, 4 Aug. 1918, 1, 15. A copy of this article is in NAC, George Foster fonds, MG 27 II-D-7, vol. 70, file 73. For an interesting discussion of President Wilson’s motives for intervening in Siberia which stresses economic factors, see Bacino, *Reconstructing Russia*. Canadians shared many of his views.

⁵NAC, Foster fonds, vol. 70, file 73, C. F. Just to G. E. Foster, no date. This letter was probably

For Canadian government officials and businessmen, Just's last point was key. After years of high wartime production of industrial manufactured goods, the end of the war—by this time the Allies were fairly confident of their eventual victory—would cause serious problems for the Canadian economy, which would soon have to deal with industrial over-capacity.⁶

Eager to continue high levels of industrial production and secure a position as a major player in the Pacific economic area, Canadians saw Siberia as a new frontier, the perfect place to take a leading role in its economic development. Not only was it a largely unexploited land rich with resources, but the Canadian experience in developing its own frontier would come in handy in Siberia, many areas of which had a strikingly similar geography and climate to parts of the Canadian West and North. Proving Just was not alone in his Siberian dreams, a Vancouver businessman wrote to Foster in September of “the Pacific side of Siberia”: “Their needs in developing their Country are practically the same needs that existed from the Great Lakes West in Canada prior to 1890—Eastern Canada learned to produce these special requirements.” He also drew a direct link between Siberia in 1918 and the gold rush twenty years before, a race for riches that Americans had won. This time around, he hoped, things would be different:

Canada, if she does not delay too long, can secure the major portion of this Siberian trade. Japan and United States of America are at work even now in laying the foundations of trade with Siberia.

Do not let us be too late. Even if nothing tangible is accomplished for several months by the proposed commission, it will have at least established Canada as a producing reality in the minds of the Siberians.

To go back to 1897 and 1898, Sir George, you will recall that Canada lost the bulk of the

written on or shortly after 4 Aug. 1918.

⁶See comments on this in BMO Corporate Archives, Braithwaite papers, cabinet 11, drawer 4, file 1, folder 1C), A. D. Braithwaite, “Report of Visit to Siberia,” ca. 1919, pp. 1–2.

Klondike trade through not making herself a factor soon enough. I hope the mistake will be not repeated.⁷

After Borden's August message, Minister of Immigration and Colonization James Alexander Calder asked for Dennis's advice on the proposed economic commission. The son of Canada's first surveyor general, John Stoughton Dennis Sr., and the descendant of United Empire Loyalists,⁸ Dennis was born in the small town of Weston, Ontario in late 1856. Like Young, he attended the elite Upper Canada College in Toronto, and he then headed west in 1872. Dennis spent the next several decades living and working in the West in the employ of the dominion government, the Hudson's Bay Company, the North-West Territories government, and the Canadian Pacific Railway. Dennis followed in his father's footsteps and worked initially as a surveyor, but he rose quickly to professional prominence as a civil engineer and world-class irrigation expert. When he was recruited by the CPR in late 1902 he left a plum job as chief engineer and deputy commissioner of public works for the government of the young North-West Territories.⁹ As befitting his loyalist and Toronto roots, Dennis was a strong believer in Canada's attachment to the British Empire, and in 1910 was made a fellow of the Royal Colonial Institute, a London-based organization "engaged in a constant battle, year in and year out, to preserve a united Empire."¹⁰ Two years later Dennis was selected to head a new CPR department.

⁷NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, file 21916, C. S. Meek to Foster, 30 Sept. 1918. Meek was the president and general manager of a company that specialized in the production and export of industrial raw materials.

⁸See the biography of J. S. Dennis Sr., written by Colin Frederick Read, in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 11:244.

⁹For more on Dennis, see his obituary, "Colonel J. S. Dennis; development of Western Canada," *Times* (London), 28 Nov. 1938, 16, and comments in John A. Eagle, *The Canadian Pacific Railway and the Development of Western Canada, 1896–1914* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), passim, but especially 195–196.

¹⁰"Royal Colonial Institute," *Times* (London), 30 Apr. 1910, 6; Sir Frederick Dutton, "Throne and Empire," speech given before the Empire Club of Canada, 8 Oct. 1925, in *The Empire Club of Canada*

As one historian of the railway described it,

Everything having to do with the unsold portion of the railway's grant lands, townsite properties between Lake Superior and Kamloops, tie and timber operations in British Columbia, irrigation works, mineral rights, mines and coal lands were consolidated in a new department of natural resources located in Calgary under the direction of J. S. Dennis. The importance of the new department was indicated by the decision to make Dennis assistant to the president, reporting directly to [CPR head Thomas] Shaughnessy.¹¹

While working on the prairies Dennis acquired the nickname "Calgary Jack."¹²

Dennis's civilian résumé was impressive. So too was his wartime record, which no doubt earned him the respect of dominion politicians and military officials, and furthered his reputation as a trusted administrator and policy man. Dennis attended the Royal School of Gunnery in Kingston, Ontario, and in 1885 he commanded the Dominion Land Surveyors' Intelligence Corps (or Dennis's Scouts) during the Riel Rebellion.¹³ When the Great War broke out Dennis was loaned by the CPR to the government; his knowledge of transportation issues was put to good use in the movement of large numbers of Canadian soldiers.¹⁴ In 1917, after the entry of the United States into the war, Dennis took charge of a section of the British-Canadian Recruiting Mission in that country. In September 1918, before Dennis became known in Vancouver for his involvement with the economic commission or the Red Cross, an impressed *Daily Sun*

Speeches 1925 [speech on-line] (Toronto: Empire Club of Canada, 1926, accessed 25 May 2004), 264-269; available from <http://www.empireclubfoundation.com/details.asp?SpeechID=275&FT=yes>.

¹¹David H. Breen, "The CPR and Western Petroleum, 1904-24," in *The CPR West: The Iron Road and the Making of a Nation*, ed. Hugh A. Dempsey (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984), 235.

¹²"Col. Dennis is dead; soldier, engineer," *New York Times*, 27 November 1938, 48.

¹³N. F. Dreisziger, "A Surveyor Advises the Government: J. S. Dennis, Jr. and Canadian-American Negotiations, 1895-1910," *Canadian Surveyor* 29, no. 1 (Mar. 1975): 141. For more on Dennis's career before the Great War, see Morgan, ed., *Canadian Men and Women of the Times*, s.v. "Dennis, Major John S.," p. 317, and Charles G. D. Roberts and Arthur Leonard Tunnell, eds., *The Canadian Who's Who: A Handbook of Canadian Biography of Living Characters*, vol. 2, 1936-1937 (Toronto: Murray Printing, n.d.), s.v. "Dennis, Col. John Stoughton, C.M.G.," p. 290.

¹⁴"Former boss of Trotsky to open Red Cross drive," *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 6 Jan. 1919, 12.

reporter gave a brief account of his recent activities:

Colonel J. S. Dennis, chief commissioner of colonization and development for the Canadian Pacific railway, has been carrying on a campaign for recruiting Britishers and Canadians in the United States, for which work he was selected on account of his reputation as an organizer and for carrying difficult tasks through to a successful conclusion. He was at first placed in charge of the western section of the United States, with headquarters at Chicago, but was later elevated to the position of second in command of the British Canadian Recruiting Mission, with headquarters at New York.

As a result of the campaign which has been carried on, over 65,000 recruits for the British and Canadian armies have been raised in the United States.

These recruits were British subjects in the United States, who, under the existing conditions, could not be reached by the draft laws of either Great Britain, Canada, or the United States. It is largely as a result of Col. Dennis' efforts that a convention has been entered into which provides that, as between Great Britain, Canada and the United States, subjects of one country resident in the other are to be subject to draft.¹⁵

His contribution to King and country was not lost on his superiors: In March 1918 the minister of militia and defence suggested Dennis for the recently created Order of the British Empire, and in May the officer commanding the British-Canadian Recruiting Mission recommended Dennis be named a Companion of the Order of the Bath.¹⁶ Though he did not receive these distinctions, Dennis was made a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG) that year,¹⁷ a honour bestowed on British subjects serving abroad.

By the time Siberia was being mooted about as a place of interest for Canadians, "Calgary Jack" was known as somewhat of an expert on the region. His deep and far-reaching knowledge of Canada's western and northern areas was complemented by some

¹⁵"British Canadian recruiting campaign as it is conducted in the United States," *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 15 Sept. 1918, 11. For a discussion of recruiting south of the border, see J. M. Pawa, "Manpower, Diplomacy and Social Maladies: Canada, Britain, the United States and the Recruitment Controversy of 1917-1919," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 11, no. 3 (Winter 1980): 295-311.

¹⁶NAC, Borden papers, vol. 14, microfilm, reel C-4204, 3476-3477, Mewburn to Borden, 29 Mar. 1918; *ibid.*, vol. 9, microfilm, reel C-4201, 1494-1496, Mewburn to Borden, 6 May 1918, and Devonshire to Borden, 10 May 1918.

¹⁷"Colonel J. S. Dennis; development of Western Canada," *Times* (London), 28 Nov. 1938, 16. For a list of Dennis's other decorations, see NAC, Engineering Institute of Canada fonds, MG 28 I-277, Membership Files, vol. 68, J. S. Dennis file, "Synopsis of the Career of Colonel John Stoughton Dennis . . .," 2.

knowledge of Russia. “Colonel Dennis is personally familiar with conditions in Russia,” declared a newspaper article,

having lived for a considerable time in that country. Leon Trotsky, now one of the men in control of the Bolshevik government in Petrograd, was an employee in Colonel Dennis’ office. The Siberian Red Cross commissioner is one of the few acknowledged authorities in Russian economic and political conditions, having made this a special study for some years. Recently he made a trip from Vancouver to New York in order to address a public meeting with Elihu Root¹⁸ and other distinguished Americans on the Asiatic situation. His articles in the *Contemporary* and other well-known magazines are highly regarded by all competent critics.¹⁹

On 11 September, while Dennis was in Ottawa on “government business,” the *Toronto Globe* carried a short article about his views of Siberia’s geography and climate. His words betrayed a keen economic interest in the underdeveloped country, as well as a more than passing familiarity with the region’s geographic conditions. It is also apparent that Just and Dennis were on the same page when it came to Siberia’s “great future.” “The country is enormously rich” and, Dennis was quoted as saying, “presents a field whose importance can hardly be exaggerated.”²⁰ Once he arrived in Siberia himself early in the new year, Dennis worked there in three capacities, two without any salary.²¹ His own concern for Russia and its people would show through in his ambitious plans for Canadian economic activity in and charitable assistance to Siberia.

Dennis responded to Calder’s request for advice on Siberia in mid-August from New York. Like Just, Borden, and others, he too saw potential problems for Canada if the Americans were allowed to pursue their economic policies in Siberia without a

¹⁸Root had headed up a US government mission to revolutionary Russia in the summer of 1917.

¹⁹“Former boss of Trotsky to open Red Cross drive,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 6 Jan. 1919, 12. See also “Col. John S. Dennis, C.M.G., is Red Cross Commissioner to Siberia,” *Bulletin* 40 (Nov. 1918), 40. I have found no further information about Dennis’s earlier time in Russia or his association with Trotskii.

²⁰“Siberia like Western Canada,” *Toronto Globe*, 12 Sept. 1918, 5.

²¹Dennis earned a salary as the CEF(S) transportation agent. On the details of his appointment to the CEC(S), see the order-in-council, P.C. 2595, 21 Oct. 1918, in Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, 1:211–213.

commensurate Canadian response. “As you are aware,” he wrote, “the United States is organizing a very strong Trade and Propaganda Commission to accompany or follow their military expedition, and I feel that unless Canada follows suit, we will be left in the cold.” He predicted a “marked trade development with Russia” after the war, and saw no reason why Canada could not take the lead in providing the necessary goods. Dennis then outlined specific recommendations on the composition of the economic commission.²² Later in August Just penned a long memorandum that outlined his own thoughts on the proposed commission, one of many reports that he sent Foster on the economic situation in Siberia and British policies in Russia. He was perhaps also responsible for the reprint of an article from the June 1918 issue of *Kelly’s Monthly Trade Review* which is preserved in the minister’s fonds at the National Archives of Canada. Its title gets right to the point: “You must Help Russia. A Plea for Russia: The Land of Golden Opportunities. Reasons why Great Britain and the United States should not abandon her.”²³

During their trip to London that August, Borden and two Canadian cabinet ministers explored possibilities for Canadian economic involvement in Siberia. Privy Council head Rowell met with F. C. Armstrong, a representative of R. Martens & Co., an important international firm specializing in Russian trade. At the same time Borden “made some examination of the charts and documents which Mr. Martens prepared and

²²NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, file 21916, Dennis to Calder, 17 Aug. 1918. Dennis also thought the proposed commission could study the possibilities of attracting Siberian peasants to immigrate to western Canada, and should look into establishing peacetime transportation between Canada and Siberia. Calder forwarded Dennis’s letter to Foster: *ibid.*, Calder to Foster, 20 Aug., and Foster to Calder, 24 Aug. 1918.

²³All in NAC, Foster fonds, vol. 70, file 73. Just’s original memorandum was dated 29 Aug. 1918.

which were exceedingly interesting and instructive.”²⁴ Armstrong reported that Borden, Rowell, and Charles Colquhoun Ballantyne, the minister of marine and fisheries and naval service, had shown “very cordial interest . . . in his explanation of economic conditions in Russia, and of the work done by R. Martens & Co. Ltd. in the development of Russian trade,” and that Borden wished to discuss “the matter more fully with Mr. R. C. Martens.” At the end of the month Borden was told that Richard Martens was in New York; he would be glad to drop by Ottawa for discussions while on his way to the Far East.

I might say that [Martens] has been in consultation with the United States Government concerning economic relief to be sent to Siberia, and is actually collecting a shipment of various necessities to be shipped at an early date. At this end, I am getting information as to what can be supplied by Canadian manufacturers with a view to including certain Canadian goods in the same consignment. I am satisfied from the discussions I have had with the managers of the three Siberian branches of this firm, who have been called to New York in connection with this matter, that there are good possibilities of permanent interchange of trade between Canada and Siberia; and if we can assist the Siberians now when they are in such great need, it will give us a very good standing for the future.²⁵

Many of those who supported western economic activity in Siberia shared Martens’s belief that aiding the region’s residents in the present would prove beneficial in the future.

As a Russian national and businessman engaged in foreign trade, Martens was concerned about recent developments in Russia, and not only because he was keen to keep trade routes open. In the summer his company produced a special issue of their publication, *Russia: A Journal of Russian and American Foreign Trade*, entitled “A Call

²⁴NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, file 21916, Borden to Foster, 27 Aug. 1918. A copy of this letter is in NAC, Rowell fonds, vol. 17, file 73, microfilm, reel C-941, 12038. Something of Martens’s views on the opportunities in Siberia may be gleaned from R. C. Martens, “Unique Maps of Russia and Siberia,” *World’s Work* 36 (Oct. 1918): 673–696.

²⁵NAC, Rowell fonds, vol. 17, file 73, microfilm, reel C-941, 12039, H. T. Meldrum to Borden, 26 Aug. 1918. Meldrum was the Canadian agent for R. Martens & Co. He was based in Montreal.

to the  for Aid Against Pestilence and Famine.”²⁶ It opened with an introduction which, the editors no doubt hoped, would have spurred even the most laissez faire of capitalists and government officials to embrace the cause of Russian relief. It also made clear that Russia had not abandoned the Allied cause, and after “her invaluable service to the Allies in the first years of the War, she has well earned all necessary help from them.”

Martens’s editorial, which followed, was bleak. First, he presented a terrible time-line of famine and disease, and predicted millions of deaths as a result. Next, Martens reminded readers that the Russians had been important allies during the war, and that they too continued to be victims of German belligerency and treachery, past and present. In doing so, he implicitly countered the arguments of those who may have felt little sympathy for the turncoat Russians:

Of medicines, serums, and all such medicaments, Russia has been increasingly bare since her armies gave up the war. Before the war began Russia relied upon Germany for most of her medical supplies. After her entrance into the war, these supplies were provided by the Allied nations. Today Russia’s needs in this direction seem to have been forgotten. Now that Russia has sunk into disorder under the fanatic treachery of the Bolsheviki supplied with German gold, the world appears to have forgotten that Russia gave many millions of lives to the cause of the fight against Germany, and that her military efforts, even though they have not been sustained, secured in her first attacks against Germany—a non-industrial country against a highly developed and organized industrial country—at the very outset of the war, initial success and a diversion of German military strength that were absolutely invaluable to the Allies of Western Europe.

Let us clearly understand that the impending perils of famine and disease are only in a very small part the faults of the Russians themselves. Whatever hygiene and quarantine may accomplish against famine diseases, the greatest need is for medicines, serums for the specific treatment of certain of the worst diseases and epidemics, and certain immediate, drastic, and local disinfection, which requires special apparatus in the hands of doctors and nurses to make it effective under disorganized conditions, in which disease is often found most virulent and most difficult to deal with. The heroic and wonderful work done against typhus in Serbia a few years ago is a type Russia’s great need calls for. True it is, perhaps, that the Russian peasant, and the uneducated man of diverse race who make their way into all parts of Russia have known practically nothing of hygiene. Prior to the outbreak of the war, however, thanks to the great preparatory measures and care by the Government, epidemics were cut down to a minimum, but in the face of the many difficulties that have arisen during the war and have grown worse with its progress, augmented to an enormous extent since the Revolution, conditions have become chaotic

²⁶*Russia: A Journal of Russian and American Foreign Trade* 3, nos. 7–8 (July–Aug. 1918). The journal was published in New York by R. Martens & Co.

and consequently no precautions are taken, resulting in the potentiality of enormous loss of life. Beyond doubt these classes have been in some fault, but the gravest cause of their present peril is the practically complete absence of medicines, of serums, disinfecting apparatus, in the hands of doctors and nurses trained in the effective use of all these in successful combating of disease under the rough and trying conditions which they would most likely encounter. We have plenty of doctors and nurses in Russia to co-operate with any aid sent.

Finally, Martens appealed to the American people to do their bit for “the physical and moral welfare of the civilized world”:

Where shall Russia get the vitally needed aid? The other nations of Europe are fully occupied with meeting the care of their military sufferers, both the wounded and those homeless and suffering because of the war. Europe’s hands are already full—therefore it is to America that Russia must turn in this time of her special and difficult need, which no amount of hard work and good intention at home—unaided and without equipment or organization—can suffice to meet.

Do not look too intently on what you may think are the faults in the Russian. The Russian people have played no small part in this war of the world: it is not beyond hoping that they will again bear an effective hand in it. But, however that may turn out, Russia stands for nearly two hundred millions of white people striving towards Democracy—the largest white population in the world guided by definite ideals of free and equal opportunity. It is the whirling planetary political mass from which a new government and a new Democracy are to be formed.

Surely, for every reason that concerns not only the general principals of humanity, but definitely the physical and moral welfare of the civilized world, Russia’s claims to the assistance of America can hardly be overstated. In Russia, facing, and already partly involved in, famines and epidemics of serious disease, the very health of the world is imperilled. For Russia herself the peril is still greater. Therefore I appeal to the American public to come forward with the help so sorely needed. I ask them to recognize the existence of famines due to small planting of crops in Russia by peasants who dared not risk their labor under the chaotic political conditions that prevail, and who, due to the almost total absence of implements, whether agricultural or otherwise, were therefore unable to cultivate or to draw adequately on their natural resources. I ask them to face the threatening facts which confront the whole Russian nation, and to make every effort they are able to make in the direction of warding off the impending perils, which are not merely Russian perils, but World Perils.²⁷

It is an open question whether a journal devoted to foreign trade was the appropriate pulpit from which to sermonize about a looming humanitarian disaster, but there were close links between profit and philanthropy. This was recognized by the designers and members of the Canadian economic mission.

Preparations for the economic commission continued in the fall. Martens met with Foster in September to discuss “quite fully with you and your colleagues the economic

²⁷Ibid., 5–7.

situation of Russia and Siberia.” A few days later Dennis requested Martens to supply, in the latter’s words, “a full resumé of the Siberian economic position and what should be done.” (The two were probably acquainted with each other from Dennis’s days with the recruiting mission in New York, a city where Martens spent some of his time.) Martens acceded to Dennis’s request, sending a long letter of recommendations about the proposed mission to Foster on 8 October.²⁸ Just also offered his own thoughts on the matter.²⁹ He even suggested that members of the expeditionary force could actively help the cause of Canadian-Siberian trade, implying in a memo to Foster that he thought Canadian officers and NCOs would be more valuable as economic observers of a promising new market than as soldiers.³⁰

Just was enthusiastic about Siberia, but other people realized that trade with the region would be hampered by the continued civil war and the troublesome social and economic situation which existed there. One way to get around this was to send relief. By this time the Canadian governor general had received a letter from the British colonial secretary concerning Allied plans to organize relief in Siberia. The letter suggested that much of the material from the empire might come from the dominions. Moved by the same spirit of enlightened self-interest that Martens hoped would inspire renewed economic activity in Russia, the colonial secretary reported that

The primary object of the measures contemplated is to secure the good-will and sympathy of the Siberian population by manifesting a practical interest in their welfare. At the same time, it is desirable, on various grounds that the operations of supply should so far as practicable, be

²⁸NAC, Foster fonds, vol. 70, file 73, letters from Martens to Foster, 4 Sept., 4 Oct., and 8 Oct. 1918.

²⁹Ibid., Just to Foster, 9 Oct. 1918. See this file for much more information Just sent Foster from August through October.

³⁰Ibid., Just, “Memorandum to Rt. Hon. George E. Foster,” 9 Oct. 1918.

self-supporting and not eleemosynary, except in cases where actual destitution exists. The information at present available does not indicate that there is any appreciable amount of destitution such as would require charitable relief, and it may therefore be found possible to carry on the work of supply more or less on commercial lines, subject to such restrictions as may be necessary to control prices, and to avoid any suspicion that the economic needs of Siberia are being exploited for private gain.³¹

The British did not think that “charitable relief” would be necessary on quite the same scale that Martens had earlier envisioned, perhaps because they were only concerned with Siberia and not the entire country. They still hoped that some measure of charity might win them favourable consideration in future lucrative contracts. When the Canadian government officially created its own economic commission for Siberia near the end of October, the potential importance of relief was remembered: “The Government of Canada, in common with the Mother Country and her Allies, wishes to do its share towards assisting the Siberian population in obtaining the necessary supplies along commercial lines, and where required in rendering relief in cases of destitution.”³² The members of the Canadian Economic Commission to Siberia (CEC[S]) eventually included financial expert A. D. Braithwaite, a former manager with the Royal Bank; Dennis; Just; Louis Kon, a Russian-speaking Canadian who acted as secretary; A. Ross Owen, the CPR’s agent at Vladivostok; and the young trade commissioner, Wilgress.

Businessmen and politicians were not the only ones who considered “relief”—a word which did not necessarily imply charity³³—important for the development of good

³¹Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, 1:209–210, W. H. Long to the Duke of Devonshire, 6 Sept. 1918.

³²This is from the order-in-council, P.C. 2596, 23 Oct. 1918, *ibid.*, 1:216. See also the order-in-council from two days previous, P.C. 2595. Both are reproduced in *ibid.*, 1:211–216. For more on the CEC(S), see Robert N. Murby, “Canadian Economic Commission to Siberia 1918–19,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 11, no. 3 (Fall 1969): 374–393.

³³Simply making needed goods available to places in postwar Europe where there were shortages, for example, was considered “relief.” On the contemporary understanding of this term, which included “straightforward business transactions,” see League of Nations, Economic, Financial and Transit

relations with Russia, whether or not they were also moved by humanitarian sympathy. In late August, before the public knew of plans for the CEC(S), the editors of the *Vancouver Daily Sun* called on the government to organize an “economic expedition” to Russia:

Business men and organization experts are being sent from other countries. Why should not Canada also do her share in this direction?

The benefits would accrue to Russia in the first instance and the expense would probably be a considerable item, but in the long run the investment would be well worth while.

It would introduce Canada to the Russians in the most acceptable manner. When her people have recovered from anarchy and revolution, she will be among the foremost of the world’s commercial and trading nations. As a future customer she is well worth cultivating. The memory of help given in her hour of need, would tend to create the kindly feeling that is at the base of economic intercourse.

Before the war, Russia was gradually getting into the habit of buying in this country. Their purchases in 1913 were slightly over \$2,000,000. A business with such a promising start deserves to be looked after.³⁴

“Relief” was also offered to Canadians as a rationale for the military expedition. When the *Toronto Globe* commented on the announcement of the organization of the military force, the importance of Canada taking part in the economic development of Siberia and establishing itself on the eastern coast of “the ocean of the future” was emphasized. But trade prospects and the desire to keep Germany from getting hold of Siberian resources were not the only reasons cited. “Relief of suffering,” claimed the paper, “is foremost in the aims of the allies.” More specifically,

Considerations of humanity, it is stated, press strongly for the sending of help to the Russians to enable them to re-establish stable conditions. The political and social chaos which has been fomented with the aid of the Germans has resulted in appalling [*sic*] distress and suffering. . . . There was also certain to be acute famine in the coming winter, and the number of probable deaths from starvation has been put by some observers at the awful figure of twenty millions.³⁵

Department, *Relief Deliveries and Relief Loans, 1919–1923* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1943), 8.

³⁴“Economic help to Russia,” editorial, *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 29 Aug. 1918, 2. On prewar and wartime Canadian-Russian trade relations, see Eva S. Balogh, “Hesitant Encounters: Episodes from Early Russo-Canadian Trade Relations,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 8 (1966): 216–230, and David Davies, “The Pre-1917 Roots of Canadian-Soviet Relations,” *Canadian Historical Review* 70, no. 2 (June 1989): 180–205. See also correspondence in NAC, Foster fonds, vol. 16, file 1394.

³⁵“Canadians for Siberia; special force authorized,” *Toronto Globe*, 12 Aug. 1918, 1, 5.

Couched in such terms, it would not have been unreasonable for Canadians to believe that humanitarian assistance would be an important component of Canadian involvement in civil war Siberia, even if the intentions were not entirely altruistic. Dennis certainly hoped so.

Dennis's Campaign for Civilian Relief

Of all the interested individuals in positions of real or potential influence in Canada, Dennis was probably the strongest supporter of Canadian aid to civilians in Siberia. His appointment as CRCS commissioner in early October came in the midst of preparations for the economic commission. Fresh from his time in New York, discussions with Martens, and most likely having paid close attention to what the newspapers were writing about the Allied military expeditions, he wasted little time trying to get the members of the CRCS governing bodies on side with his ideas. At first, Dennis met with some success. In early November he cabled Marshall, the chairman of the Red Cross in Toronto, asking for \$5,000 to purchase goods for civilian relief, "principally warm clothing for women and children, and boots." This was approved; Marshall wired the amount to Vancouver for Dennis to spend.³⁶

Dennis, Matron Potter, and the other members of the Vladivostok Red Cross team had arrived in Vancouver by this time. Once there, they quickly contacted local Red Cross officials about Siberian civil relief. Dennis "made it very emphatic that the civilian population in Siberia must receive attention, together with about 5,000 [Canadian] soldiers and some American soldiers." Potter lent her support to the idea. According to

³⁶CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:156, Dennis to Marshall, 4 Nov. 1918, and B. S. MacInnes to Dennis, no date, quoted in the minutes of the EC meeting, 12 Nov. 1918.

the report of the meeting in the *Vancouver Daily Sun*, “She also urges that assistance be given to the women and children in Russia, and for that purpose has left with the superintendent many patterns of clothing suitable for that country.” The \$5,000 authorized by Marshall was spent in Vancouver: “Many hours were spent yesterday by Mrs. Potter in the wholesale district, where she purchased several thousand dollars’ worth of underwear for the unfortunate individuals in the land where she will start her new duties. Her requisition list also included sew-hooks, clocks, oil-cloth, wool needles, etc.” Matron Potter knew that the work ahead of her in Siberia, whether strictly military or involving civilian relief, would be difficult, but “she feels confident that the women of Western Canada, who are looked to for the supply of materials, will not fall in their support of this great work, when they have so nobly answered all other calls to duty.”³⁷ Later that month members of the Vancouver Red Cross “warmly endorsed” Dennis’s proposal that their branch undertake civilian relief for Siberia.³⁸

Vancouver was as good a place as any in Canada from which to campaign for civilian relief for Siberian residents: The city’s Red Cross branch would play a large role in the shipment of military “comforts” and medical supplies to Siberia and, relative to other Canadian towns, the Far East received a great deal of attention in the city.³⁹ Unsurprisingly for a city in the midst of expanding its port facilities and hoping to increase its share of North America’s trade with the Far East, the recently formed CEC(S) garnered favourable press coverage there. The commission was viewed as a positive

³⁷“Vancouver women urged to help civilians in Siberia,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 6 Nov. 1918, 4.

³⁸“Aid is sought to Siberian civilians,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 21 Nov. 1918, 3.

³⁹If press coverage is any indication, Japan and, to a lesser extent, China were on the minds of many in Vancouver, especially with reference to current and future trade relations.

development by the *Daily Sun*, as “there will soon be a vast business to be done [in Russia] as soon as conditions become more settled.” The paper’s editors joined other groups in calling on the government to appoint a British Columbian to the body to represent provincial interests.⁴⁰ If there was any doubt about the wisdom of sending an economic commission to a region in the midst of a bloody civil war, Just, then acting chairman of the commission, attempted to put it to rest. He spoke at a meeting of the Board of Trade, where he displayed his usual optimism about eastern Siberia, “Canada’s natural trade field.” Just argued that important economic gains awaited Vancouver, and the rest of Canada, and that trade would take off “as soon as tonnage is available.”⁴¹

While preparations for the economic commission were underway and regular shipments of Red Cross military supplies began, Dennis’s campaign for civilian relief continued. The colonel must have been buoyed by his success in securing \$5,000 from Marshall and had every reason to believe that more would be forthcoming. He urged the CRCS to commit to a greater program of civilian relief in Siberia. In mid-November Dennis pressed the society on this issue and recommended that a further \$25,000 be authorized to purchase food and clothing for immediate shipment to Siberia. The CRCS councillors were concerned that the society keep within the bounds of its limited wartime charter:

⁴⁰“Seek trade with Siberia,” editorial, *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 24 Oct. 1918, 6; “Urges B. C. mining man be put on Commission,” *ibid.*, 25 Oct. 1918, 1; “Appointment urged of B. C. mining man on Siberian Commission,” *ibid.*, 7 Nov. 1918, 14. See also NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, file 22804, letter to T. A. Crerar, 22 Nov. 1918, regarding the appointment of a member of the British Columbia Fruit Growers’ Association to the commission. A mining representative (C. J. Curtin) was attached for a time, but the government reconsidered his appointment and he never made it to Siberia. See documents in *ibid.*, files 21916 and 22804, on this and on the inability to appoint a representative from the manufacturing sector.

⁴¹“City should get large trade with eastern Siberia,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 29 Nov. 1918, 6.

It was felt that the Society should be very careful about committing itself in the matter of civilian relief in Siberia, the work would be practically unlimited in extent. The destitution and suffering was really the result of civilian revolution, and not the direct consequences of the war, and that, therefore, it could not be considered strictly refugee work. That if, as was possible, any political considerations underlay the question of civil relief, it was a matter for the Governments concerned, and was quite outside the work of the Society. The Council was of the opinion that the Siberian Commissioner should be instructed that he was not at liberty to commit the Society to any large expenditure in this direction⁴²

Marshall informed Dennis a few days later that he would not get any more money from the society for civilian relief “until you have been able to investigate conditions on the ground, and advise the necessity.”⁴³ But Dennis would not arrive in Vladivostok until February. Marshall’s words were not encouraging.

Despite this setback, Dennis was not prepared to give up his campaign: He wrote three more letters to the CRCS in December on the subject of civilian relief.⁴⁴ Fortunately for the commissioner, whether the CRCS shipped goods intended to relieve civilians was not entirely dependent on the opinions of perhaps reluctant Toronto officials. The Alberta branch of the CRCS supplied just over \$300 worth of clothing for Russians in Siberia;⁴⁵ Vancouver businessmen donated \$10,000 worth of biscuits and hydrated potatoes for civilians;⁴⁶ and in early January Captain Laycock reported that he had shipped baby clothes, boots, shoes, and other goods “to help out in some measure the distress among the fifteen million refugees in Siberia that are without clothing or food.”⁴⁷ These goods

⁴²CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:192, the minutes of the CC meeting, 26 Nov. 1918. Dennis’s letter, dated 17 Nov. 1918, was only mentioned.

⁴³Ibid., 4:168–169, Marshall to Dennis, 30 Nov. 1918, quoted in the minutes of the EC meeting, 10 Dec. 1918.

⁴⁴These, dated 2, 7, and 12 Dec., are mentioned in *ibid.*, 4:199, the minutes of the EC meeting, 30 Dec. 1918. The minutes did not indicate any specifics about the letters’ contents.

⁴⁵CRCS, *Annual Report 1918*, 89.

⁴⁶“Siberian shipment,” *Toronto Globe*, 7 Jan. 1919, 4; “Red Cross shipments to Siberian contingent,” *Toronto Globe*, 24 Dec. 1918, 4. The foodstuffs were duly sent to Siberia in December.

⁴⁷“Cases by thousand sent to Siberia,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 8 Jan. 1919, 12. This article also mentioned that “540 cases of rye biscuits baked by Ramsay Bros. and the National Biscuit Co. from flour donated by wholesalers of the city” were shipped, and it seems likely these were the biscuits sent to

would do little to help Siberian residents, but they were at least a start. Dennis continued his efforts on their behalf.

If those in charge of the Red Cross national office were unwilling, for the moment at least, to take on any major program of civilian relief in Siberia, there were other avenues Dennis could explore. He was, after all, the senior member of the CEC(S) and a well-respected military and civilian official. From their base in Vancouver Dennis, Just, and Kon prepared a preliminary report on the work of the CEC(S) on 9 December. Parts of it echoed Martens's earlier warning of mass suffering in the coming year:

The British, Canadian and American Red Cross organizations have already made arrangements to undertake civilian relief in Siberia. That the need is great is confirmed by all reliable reports at hand, and it is certain that unless large quantities of food and clothing are forwarded at once, serious suffering and starvation will be experienced during 1919. It will not be possible for the Red Cross organizations, through voluntary contributions, to meet this necessity in any large way, and your commissioners urge that the Canadian Government provide and ship at once a quantity of food and clothing to be distributed through the Canadian Red Cross, being of opinion that this action will have the effect of laying a strong foundation upon which to develop Canadian trade later on.

The commissioners recommended that the government immediately spend at least \$100,000 to buy "boots, food and clothing, and that these goods be shipped, consigned to the Canadian Red Cross Commissioner at Vladivostok, to be distributed through that organization in supplementing the voluntary contributions for the relief of the existing needs for food and clothing."⁴⁸ It seems unlikely that Dennis and the others would have recommended a course of action that they believed the government would reject: They must have believed what they proposed was indeed feasible. If so, they would be bitterly disappointed. Later that month, similar comments that stressed the importance of CRCS

refugees.

⁴⁸CEC(S), *Report of the Canadian Economic Commission (Siberia)*, Supplement to Weekly Bulletin of the Department of Trade and Commerce (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1919), 54. The original report is in NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, file 21916.

work as a counter to American generosity appeared in a newspaper article. Dennis may have been the source:

The Americans have, it is stated, set aside one million dollars for civilian relief through the Red Cross in Vladivostok and it is pointed out that Canada should not be behind in this respect. At the present time the Canadian Red Cross, while looking after the military end of the work, has not been able to take care of the civilian relief with the result that the people of Siberia turn to the Americans. This, it is pointed out, will be a big factor in the future trade relations with Siberia who [*sic*], unless some steps are taken by Canada, will likely favor the United States.⁴⁹

As 1918 turned into 1919, Dennis keyed up his public campaign to secure needed goods for Siberian civilians from the residents of British Columbia. Judging from his days as a top official in the British-Canadian Recruiting Mission, “Calgary Jack” was accustomed to delivering forceful and impassioned pleas in front of large audiences. A few months earlier he had urged Americans in “all the leading centres of the Eastern and Middle States” to sign up for wartime service, “speaking to audiences in the largest auditoriums the cities afforded.”⁵⁰ In just one month a year earlier Dennis had “travelled by rail nearly five thousand miles, marched three hundred miles on foot, visited thirty-two places, and made sixty-seven speeches.” His words apparently had a great deal of persuasive power: After one speech in Providence, Rhode Island, for example, seventy-six men asked to join the Canadian army.⁵¹ Now that the war was over, Dennis implored the women who had worked so hard for the Red Cross and other auxiliaries to devote some of their energies to help women and children suffering in Siberia.

A few days before he left for Vladivostok, Dennis was the “chief speaker at [a]

⁴⁹“Three thousand troops, 25,000 tons of supplies forwarded to Siberia,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 24 Dec. 1918, 2

⁵⁰“British Canadian recruiting campaign as it is conducted in the United States,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 15 Sept. 1918, 11.

⁵¹Untitled synopsis of Dennis’s career, dated 3 Dec. 1923, in NAC, Engineering Institute of Canada fonds, Membership Files, vol. 68, J. S. Dennis file.

mass meeting” in Vancouver that officially opened a major Red Cross drive.⁵² In his address, according to a newspaper report of the event, Dennis made it clear that even though soldiers had laid down their arms, Red Cross work was far from done. As an example of the need for CRCS work which still existed, Dennis spoke specifically of Canada’s place in Siberian relief, seizing the opportunity to promote his favourite cause. His words directly countered the (for him) frustrating legalistic arguments of Red Cross headquarters, and played on Canadians’ sense of duty and imperial pride. He also hoped that his countrymen and -women would feel shamed into action by the generosity of their southern neighbours:

Civilian Relief Work.

Having made relaxation of war-disciplined effort seemed [*sic*] out of place, Col. Dennis gave facts to show that the Red Cross work of civilian relief, aside from its many military duties, was more than it could hope to cope with fully. It would nevertheless be un-British and “un-Canadian” not to do at least its bit. He built his argument from the ground up, going back to the Geneva convention to show that the Red Cross had the right to give besides military relief, civilian relief made necessary as a direct result of war. At present, however, the French, American and Italian Red Cross and the Red Cross societies in the British Empire were the only ones in a position to undertake relief of war sufferers on a large scale. The American Red Cross had been very aggressive in this line of action and appropriated \$8,458,000 this year for ambulance work, relief of civilians and war prisoners, etc., in Siberia and Russia.

Drastic Needs of Siberia.

It was to Canada’s Red Cross work to Siberia and Russia that he specially referred. It was fully justified in his eyes, firstly, by the desperate need for it, and secondly, by the fact that Canada would be a laughing stock and in a very poor position in Russian eyes if it refused to help any but its own soldiers while the American Red Cross beside it was spending millions upon helping the starving legions of women and children as well as men.

Owe Debt to Russia.

If it came to a question of obligation, Col. Dennis said that Canada and all the Allies owed a debt to Russia. In the opinion of military chiefs the Great War would have been lost had not Russia’s first two immense drives, made but with scantily equipped armies prevented Germany from concentrating all her fury on the Western front. He briefly outlined what supplies and staff had already been sent to Russia, and asked for the support of B. C. Red Cross workers in giving money and work to save at least some of the many million people in imminent danger of starvation. Red Cross work would have gone to pieces long ago, he said, if it were not for the women and they were being asked to still carry it on.⁵³

⁵²“Former boss of Trotsky to open Red Cross drive,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 6 Jan. 1919, 12.

⁵³“Over 40,000 wounded Canadians under care of Red Cross society,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 8 Jan. 1919, 2.

The next day, 7 January, Dennis took his “earnest appeal” to New Westminster, a town just east of Vancouver. Addressing a public meeting organized by the local Red Cross branch, he stressed, according to a report of the event, that Red Cross work

would be far greater in Canada during the coming year than it was in any of the four years of the war.

The work that was most needed was the providing of wearing apparel for the women and children of Siberia, who were freezing for want of something to wear. Many of the women have nothing to put on, he said, except the one fur coat that goes with the family as an heirloom.

The speaker went on to state that already the Red Cross had accomplished a remarkable work in giving help to Siberia, no less than 4,000 cases of goods having been shipped that was supplied by voluntary aid. Then, in addition, some \$5,000 worth of supplies had been purchased from the Vancouver merchants. Another shipment was due to leave on Friday. . . .

He asked that the ladies do all in their power so that the Canadian Red Cross society would be able to leave a good impression upon the people of Siberia for its work.⁵⁴

That same day Dennis was given final clearance to depart for the Far East. He sailed aboard the SS *Madras* on the tenth of January, and arrived in Vladivostok early the next month.⁵⁵

Siberia, of course, was not unique in 1919 as a site of civilian and refugee suffering. The Great War—the first “total war”—had caused unheard of hardships for residents of Europe and other places where there had been fighting. The United States, with Herbert Hoover as the key figure, took the lead in both economic and social reconstruction of Europe as world leaders and would-be statesmen gathered in Paris to champion their causes. For his own reasons, Dennis was especially interested in helping Siberians get back on their feet; few others were so committed. Despite President Wilson’s conviction that the only way to stop the spread of Bolshevism was with food aid, very little humanitarian assistance was given White Siberia by the American

⁵⁴“Col. Dennis pleads for Red Cross,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 8 Jan. 1919, 11.

⁵⁵NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 363, file 121, Gwatkin to Dennis, 7 Jan. 1919; NAC, Dennis’s WWI personnel file.

government. As Dennis noted, the American Red Cross did put aside a relatively large amount for Siberian relief. Even so, military medical work took priority over refugee relief.⁵⁶ For the war's victors, the project of rebuilding Europe took priority over the delivery of aid to far-away Russians fighting amongst themselves.

This same attitude, that the fate of Russia should be left to the Russians, was partly responsible for the increasingly bad press that the Canadian military venture in Siberia received after the armistice. During the war the public had accepted the plans to send Canadian boys to Russia, but as the new year dawned and the peace conference began, the government was under more and more pressure to clarify why the force was still being deployed. Many people, including politicians, editorialists, labour groups—and a few of the soldiers who were headed to Siberia—loudly questioned the wisdom of the force. Some Canadians demanded the immediate return of the troops, while those more loyal to the government asked for enlightenment as to Canadian (and Allied) policy in the far-flung region now that the war was over.⁵⁷ It had been Borden who, in December 1918, had first proposed that the Allies attempt to mediate in the Russian conflict by inviting delegates from the various sides to Prinkipo, a small island in the Sea of Marmara. When this plan had been quickly accepted as Allied policy,⁵⁸ it made the Canadian military presence in Siberia and northern Russia awkward, to say the least.

⁵⁶T. J. Edmonds, "The Red Cross amid Revolution in Siberia," *Survey*, 3 July 1920, 486.

⁵⁷For contemporary comments on Canadian disapproval of the Siberian military venture, see Gordon Grey, "Canada and the Siberian Expedition," *Nation*, 1 Feb. 1919, 162–163. There is also a discussion of this issue in Mary Ann Van Meenen, "The Canadian Intervention in Siberia, 1918–1919" (MA thesis, Dalhousie University, 1989), 55–85.

⁵⁸Robert Bothwell, "Borden and the Bolsheviks," 32–34; Smith, "Canada and the Siberian Intervention," 875–876. The Canadian public also knew of the proposal: "Allies offer Borden's idea," *Toronto Globe*, 25 Jan. 1919, 1, 4.

There was never any well-thought-out Canadian policy in Siberia, but Canadian soldiers stationed in Vladivostok were involved in no military action against the Red Army or armed partisans, though they once went in search of Bolsheviks and found none.⁵⁹

If clarity of purpose was a virtue lacked by the Canadian government when it came to Canada's military goals in Siberia or the political manoeuvring in Europe vis-à-vis the Bolshevik regime, the CEC(S) had other problems. Dennis and his colleagues believed that humanitarian assistance would help secure the Siberian market for Canadians. Unfortunately, this idea, like many others, received little support from officials in Ottawa. On 11 February, a week after his arrival in Vladivostok and clearly up to speed on the social situation in Siberia, Dennis cabled the Department of Trade and Commerce, urging quick action:

DISTRESS AND TYPHUS AMONG RETURNING RUSSIAN PRISONERS AND REFUGEES SIBERIA SERIOUSLY INCREASING HIGHLY IMPORTANT CANADA IDENTIFIED WITH RELIEF MEASURES COMMISSION URGE IMPLEMENTING FORTHWITH THEIR PROPOSALS THIS REGARD SUBSTITUTING SUMMER FOR WINTERPAR [sic] CONTAINED REPORT DECEMBER NINTH CANCEL FOOD LIST STOP DESIRABLE ARTICLES SUPPLIED STAMPED CANADA IN RUSSIAN THUS ADVERTISING CANADA AND ASSISTING OUR FUTURE TRADE WITH SIBERIA.⁶⁰

The department's deputy minister passed on this cable to Acting Minister Alexander Kenneth Maclean,⁶¹ who was in charge of the department while Foster was in Europe. Maclean then wrote to the CRCS requesting that the society appropriate some of its funds

⁵⁹In April a company of CEF(S) men went up as part of an inter-Allied force to root out Bolshevik partisans in a mining district east of Vladivostok. When they arrived, according to one young soldier, "there was one old man and a couple of women there." They came home having seen no sign of the enemy. NAC, Steele fonds, Steele to Libby, 23 Apr. 1919. More details about the would-be campaign are given in Nielsen, "Combating the Cold in Siberia," 60, 65. See also Beattie, "Canadian Intervention in Russia," 317–318.

⁶⁰NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, file 21916, Dennis to Comagent, 11 Feb. 1919.

⁶¹Ibid., O'Hara to A. K. Maclean, 13 Feb. 1919.

for relief work among returning Russian prisoners and refugees.⁶² The CRCS councillors once again hid behind their charter and refused to lend their financial support to the scheme. Their reluctance may well have come out of a genuine desire not to cross the legal line, but it did nothing to advance Dennis's cause. According to the minutes of the Central Council meeting, the councillors did "not feel that they are at liberty to acquiesce in the proposal made by Hon. A. K. Maclean, as it is beyond the Constitutional powers of the Society to make a grant in question."⁶³ Marshall explained to Maclean that the society had already given considerable sums for Siberian relief: They had just voted on giving \$20,000 for an anti-typhus train and had agreed to spend several thousand dollars on "a very large quantity of drugs to be forwarded by express."⁶⁴ And there were, of course, many other worthy causes that the society was being called upon to support.

In his first CEC(S) report from Vladivostok, Dennis again emphasized the importance of relief. He drew his minister's attention to his earlier cable and explained how quick action would create a "splendid sentiment" toward the Canadian government on the part of Siberians. He noted that the commissioners "feel very strongly that no better investment could at the present time be made which would yield a greater return after normal conditions are established in an active demand for Canadian goods."⁶⁵ When Dennis cabled the trade department in early March asking what decision had been reached on his February cable, he was told the following: "Relief matters for Siberia

⁶²Ibid., Maclean to Marshall, 19 Feb. 1919. See also comments in CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:247, minutes of the CC meeting on 25 Feb. 1919.

⁶³CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:247-248, minutes of the CC meeting, 25 Feb. 1919.

⁶⁴NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, file 22804, Marshall to McLean [*sic*], 3 Mar. 1919.

⁶⁵Ibid., Dennis to Foster, 20 Feb. 1919.

being dealt with by Canadian Red Cross Society.”⁶⁶ Maybe so, but Dennis knew CRCS pockets were not lined with money for Siberian civil relief. No money was ever forthcoming from the government. The most probable reason was that on the same day Dennis composed his February report, an order-in-council was passed which significantly altered the government’s arrangements for promoting trade with Siberia.

The government’s inaction on this one important suggestion was the least of the commission’s problems. The CEC(S) had been originally formed to study the possibilities for Canadian trade with Siberia and make policy recommendations to the government. Once the CEC(S) got on the ground in Siberia, and the commissioners began to investigate matters there for themselves, they soon realized that although Canadian-Siberian trade held vast opportunities, conditions in Russia made any immediate concrete steps impossible. Dennis and the other commissioners quickly discovered that transportation and financial problems, and well as other challenges, meant that little could be done to move along economic ties between the two countries.⁶⁷ The last straw for the commissioners was when they heard that their government had signed a contract with the Siberian Supply Company, a semi-official British agency which was now to handle all Canadian shipments to Siberia. The government, unbeknownst to its representatives in Siberia, had made the arrangements with the Siberian Supply Company less than two weeks after Dennis’s arrival in Vladivostok.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Ibid., Dennis to Comagent, 6 Mar. 1919, and O’Hara/Comagent to Dennis, 11 Mar. 1919. Comagent was the cable address of the Commercial Intelligence Branch of the trade department.

⁶⁷CEC(S), *Report*, passim.

⁶⁸See the order-in-council, P.C. 344, 20 Feb. 1919, reproduced in Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 3, 1919–1925 (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1970), 65.

Wilgress wrote to his superiors in Ottawa several times about the company, arguing each time that the British arrangement was viewed with suspicion and disapproval by foreigners and Russians alike in Vladivostok. After news of the contract with the Canadian government reached the commissioners, Dennis made clear his strenuous objections. Later, in a calmer mood, Dennis explained to the trade department that “a careful consideration of the situation has led to the conclusion that there is nothing to be gained by the Commission continuing its activities here.”⁶⁹ By mid-March, the CEC(S) had closed up its work in Vladivostok.⁷⁰ Though the commissioners were disappointed by their government’s decision and were cognizant of the barriers to trade which existed, Siberia was still a place of great interest (and promise) for them, and they looked forward to a day—not far in the future—when their work would resume.⁷¹ In the meantime, the Canadian trade commissioner, Dana Wilgress, remained in Vladivostok, where he could continue to look after the interests of Canadian-Siberian trade and keep watch over the Siberian Supply Company.

Refugees and POWs in Siberia

Dennis’s pleas may have amounted to little, but he was not telling tall tales when he told Canadian audiences or cabled superiors about social realities in Siberia. Even in Vladivostok, where Allied military control might have potentially meant better

⁶⁹NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, file 22804, Dennis to Foster, 11 Mar. 1919. See also other documents in this and file 21916, and comments in Wilgress, *Memoirs*, 55, and CEC(S), *Report*, 17–18.

⁷⁰Playfair, “Hundred million market for Canadian and British goods lying open in needy Siberia,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 15 Mar. 1919, 1.

⁷¹See the general report written by Dennis and Louis Kon in CEC(S), *Report*, 9–10, 13. This is also the impression one is left with after reading Kon’s “Report on Political situation in Russia and Siberia,” preserved in NAC, Foster fonds, vol. 26, file 4081. There is no date indicated on the latter, but it must have been written about June 1919.

conditions for the civilian and refugee population, life was filled with horror for many residents. The coming of winter forced refugees into increasingly crowded and unsanitary quarters where the outbreak and rapid spread of typhus was only a matter of time. The desperate situation of the refugee population in Vladivostok was clear to anyone who spent time in the city; Canadian soldiers were no exception. Though neither the CRCS mission nor the CEF(S) had an official role in caring for local civilians, individual units and men made some efforts to help out those living around them. Leftover food from CEF(S) messes, for example, was given to refugee children on a daily basis, and Canadians provided clothing and medical assistance to “hundreds of destitute refugees.”⁷² Arthur James Smith, the former CRCS secretary in Vladivostok, explained the city’s “tragedy” to Canadian readers after his return from the Far East:

With women and children living in freight cars for miles along the track, and the railway station full of families who have lost everything and are reduced to sleeping on stone floors in the bitter Siberian nights, or even in the doorways of the buildings, it is not possible to find the atmosphere necessary to unalloyed enjoyment. The knowledge that all around one there is suffering and hardship and starvation, and that disease brought on solely by the existing conditions is making headway in every part of the city, detracts from any entertainment. And yet it seems so difficult to do anything, for Vladivostok is a city with a normal population of about fifty thousand, suddenly forced to add at least two hundred thousand to its numbers, and that without any accommodation, and most of the refugees seem to be women and children. There are no spare buildings or houses of any kind, hence the commandeering of the freight cars by these poor fugitives from the miseries of the interior. The very basements of the buildings hold refugees by the thousand, and the good offices of the American Red Cross in relief work can only help out a fraction of the sufferers. Perhaps the greatest demand is for clothing and after that for shelter.⁷³

The helplessness that Smith apparently felt may have been a common feeling among those who witnessed the enormity of the suffering and found themselves unable to contribute in any significant way to the amelioration of conditions. Even so, at least one

⁷²MacLaren, *Canadians in Russia*, 198; Nielsen, “Combating the Cold in Siberia,” 58.

⁷³Arthur James Smith, “Vladivostok has its amusements also a vast refugee problem,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 6 Apr. 1919, 33.

Canadian officer did go beyond the call of duty to help out Russian refugees. Captain Ardagh was immediately taken aback by civilian life in Vladivostok after his arrival in mid-January. He decided to do something about it, as the following light-hearted diary entry shows:

About 11 o'clock this am I heard about the condition of the refugees at the station. I knew the Chief Steward had a lot of extra bread, so I got busy! The Ship's Skipper said he would let me have it so I got a fatigue party & got 2000 loaves on to the wharf. The next proposition was to get it to the station. The "A. D. of S & T." could not keep me out. I happened to see a Red Cross motor ambulance & commandeered it. So I got a sergt & 2 men & up we went, 2 other officers coming up to see the fun. It was about a ten minutes run. When I arrived at the station I wondered how I should "carry on". I went inside & finally located an interpreter.

He suggested that he should make the announcement to the "3rd Class crowd". So I followed him through various corridors which were all crowded with a most cosmopolitan "bunch" I ever saw, both male & female, old & young. We finally arrived at a large waiting room. The smell was not pleasant, or should I say odor?!

He (the interpreter) mounted on a chair & I then blew my whistle & the way everyone "gaped" at me was funny. He then announced that 'Canadian officers were giving bread free in front of the station'. I then hustled out with him. The next 10 minutes was a funny sight. My men were throwing out these loaves to the crowd, some who ate them ravenously, others hustling back into the station. I managed to get through the crowd to the motor & get a few loaves which I hauled to women.⁷⁴

Like many Canadian soldiers, Ardagh spent most of his time with the CEF(S) living in barracks several miles from the centre of "Vladi,"⁷⁵ and thus did not see as much suffering as those who lived in town, or who went there regularly for work. In March Ardagh once again found himself at the train station, awaiting departure for Omsk on guard duty for the British Military Mission, and he was again struck by what he saw. "The refugees [in Vladivostok] are lying around everywhere," he wrote sadly, "& some of the sights are really pitiful. One can see that the poor little children are famished."⁷⁶

⁷⁴NAC, Ardagh fonds, diary 1, entry for 16 Jan. 1919.

⁷⁵Most Canadians were quartered several miles from town, requiring lengthy treks to get to and from Vladivostok, in Gornostai Bay (variously spelled; home to the two infantry battalions) and Second River. Closer to the centre of things were East Barracks, Egerscheldt (variously spelled; the Ordnance Depot at the docks), the No. 5 Officers' Quarters (also known as the Naval Barracks), West Barracks, and other places in and around Vladivostok.

⁷⁶NAC, Ardagh fonds, diary 2, entry for 23 Mar. 1919.

Other Canadian officers were also struck by how so many Russians were forced to live. A young Raymond Massey, then a lieutenant with the CEF(S) charged with entertaining his fellow soldiers in Vladivostok, remembered the “appalling” living conditions of the “derelicts crowded into the town and its vicinity.” They were “penniless . . . victims of the Bolshevik terror.”⁷⁷ Another Canadian lieutenant, Stuart Ramsay Tompkins, felt a deep sympathy for the plight of Russians he encountered. Unlike many members of the CEF(S), Tompkins’s duties often took him into Vladivostok.⁷⁸ In a letter written on 1 February, Tompkins urged his wife in Canada to make arrangements for civilian relief:

Before I close I want to say something about things here. I can’t say much [because of military censorship⁷⁹] but there is undoubtedly the greatest distress, especially up country. If you can do anything by your influence or by getting Red Cross work organized and getting things sent over here, not to the troops as much as civilians, you will be helping a whole lot. I feel very seriously about the thing and do what you can, dearest.⁸⁰

A few days later he despaired, “I was in town yesterday and the sights we saw were indescribable. If only the people of the Western world knew of it—that it was up to them to do something in the name of humanity.”⁸¹ He considered remaining in Siberia with a fellow officer should the CEF(S) withdraw to “try for relief work. Heaven knows it is needed.”⁸² That he seriously considered such a move was telling, especially because Tompkins felt guilty about being away from his wife for so long. Tompkins’s experiences in Siberia had a profound impact on him: He later completed a PhD in

⁷⁷Raymond Massey, *When I Was Young* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), 205.

⁷⁸In early Feb. 1919, Tompkins was made mess secretary, which meant he took trips into the city to buy food and drink for the officers. Tompkins, *Canadian’s Road to Russia*, 388.

⁷⁹The CEF(S) censored outgoing mail and press reports until later in February.

⁸⁰Tompkins, *Canadian’s Road to Russia*, 386, S. R. Tompkins to E. Tompkins, 1 Feb. 1919.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 392, S. R. Tompkins to E. Tompkins, 6 Feb. 1919.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 395, S. R. Tompkins to E. Tompkins, 8 Feb. 1919.

Russian history at the University of Chicago and became a pioneer scholar in a then still-young field.

From Tompkins's point of view, life in Vladivostok was deplorable for all too many Russians. In the minds of Russians fleeing Bolshevik rule to the West, on the other hand, Vladivostok was an important destination of choice: The Allied presence was probably seen as a guarantee of safety and some measure of social assistance. Thousands of refugees travelled the Trans-Siberian and its secondary line through Manchuria, the Chinese Eastern Railway, determined to reach the far eastern port city. This was also true of Omsk, the western Siberian capital of Kolchak's supposedly "All-Russian" government. Though he never went into the Siberian interior himself, Tompkins knew that it was there that much worse civilian suffering could be found. Western visitors were amazed by the seemingly constant stream of freight cars carrying destitute refugees eastward, and by the conditions in which so many people lived in and around the major centres. When he went "up the line" for the British that spring, Ardagh was shocked by the pitiable condition of refugees travelling eastward in crowded boxcars, and he saw thousands of them trying to eke out an existence in Omsk.⁸³ Indeed, some reports put Omsk's population at between 800,000 and 1,000,000 people in the spring of 1919, several times the city's prewar population of 120,000.⁸⁴

Unlike Ardagh or Tompkins, not all Canadians were singularly moved to pity when they encountered Russian refugees. After all, starvation, disease, social dislocation,

⁸³NAC, Ardagh fonds, diaries 2 and 3, entries for 2 Apr. and 4 May 1919.

⁸⁴BMO Corporate Archives, Braithwaite papers, Braithwaite, "Report of Visit to Siberia," 18. Lengthy extracts from this report are reproduced and discussed in William Rodney, "Siberia in 1919: A Canadian Banker's Impressions," *Queen's Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (Fall 1972): 324–335.

and general misery were nothing extraordinary in immediate postwar Europe, nor was life in Canada at this time always wonderful. Colonel John Weightman Warden, then working for the British, noted in his diary that spring that Kolchak's capital, "the dirtiest Russian Town I have yet been in," was home to three hundred thousand refugees and "Pasants." He complained bitterly, and at length, about the incompetence of Knox and the BMM, but Warden had little comment on the Russians around him. He had the following to say about Omsk: "I have been walking all over the town & there is nothing of interest here, only Refugees everywhere of the Poorest type." One gets the sense that the description "Poorest type" was not a reference to the state of the Russians' bank accounts.⁸⁵ After two and one-half weeks spent travelling through Manchuria and Siberia, Sergeant Coleman was used to witnessing human suffering. "Of course," he noted matter-of-factly in his diary at the end of March, "Omsk is filled with refugees, thousands of whom, I believe, live in 'dug-outs' as houses are unobtainable."⁸⁶

Dennis was rather more sympathetic to the plight of civilian refugees and prisoners of war in Siberia. Though he arrived in Vladivostok with some foreknowledge of the social conditions he would find in the region, the colonel was likely unaware of the extent of suffering endured by former POWs stranded throughout Siberia. The situation of these unfortunate victims of circumstance, most of whom had been in Russia since the early years of the war, was one of the realities which gave Siberia at this time a unique quality of misery. The Russian revolutions and the Russian withdrawal from the First

⁸⁵These quotes are from NAC, Warden fonds, diary, entries for 28 Apr., and 2–4 May 1919. Warden later spelled his middle name "Wightman."

⁸⁶[Coleman,] "In the Footsteps of Robinson Crusoe," 10.

World War had left hundreds of thousands of POWs from the Central Powers—most of whom were from the Austro-Hungarian Empire—marooned in various parts of the former Russian Empire. During Russia’s belligerency they were protected by international agreements and assisted by representatives of neutral Red Cross societies. The Bolshevik coup in Petrograd in October 1917 and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk brought a change of status to “free citizens” and repatriation for some, but living conditions for those men left behind quickly worsened. After the Czecho-Slovaks’ revolt, POWs who found themselves outside Soviet Russia lost any chance of returning home for the time being. Not only this, but the legionnaires’ hostility toward them meant they were once again confined to prison camps, camps that Russian authorities were increasingly unable to maintain.⁸⁷ Red Cross workers from several countries and the Japanese and American militaries provided some assistance, but the POWs had few interested in their well-being or repatriation. To make matters worse, the new republics formed in their homelands in the fall of 1918 had little interest in their welfare: They were concerned the men would return home infected by Bolshevism.⁸⁸ It would be some time before the prisoners would have an advocate of sufficient stature and persuasive ability to implore the Allied leaders to undertake the tremendous task of their repatriation and look after their well-being in the meantime.

All this would have been unknown to the Canadians who arrived with the advance

⁸⁷See discussion of this in Elsa Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia and Siberia*, trans. C. Mabel Rickmers (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1929), 234–261.

⁸⁸There were also other things that delayed the repatriation. See Gerald H. Davis, “The Life of Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–1921,” in *Essays on World War I: Origins and Prisoners of War*, ed. Samuel Williamson and Peter Pastor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 186–188.

party of the CEF(S) in late October 1918. As in the case of Russian refugees occupying barracks newly appropriated for the CEF(S), Canadian soldiers came face to face with the privations of POW life in Vladivostok soon after their arrival in Siberia. Throughout the time of its stay in Siberia, the force employed POWs, and many soldiers lived near them in their barracks. One Canadian officer wrote to the base commandant in early November asking if there was anything the force could do to see to it that prisoners living alongside Canadian troops were given proper supplies: "Many of the prisoners at East Barracks are in a deplorable condition owing to the lack of decent clothing, and in some instances have been reduced to a mere bundle of rags. Shoes and mitts are also badly needed. If anything could be done to relieve the present situation, it would be much appreciated, please."⁸⁹ It is likely that at least some action was taken on an ongoing basis to assist these men. In late January the CRCS was asked to provide clothing for "about 80 prisoners of war at Gornostai Bay Barracks in a destitute condition."⁹⁰ Lieutenant Munro issued seventy-two pairs of socks to POWs out of his first allocation of Red Cross supplies.⁹¹

Some Canadian soldiers were clearly aware of the situation of POWs in Vladivostok, but what of the Canadian Red Cross representatives? A week after the arrival of the first CRCS staffers in Siberia, a talk was given in Vladivostok by a Swedish Red Cross official. Whether Holme, Smith, or Matron Potter were in the audience is

⁸⁹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 365, file B.H. 9-1, OC Base Depot to A. H. H. Powell, 5 Nov. 1918.

⁹⁰Ibid., vol. 368, file B.H. 38-1, A. H. H. Powell to CRCS, Vladivostok, 26 Jan. 1919. See also *ibid.*, Young to Powell, 9 Feb. 1919, and Powell to Young, 10 Feb. 1919. This file contains other correspondence regarding the clothing needs of POWs, late Jan.–Feb. 1919.

⁹¹Ibid., vol. 375, file 18-1, J. M. Munro, "Report of Distribution of Red Cross Supplies for November & December 1918."

unknown, but Playfair was, and he was much affected by what he heard. The press correspondent shared quarters and a mess with Holme and Smith; that evening's dinner conversation may well have included discussion of the life of POWs in Siberia. The reporter's account of the speech, penned the same day, was probably the longest—and certainly the most heartfelt—dispatch he sent home. According to his report, Gosha Cedergren had spent the previous two years in the Siberian interior and he told “a pitiful tale of the conditions that now exist through lack of proper housing, adequate clothing, and food, predicting a catastrophic epidemic of typhus if something is not done at a very early date.”⁹² When Dennis arrived in Vladivostok, it was reports such as these that helped spur him to action.

Dennis's Ambitious Relief Plans, March–April 1919

Dennis kept close watch on developments in Siberia in the months before he left Canada. Once in Vladivostok, he saw for himself some of the reality of daily life for many in the war-torn region. As commissioner of the CRCS unit and chairman of the CEC(S), as well as director of transportation and intelligence on Elmsley's staff,⁹³ Dennis worked alongside officials familiar with the challenges facing the country and potentially in a position to help. Dennis lived in the same Vladivostok hotel—“the only establishment that could pass as” one, according to Wilgress⁹⁴—as British High Commissioner Eliot,

⁹²Ibid., vol. 359, file 49, Playfair, draft article, 12 Dec. 1918. A censored version of Playfair's article appeared in the Canadian press only in February, so Dennis could not have read it before his arrival in Siberia. See Playfair, “Must assist foe prisoners,” *Toronto Globe*, 1 Feb. 1919, 7. The same article appeared the next day in the *Vancouver Daily Sun*: Playfair, “No more pet animals in Russian prison camps; have all been eaten up,” 35.

⁹³NAC, Engineering Institute of Canada fonds, Membership Files, vol. 68, J. S. Dennis file, “Synopsis of the Career of Colonel John Stoughton Dennis . . .,” 2.

⁹⁴NAC, Leolyn Dana Wilgress fonds, MG 31 E-9, “Memoirs—Chapters 1–5,” chap. IV, 13.

and the two “established close relations.” He also “worked closely” with the head of the British Railway Mission.⁹⁵ Any information he may have received from them, either formally or informally, would only have added to what he knew from his meetings with other imperial representatives in Vladivostok, including the British Red Cross commissioner, his own Red Cross staffers, and Playfair, to whom he granted several interviews. Dennis was also in contact with Russian officials and businessmen. In early March, for example, he addressed a group of representatives from Russian co-operatives. Always careful to tailor his words to fit his audience, Dennis explained that the purpose of the CEC(S) had been “to assist Siberia as part of Russia in restoring herself to normal economic life. . . . there was not the slightest intention to take advantage in a business sense of the existing chaotic conditions in Siberia, but to find out in what manner economic aid to Russia could be given.”⁹⁶ Dennis was outwardly optimistic, but there was not much reason for celebration: After a month in Vladivostok it was clear that there was little the economic commission could do to further its cause. Since the day-to-day operation of the Red Cross mission was in the capable hands of its assistant commissioner, Dennis could have returned to Canada at this point. Instead, he remained in the Far East to begin work on another project meant to assist Russia. He no doubt hoped that this one would bear fruit.

By now the campaign for civilian relief in Siberia launched by Dennis and the economic commissioners was several months old. It had met with little success.

⁹⁵Wilgress, *Memoirs*, 54.

⁹⁶“Report of the Joint Meeting Held with the Representatives of the Co-operatives at Vladivostok on Wednesday, March 5, 1919,” in CEC(S), *Report*, 49.

Donations of foodstuffs, clothing, and other supplies had arrived from Canada, but there was no movement on the CEC(S)'s recommendation for relief, apart from Maclean's rejected request to the CRCS. Dennis was a veteran of several ambitious, large-scale, and highly successful undertakings from his days in western Canada, many of which he came up with himself. He must have been frustrated by his lack of success in Siberia. But just when he may have feared his time there had been wasted, another opportunity came along for him to use his considerable talents. With the hope and perhaps promise of British financial backing Dennis began work on a large-scale relief plan for refugees and POWs in Siberia, one that the Canadian Red Cross would administer.

By early March 1919, according to Playfair, "The desperate condition of enemy prisoners and returned Russian prisoners in Siberia is now occupying the attention of the British and Canadian authorities, and proposals are now under consideration by which the Canadian Red Cross would assume charge of the situation." The CRCS had already shipped five carloads of supplies to help these prisoners, but "immense operations" were needed to really make a difference.⁹⁷ A week later Dennis's proposal was ready for submission to the British. Ever interested in emphasizing the positive side of Canadian experiences in Siberia, and having his own concerns about the condition of POWs in the region, Playfair wrote a lengthy account of the proposal, to be published if and when the plan was accepted. "The Canadian Red Cross in Siberia," his article began,

has now under consideration the most important enterprise that has yet been undertaken since the Allied occupation of the Russian Far East. With the financial aid of the British authorities it has offered to take full charge of relief work in Western Siberia, for German and Austrian prisoners, released Russian prisoners, and refugees. It is estimated that the number of persons requiring

⁹⁷Playfair, "To relieve sufferings of Russian prisoners," *Toronto Globe*, 13 Mar. 1919, 2.

assistance in the area to be covered reaches at least 500,000, and the cost will run into many millions of dollars.

It is an open secret that the prisoners of war in Russia have been sadly neglected since the Revolution, badly housed, badly fed, and poorly housed [*sic*]. Many thousands of them have died from typhus and tuberculosis, the result of neglect, for the prisoners as well as other classes felt the demoralizing effects of political and economic chaos. In Eastern Siberia Americans and Japanese have formed concentration camps and in a measure taken care of the situation. In Western Siberia the task has scarcely been attempted beyond the despatching of a number of hospital trains, and the sending of quantities of clothing and drugs.

Of course, humanitarian concerns were not the only motivating factor. It was no doubt calculations of the political and military expediency of the relief efforts which interested British officials:

The present precarious position of the prisoners of war and the returned Russian prisoners favors, it is now believed, the spread of Bolshevism, and strengthens the hands of the Bolshevik Government, which employs large numbers of prisoners in its military organization. It is argued that if effective relief can be given Bolshevik influence would be undermined and there would also be defections from the Bolshevik ranks. Another factor in the situation is that enemy delegates are pressing for facilities to proceed to Siberia to deal with war prisoners, and this request may be acceded to, as at least one great power—the United States—appears to favor the proposal. This step would be dangerous to the Allied influence in Russia, it is believed, and encouraging to the Lenin following.

This theory, that suffering gave birth to political extremism, was a fairly common contemporary understanding of what drove people in Russia and elsewhere to support Bolshevism. Since the British Military Mission under Knox was in Siberia to aid “loyal” Russians in their struggle against the Red Army, it is hardly surprising that arms, ammunition, bandages, and uniforms were not seen as the only potentially useful weapons in this new war. “This situation was presented to Col. Dennis,” Playfair continued, and the commissioner drew up a proposal for a vastly enlarged CRCS establishment to oversee the relief of these men, women, and children. This was then “submitted to the British authorities for ratification.”⁹⁸

In his proposal, Dennis made clear the geographical limits of the new mission’s

⁹⁸NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 359, file 49, Playfair, draft article, 10 Mar. 1919.

responsibility, as well as the groups that would receive assistance. Since the Allies had arrived in Siberia some relief work among POWs and civilians was being done by the American and Japanese Red Cross societies in *eastern* Siberia—that was where their nations’ troops were stationed. The American and Japanese armies took over from Russian authorities the administration of six camps in Siberia.⁹⁹ Dennis hoped that the work of the ARC and the Japanese Red Cross would be formalized and expanded, so that it would complement the proposed CRCS work in *western* Siberia. Though the condition of former enemy POWs was the impetus for the relief scheme, they were not the only targets of the planned imperial assistance: Returning Russian POWs and refugees were also to be assisted. The inclusion of the two other groups was in keeping with Dennis’s concern with promoting goodwill between the Russian people and Canada. “Any effort to relieve the condition of enemy prisoners of war while much needed help was refused to Russians would create a very bad feeling against the Allies,” he explained. “Western Siberia,” of course, included a sizeable landmass. Dennis was specific about the areas and numbers of people to receive help, as well as the goods that were most needed.

Dennis then provided some details of the proposed mission’s requirements, outlining the necessary staff, where the goods would come from, what arrangements with local authorities would be needed to make the plan a success, and the considerable financial commitment required. He asked “for an immediate credit of \$10,000,000 and such further sums as may be needed,” and “estimated that this amount would carry the

⁹⁹Roman Dyboski, *Seven Years in Russia and Siberia (1914–1921)*, ed. and trans. Marion Moore Coleman (Cheshire, CT: Cherry Hill Books, 1970), 59. The Japanese later assisted the international Red Cross mission in supplying goods for POWs in the summer of 1919. See Olive Checkland, *Humanitarianism and the Emperor’s Japan, 1877–1977* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 75.

operations on for a period of six months.” Finally, Dennis requested that current CEF(S) members and those serving with the British battalions “be detailed for duty with the Canadian Red Cross Corps, and that all British and Canadian military stores at present in Siberia and suitable for relief work . . . be turned over to the Corps.” To undertake “a task of this magnitude,” it was clear that a substantial staff would have to be gathered, one much larger than the puny CRCS establishment in Vladivostok. Dennis’s proposal included 280 personnel, 150 of which would be military guards—a requirement for any humanitarian operation in civil war Siberia—and a large medical section.¹⁰⁰ Dennis put out a call for volunteers among members of the CEF(S). Tompkins immediately signed up, reminding his wife that “there is a crying need for [relief] work.”¹⁰¹

It was an ambitious programme, not least because the CRCS had already demonstrated a lack of enthusiasm when it came to less than strict interpretations of its legal charter. Did Dennis think the scheme’s stress on POWs would win the society over? If so, this was still a potential problem: The Canadian society had never concerned itself with enemy prisoners. With the financial backing of the British government—there is no indication that Canadian authorities were expected to cover any of the costs of the operation—and the political support that would come with this, Dennis probably believed that the plan would not be rejected by his Red Cross superiors in Canada. The CRCS may have been unenthusiastic when it came to civilian relief in Siberia, but the members of the Executive Committee and Central Council were, like Dennis, proud Canadians and

¹⁰⁰See app. 1 for the full text of the proposal.

¹⁰¹Tompkins, *Canadian’s Road to Russia*, 416 and 418, S. R. Tompkins to E. Tompkins, 13 and 17 Mar. 1919.

imperialists. Whatever Dennis's thinking, there is no evidence that he even told Marshall or others in Toronto of his proposal, perhaps waiting to present them with what amounted to a *fait accompli*.

The agreement of the Canadian Red Cross authorities, the British government, and the appropriate Siberian officials were clearly prerequisites for the plan to be put in place, but these were not the only groups which had the potential to derail the project even before it left the station. When he went into the Siberian interior soon after Dennis drew up his proposal, Clarke took the opportunity to visit several POW camps. The medical director left Vladivostok on 11 March,¹⁰² en route to Cheliabinsk and the Ural front at the request of Knox to get the Russian army barracks there in sanitary condition and to do "something to stop the terrible wastage of men caused by typhus among Kolchak's troops."¹⁰³ A couple days before the train reached Omsk, the mixed Canadian-British group stopped at Novo Nikolaievsk, the site of "one of the largest prison camps in Siberia, [with] more than 17,000 German and Austrian prisoners of war still being confined there."¹⁰⁴ That night, 23 March, Clarke wrote to Elmsley about what he had seen so far. He was convinced that though the situation was not ideal there was nothing in what he saw or heard that justified Dennis's relief scheme:

This is Sunday evening and I have had a very busy day. Have tramped through miles of Russian Barracks and kitchens, and bath houses and latrines, but I want you to get this letter at the earliest opportunity. I have been making use of my leisure at the various stopping places, by going into the Prisoner proposition that Colonel Dennis was on, and I have been compelled to come to the conclusion that any extension scheme of relief for enemy prisoners is altogether uncalled for and absurd as far as I have gone. I may have to change my mind again later, but in the meantime would recommend that any tentative arrangements should be held up pending further investigation.

¹⁰²NAC, War Diary, No. 10 Sanitary Section, Siberia, entry for 11 Mar. 1919.

¹⁰³McCullagh, *Prisoner of the Reds*, 95.

¹⁰⁴[Coleman,] "In the Footsteps of Robinson Crusoe," 9.

At Chita and Irkutsk there were about 20,000 prisoners, and not a complaint except that they are “fed up” and would like to go home, and the complaint of all the thinking people, that they have far too much liberty, as they roam all over the town at will, and all the principal houses and barracks, and industries employ them, so that they have possible access to arms. At Krasnoyarsk I looked over 10,000 of them and there are 3,000 more employed in the town. They all looked well fed and healthy—except a very few normally sick. They have no lice, they have good places where they can do their laundry but are short of soap, they have a workshop where they can learn a trade, a good hospital with German and Austrian doctors, and altogether I think they are much better used than prisoners in Germany. However I thought I wouldn’t write you until I saw the situation here, as this was one of the places which had the worst reports. Well, here they took an epidemic of Typhus—just the same as the rest of the City, and they died at the rate—viz about 8% so the Authorities sent most of them away to Krasnoyarsk where I saw them the other day. The ones I saw here to-day looked quite as healthy as the Russians and were in good warm quarters and free from lice. One big complaint against the Authorities here was that they left them at work with only thin clothing until the weather got very cold, and that the Russian Army requisitions a great deal of the wood which they had been sent to cut to keep their own (the Russian) quarters warm, and they therefore had to cuddle together to keep themselves warm. I think the report was true, but there are no cases of frost bite as a result. Another complaint here was that the issue of light only lasted two or three hours and they had to spend the whole night in the dark. It is true that they are short of underwear and their money does not come regularly, but there certainly is no scandal up to here, and this was said to be one of the worst spots.

If his own observations were not enough to convince him that the proposed relief efforts were unnecessary, there was one more piece of evidence to consider, namely, where Dennis had obtained much of his information about POW conditions:

I find that the reports that Colonel Dennis got were given to a member of Knox’s Staff by Anna Bernstrum (or some name like that) who has been employed by the *Swedish* Red Cross to visit German Prison Camps ever since the war broke out, so one can easily believe they are biased and I can’t find that they have ever been confirmed. Would you kindly use your judgement as to taking the matter up with the Red Cross Commissioners, and I will write you again when I have seen more.¹⁰⁵

Clarke’s “Anna Bernstrum” was actually Elsa Brändström, who was indeed a Swedish Red Cross nurse. As the daughter of the former Swedish ambassador to Petrograd, Brändström was in Russia at the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 and was soon involved in the relief efforts among captured enemy soldiers. Over the next several years she visited prison camps in European Russia, Turkestan, and Siberia, and by the fall of 1918 was

¹⁰⁵NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ 101, Clarke to Elmsley, 23 Mar. 1919. Sgt. Coleman accompanied Clarke on his trip through Siberia. In his fonds at the NAC, file 2, is preserved a copy of a Brändström report, dated 26 Jan. 1919, and it may well have been one of the documents supplied to the British official.

established in Krasnoiarsk on a permanent basis. In the years after the war Brändström became well-known in the west as the “Angel of Siberia,” a name she was apparently given by POWs whom she helped.¹⁰⁶

A few days later, as promised, Clarke again wrote to his superior officer, this time from Omsk. His earlier views on the necessity of the relief scheme were confirmed:

With further reference to the Prisoners of War proposition, there is no reason to change from the opinions expressed in my other letter. There is no sign of scandalous treatment of these people. I went carefully over a camp of over 10,000 of them yesterday and was surprised to find them in such good condition, with no more than the normal sick, no lice, clean warm clothes, and sufficient food to keep them looking healthy. The supply of fuel is limited, but health does not appear to have been affected by the cold. They are overcrowded of course, but not sufficient for scandal. Very little disease develops in the camps, but the camp hospitals are filled with those who got sick or frozen while employed and living outside.

Clearly, Clarke was unmoved by what he saw. Though he did not sympathize with the conditions in which his former enemies were living, it seems unlikely that Clarke would have lied. Indeed, he even argued with Brändström herself when they were both guests of Major-General Knox for dinner:

I had it out with the Bernstrum lady last night. She dined on the train and when she found out that I had actually visited and examined such a large number of the camps and prisoners, she climbed [*sic*] down most gracefully and said that conditions had “improved” greatly during the winter. So there was no scrap. She is a very charming woman and would have no trouble whatever in hypnotizing people into believing all those horrible tales without going to see for themselves. However, I had the information before she had the chance to put me under.

If Clarke was right about her, it would certainly upset some of the myth surrounding the “Angel of Siberia”! Clarke ended his letter with a note about Bolshevik prisoners of war. His comments were telling about how far western humanitarianism actually extended in civil war Siberia: “The Bolsheviki prisoners are really in a bad way, as there is no Red Cross or other organization who will give them anything, but I don’t fancy that we are

¹⁰⁶Nathan Söderblom, preface to Brändström, *Among Prisoners of War in Russia and Siberia*, 9.

concerned with what one Russian bunch do to another. At any rate they are dying fast.”¹⁰⁷

Brändström did not mention this episode in her book on the prisoners of war in Russia published ten years later. Her book, in fact, contains little precise information about her movements and activities. Before one is tempted to believe Clarke’s dressing-down of the woman many thought should have won a Nobel Peace Prize,¹⁰⁸ however, there is other testimony to consider. At least two other members of Clarke’s party left behind their memories of the trip. Unfortunately, Coleman’s diary of his adventures “up the line” included little comment on the prison camps he passed through or by. One British officer travelling with Clarke, Captain Francis McCullagh, remembered that the treatment of Bolshevik prisoners in hospital had been abysmal. It is unclear whether he thought that the conditions in which the other POWs lived were much, if any, better, though one gets the sense that neither were particularly well-cared-for:

I had seen some of these Siberian [POW] camps during the preceding winter [1919] and had come to the conclusion that death would be better than confinement in some of them. Dead bodies of typhus patients lay in some of the wards, while the dirt, the stench, and the frightful blank look on some of the faces of the prisoners reminded me of accounts I have read of mediæval dungeons. Their hospitals were places of unmitigated horror, and in the wards allotted to Bolshevik prisoners the latters, some of them mere boys, were allowed to lie with insufficient clothing, insufficient warmth, and hardly any attendance.¹⁰⁹

Neither Clarke nor McCullagh would have felt much sympathy for Bolsheviks, both knowing full well the atrocities that the Red Army and Bolshevik partisans were capable of committing.¹¹⁰ The prison camps were probably not places one would have elected to stay the night, let alone six or seven years. But in the context of the First World War and

¹⁰⁷NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ 101, Clarke to Elmsley, 27 Mar. 1919.

¹⁰⁸Alon Rachamimov, *POWs and the Great War: Captivity on the Eastern Front* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2002), 169.

¹⁰⁹McCullagh, *Prisoner of the Reds*, 58. McCullagh interpreted for Clarke on this trip: p. 95.

¹¹⁰While in western Siberia, the party investigated allegations of Bolshevik atrocities. See documentation in the Coleman fonds, file 3, and [Coleman,] “In the Footsteps of Robinson Crusoe,” 12–18.

at this moment of general misery for many in Siberia, some may not have been all that bad. Not when they housed the enemy, anyway. Clarke probably believed that there were far better ways to spend large sums of money than helping soldiers who had the blood of his Allied brethren on their hands. Dennis was perhaps willing to forget this if it meant that aid would reach Siberians.

After his duties in Siberia in conjunction with the CEC(S) were over, Dennis asked for and was granted permission from the military to depart from Vladivostok. He was struck off strength from the CEF(S) in mid-March¹¹¹ and headed for Japan, where he continued his efforts on behalf of civilians and prisoners in western Siberia. In the meantime, Young carried out “daily conferences” with Eliot about Dennis’s plan. Dennis “gave the British until April 1 to decide their policy, and the result is expected very soon.”¹¹² Laycock, the Siberian mission’s Vancouver man, informed Marshall on 1 April that the two top Red Cross men in the Far East were busy redrafting plans for the assistance scheme: “Assistant Commissioner Young now in Yokohama with Colonel Dennis consulting project through British High Commissioner for this Society’s present organization to administer British Red Cross funds for relief of half million refugees and returned prisoners now destitute in Western Siberia.”¹¹³ The news no doubt caught the CRCS officials off guard and left them wondering at Dennis’s seeming disregard for their own views on Siberian relief and the confines of their charter. It was no April Fools’ Day joke.

¹¹¹NAC, Dennis’s WW1 personnel file.

¹¹²Playfair, “Plan to alleviate distress in Siberia,” *Toronto Globe*, 1 Apr. 1919, 5.

¹¹³CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:273, Laycock to Marshall, 1 Apr. 1919, reproduced in the minutes of the EC meeting of the same date.

Whether or not Clarke's letters had any effect is unclear, but soon enough British plans changed. Eliot received a cable from his government informing him "that arrangements have been made with the Scandinavian Red Cross to undertake the care of the enemy prisoners of war."¹¹⁴ Upon hearing the news, Young had a "conversation" with Elmsley about Eliot's wish to change the plan's purview in light of this new information. Young then left for Japan to meet with Dennis, arriving there on 31 March.¹¹⁵ "I . . . understand from Colonel Young," Dennis wrote to Eliot, "that you wish the Canadian Red Cross to submit an amended proposal relative to the care of the returning Russian prisoners of war and the refugees."¹¹⁶ The next day, "after very careful consideration," Dennis made changes to his original establishment requirements and sent the new numbers to Eliot, with a copy to Elmsley. In addition, he told the Canadian commander, the Allied decision to withdraw many of their troops from Siberia would cause problems:

I may be pessimistic with regard to conditions which will arise in Siberia upon the withdrawal of the Expeditionary forces, but cannot help in fearing that if all the Allied forces except the Japanese are withdrawn, and unless they largely reinforce their expedition, conditions will be very unsatisfactory, and the effort to carry on successful Red Cross work very difficult. This is my reason for imposing the additional condition in the letter sent to the High Commissioner. . . .

I am asking Col. Young to deliver this letter to you, and to keep closely in touch with you relative to any reply received. If the decision is favourable, we will ask for volunteers for the establishment necessary to carry out the work, and I am attaching hereto a memorandum showing the proposed amended establishment, which you will note provides for a much reduced personnel from that set forth in the original establishment provided for the Canadian Red Cross Corps of which you have a copy.

The new personnel numbers included a significantly reduced military unit—though Dennis now specified that the soldiers were to be armed—as well as fewer people

¹¹⁴NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ 101, Dennis to Eliot, 1 Apr. 1919.

¹¹⁵Ibid., Dennis to Elmsley, 1 Apr. 1919.

¹¹⁶Ibid., Dennis to Eliot, 1 Apr. 1919.

involved in transportation and stores, and at the camp and depot.¹¹⁷ Dennis set a deadline of 15 April for acceptance of the plan by the British government, and upon a credit of \$5 million being made available at the same time.¹¹⁸

Dennis left the Far East a few days later, sailing for home on the Canadian Pacific steamer *Empress of Asia*, and arriving in Vancouver on 14 April. The *Daily Sun* notes that he had little comment on Siberia. “The less you say about the country,” Dennis was reported to have said, “the better.”¹¹⁹ If Dennis was disheartened about Siberia, he had good reason: The civil war still raged and westerners were increasingly unwilling to intervene. Dennis’s plan, for one, was never implemented. The precise reasons for this are unknown, but there are several probable ones. After hearing the news of Dennis’s ambitious scheme, the CRCS Executive Committee instructed Marshall “to cable Col. Dennis not to commit the Society to any obligations in connection with relief work without consulting the Executive.”¹²⁰ Another problem may have been that not enough CEF(S) men volunteered to stay on and work for the Red Cross in Siberia.¹²¹ Perhaps it was the thought of spending so much money to aid Germans, without guarantees that doing so would help stem the tide of Bolshevism, that put an end to the plan. Or it might simply have been bad timing which killed it: By early April, the western Allies were working on a plan to feed Russia, hoping that the promise of desperately-needed humanitarian aid would force an end to the civil war in Russia and help hasten

¹¹⁷Ibid., Dennis to Elmsley, 1 Apr. 1919. See app. 1 for Dennis’s memorandum.

¹¹⁸Ibid., Dennis to Eliot, 1 Apr. 1919. See app. 1 for the full text of this letter.

¹¹⁹“Very reticent on Siberian affairs,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 15 Apr. 1919, 13.

¹²⁰CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:273, minutes of the EC meeting of 1 Apr. 1919. There was no further mention of POW relief work in Siberia in the Red Cross minutes.

¹²¹See below, 130–133.

Bolshevism's demise. The Soviet leadership eventually rejected the overtures,¹²² but by this time the window of opportunity for Dennis's scheme had passed.

There was never any large-scale plan implemented in Siberia to care for civilians, refugees, or prisoners of war, and it was a few years before the repatriation process was completed. The American Red Cross continued its relief efforts among some POWs in eastern Siberia until early 1920, its representatives successively abandoning their posts ahead of the Red Army advance.¹²³ The International Committee of the Red Cross sent a fact-finding mission to Siberia in the summer of 1919; the plight of these POWs first began to gnaw at the consciences of high-level American officials shortly thereafter.¹²⁴ After visiting three camps near Vladivostok, the international Red Cross commission prepared an appeal to the world to help in the repatriation of Siberian POWs. It was published in November 1919 and, according to the commission's head, was the start of a general campaign spearheaded by the League of Nations and the international committee to secure the homecoming of these men.¹²⁵ The first POWs to leave Siberia did so in the spring of 1920, and the last sailed for home only in the summer of 1922, more than three and one-half years after the end of the First World War.

After Dennis returned to Canada, he finished up his Red Cross and CEC(S) work,

¹²²On the Hoover-Nansen relief plan, see Eugene P. Trani, "Herbert Hoover and the Russian Revolution," in *Herbert Hoover: The Great War and Its Aftermath 1914–23*, ed. Lawrence E. Gelfand (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1979), 124–130.

¹²³See comments on the "final blow to all of the large plans and prospects of the [American] Red Cross in Siberia" in T. J. Edmonds, "The Red Cross amid Revolution in Siberia," *Survey*, 3 July 1920, 488.

¹²⁴See, for example, Suda Lorena Bane and Ralph Haswell Lutz, eds., *Organization of American Relief in Europe, 1918–1919* (Stanford, CA and London: Stanford University Press and Oxford University Press, 1943), 674–675, R. Lansing to F. L. Polk, 16 Aug. 1919. Lansing claimed the condition of the prisoners was "a scandal."

¹²⁵George Montandon, *Deux ans chez Koltchak et chez les Bolchéviques pour la Croix-Rouge de Genève (1919–1921)*, 2d ed. (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1923), 20–22.

and then went back to his old job at CPR headquarters in Montreal. He made headlines in later years as a major player in the recruitment of settlers for Canada's western lands and as a committed imperialist at a time when many Canadians thought that their country's destiny lay outside the British Empire.¹²⁶ "Calgary Jack" retired as chief commissioner of colonization and development for the CPR on New Year's Day, 1930, but continued to act as an advisor to the company.¹²⁷ He died in Victoria in late November 1938, at the age of eighty-two.¹²⁸

* * *

Dennis's campaign for civilian and POW relief in Siberia came in the midst of what one might call the "Siberian moment" in Canadian history. From August 1918 until the early months of 1919 many Canadians, including Prime Minister Borden, believed that Siberia might well be the next big opportunity for Canadian business interests. At a time when the dominion's confidence in its own abilities was at a new high and the potential for a greater share of the world's economy seemed well within reach, the lands west of Vladivostok beckoned enticingly. Eastern Siberia's natural riches and its peoples' apparent need for Canadian agricultural expertise and manufactured goods put this war-torn region at the top of some Canadian businessmen's to-do list. Some, like Just, dismissed warranted concerns that civil war Siberia was perhaps not the best place to

¹²⁶See, for example, Thomas Geggie, "Tells London separation of Canada already an issue in politics here," *Toronto Daily Star*, 24 Jan. 1922, 13; "To settle West with Irishmen," *Toronto Globe*, 7 Mar. 1922, 2; and "Any policy better than none at all," *Toronto Globe*, 31 Mar. 1922, 16.

¹²⁷NAC, Engineering Institute of Canada fonds, Membership Files, vol. 28, J. S. Dennis file, "Synopsis of the Career of Colonel John Stoughton Dennis . . .," 2.

¹²⁸See the following obituaries: "Col. Dennis is dead; soldier, engineer," *New York Times*, 27 Nov. 1938, 48; "Col. J. S. Dennis dies in Victoria," *Vancouver Sunday Sun*, 26 Nov. 1938, 1; and "Colonel J. S. Dennis; development of Western Canada," *Times* (London), 28 Nov. 1938, 16.

launch a business venture. But even those who were apprehensive believed that the war would soon end and the situation would normalize. For Borden and others, the military force, though sent at the request of the British and in the context of the First World War, would help secure Canadian economic penetration of Siberia.

This moment of heady optimism in Canada did not last long: Siberia soon took a backseat to other matters and slowly disappeared as a place of interest for Canadians. Even before 1919 began, Borden tired of hearing about the troubles with the CEF(S),¹²⁹ and in the new year was too wrapped up in Parisian affairs to spend time pondering Siberian markets. The increased unrest at home after the war ended occupied the time and minds of other government officials in Canada. Maybe they were also turned off Siberia after realizing the enormity of the reconstruction needs of Europe, or saw the writing on the Russian wall more clearly than did their representatives in Vladivostok. In Vancouver, potentially the city with the most to gain from trade with Siberia, the *Daily Sun* printed three stories about Canadian private economic interest in Siberia in January 1919,¹³⁰ but nearly none at all thereafter. Some businessmen and trade department staffers held out for improved commercial conditions until late 1919 and even after; however, by this time theirs were voices in the wilderness.¹³¹ Dennis and other CEC(S) members continued to believe in the bright future of Siberia into at least the summer of 1919, but

¹²⁹Borden cabled the acting prime minister, "Please dispose of matter[s related to the CEF(S)] without further reference to us." Borden to White, 9 Dec. 1918, in Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, 3:58.

¹³⁰"Vancouver company for Siberian trade," 3 Jan. 1919, 5; "Plan direct air service across ocean to Siberia," 19 Jan. 1919, 3; and "Canada's chance lies chiefly in Siberia and China," 29 Jan. 1919, 1, 3.

¹³¹On this, see documents in NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, files 21916 and 28804, and material in NAC, Li-Ra-Ma collection, MG 30 E-406, ser. I, vol. 18, files 602–607, microfilm, reel M-7607, and ser. II, vol. 26, files 901–904, and various files in vol. 27, all in reel M-7615.

they knew nothing could be done while transportation and financial problems persisted. The Royal Bank of Canada, which opened a branch in Vladivostok on 1 March 1919, closed it the following October.¹³²

These problems did not mean that Canadians should pack their bags and wait for the return of normalcy. For Dennis, the opposite was emphatically true. He told the government repeatedly that if boxes of winter boots and women's clothing arrived in Vladivostok and then travelled the Trans-Siberian emblazoned with the maple leaf and the word *Kanada* in big letters, it would surely help the development of business ties. If the Canadian Red Cross—albeit with British funding—undertook the relief of hundreds of thousands of former Russian soldiers and penniless refugees in western Siberia, it would do this and more. And here Dennis's true sympathies were evident: He was not simply concerned with promoting trade, nor did he draw up proposals solely at the request of Eliot, nor did he urge Canadians to do what the Americans were already doing out of some sense of national pride. Though he used these arguments when he thought that they would convince others of the necessity of his plans, there was more behind his Siberian efforts.

Dennis was personally committed to seeing the humanitarian scheme through and was set to return to Siberia upon the plan's approval. The Great War was over, he had done his national and imperial duty, and he could certainly have returned to his civilian career secure in the knowledge that he had "done his bit" for Russians too. Instead, at

¹³²Wilgress, *Memoirs*, 54. For more on the Royal Bank branch, see Duncan McDowall, *Quick to the Frontier: Canada's Royal Bank* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993), 194–195 and "War Diary. Pages from the Chronicle of the Bank's Adventures in Troubled Times. Russian Chapter," *Royal Bank Magazine*, Mar. 1945, 12–14.

sixty-two years of age, Dennis hoped to go back to Siberia to oversee what would surely have been an emotionally-trying assignment. Fifty years later, Wilgress remembered the CEC(S) plans as “impracticable” and “very ambitious.”¹³³ Looking at the period with the benefit of hindsight, Dennis’s major relief plans were equally so. At the time, though, even putting aside humanitarian obligations, Dennis believed that his calculations were rational and his expectations reasonable. He had five arguments to back up his relief schemes: (1) the importance of generating goodwill between Canada and Siberia to improve trade between the two countries; (2) a humanitarian crisis that Dennis thought fit perfectly with the Red Cross’s mission; (3) the moral imperative of assisting soldiers who had fought against the Central Powers only to return home to a country in turmoil; (4) the Canadian desire to keep up with the United States; and (5) the benefits that relief of refugees and POWs had for British military and political goals in Russia. What Dennis did not seem to realize was that after the war’s end most people in Canada had turned inward. After four years of terrible sacrifice for the empire and the Entente, domestic problems were understandably paramount. In other words, by the spring of 1919 Canadians had forgotten all about Siberia. Without British money, no amount of speech-making could have changed the situation.

¹³³Wilgress, “From Siberia to Kuibyshev,” 368–369.

CHAPTER 4

STAY OR LEAVE? RELIEF AND THE
ANTI-BOLSHEVIK CAMPAIGN, SPRING–FALL 1919

The work done by the Canadian Red Cross has really very materially bound closer those ties which bind the Empire together and the Empire to one of her former Allies, where gratitude and sincerity will be shown, we hope, by a once more united Russia before very long.¹

Captain Victor A. Cazalet

In grateful appreciation of the generous and efficient assistance rendered by the Canadian Red Cross in Siberia to all suffering and indigent at the front and in the rear, I feel it my pleasant duty to express to you, on behalf of the Government and the population of Russia, deep gratitude for the inestimable services which the Canadian Red Cross rendered to Russia in the difficult time of her trials, and in the moment of her regeneration.

Allow me, dear Colonel [Young], to express again, on my personal behalf, the sincere wish that on your return from Canada, where you are going summoned by your duties, you could continue your beneficial activity as mentioned above.²

General Dmitrii Leonidovich Khorvat

Despite Dennis's best efforts, his ambitious plans for civilian and prisoner relief were never implemented. The CRCS mission members spent most of their time assisting Canadian soldiers while the CEF(S) was stationed in Siberia. Aid was also provided to the British battalions and, to a much lesser extent, other forces, but there seemed little reason for the CRCS personnel to remain behind when the CEF(S) began its evacuation in the spring of 1919. The British Military Mission saw things differently. For them, the small relief mission had filled a need by shipping and handling Red Cross goods for White Russian troops. Beginning in late April the BMM and the British War Office

¹Cazalet to Young, 4 June 1919, reproduced in "Our Supplies in Siberia Assist Kolchak to Conquer Bolshevism," *Bulletin* 46 (Aug.–Sept. 1919): 15.

²D. Horvat [Khorvat] to Young, 27 June 1919, reproduced in *ibid.*, 15–16.

campaigning strongly for the maintenance of the CRCS mission in Siberia. With the aid of the CRCS Siberian personnel, volunteers from the diminishing ranks of the CEF(S), British military officers in Siberia and London, Prime Minister Borden, and other Canadian authorities, Red Cross headquarters agreed to continue supplying aid to Siberia. After having ordered their mission closed in May 1919, moreover, the CRCS agreed to reopen it the following fall.

British Attempts to Keep the CRCS Mission in Siberia after the Withdrawal of the CEF(S)

After the end of the First World War, it was not long before the presence of Canadian troops in Siberia started causing trouble for the government and serious thoughts of withdrawing the CEF(S) at an early date were entertained. Only three days after the armistice with Germany, for example, all members of cabinet who were not overseas thought that the force should be withdrawn as soon as possible.³ From London, Borden reminded them of their commitment to Britain and the “extremely unfortunate effect” that backing out of the intervention would have;⁴ the expedition went ahead as planned.⁵ In early December, after Elmsley’s reports from Vladivostok made clear that there was no Allied coordination in Siberia, the acting prime minister, Sir Thomas White, again suggested that Canada reconsider its own policy.⁶ He got his wish. Gwatkin, the Canadian chief of the general staff, informed the War Office on 22 December in no

³Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, 3:51, White to Borden, 14 Nov. 1918.

⁴*Ibid.*, 52–53, Borden to White, 24 Nov. 1918.

⁵*Ibid.*, 55, White to Borden, 29 Nov. 1918.

⁶*Ibid.*, 56–57, White to Borden, 6 and 7 Dec. 1918.

uncertain terms that the CEF(S) “must return to Canada next spring.”⁷ Since the men were not engaged in any combat, there was little point keeping them in Vladivostok practising their calisthenics. As a transportation officer for the force Dennis would have known at least something of these political developments before he sailed for Vladivostok on 10 January. From his base in western Canada, the site of the most visible and audible displeasure with the Siberian force, Dennis would also have been aware of the pressure the government was under to end the intervention. This explains why he set sail for Siberia thinking he would “complete arrangements for return Canadian Red Cross and attend [CEC(S)] meetings” while there.⁸

Gwatkin had been clear about Canadian wishes, but the British were not prepared to let the matter rest just yet. Their cause was not helped by the lack of any clear British or Allied policy vis-à-vis Russia. The CEF(S) would remain in theatre over the winter, but Borden, after discussing the situation with the War Office, decided that no more reinforcements would be sent, and that those in Vladivostok should not go forward to Omsk, something Knox had hoped for.⁹ On 13 February Borden confirmed that the CEF(S) should be evacuated “as soon as Spring opens.”¹⁰ He then informed the British delegation at the Peace Conference that his government had no intention of reconsidering its decision to pull Canadian soldiers from Siberia.¹¹ In mid-March the War Office, still

⁷Ibid., 58, Gwatkin to War Office, 22 Dec. 1918.

⁸NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 363, file 120, Dennis to Gwatkin, 6 Jan. 1919.

⁹Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, 3:62–63, Borden to White, 28 Jan. 1919.

¹⁰Ibid., 63, Borden to White, 13 Feb. 1919.

¹¹Ibid., 63–64, Borden to White, 17 Feb. 1919. For more details on the decision to withdraw the force, see, in addition to the other documents in this volume, the first chapter of James Eayrs’s *In Defence of Canada*, vol. 1, *From the Great War to the Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 27–40.

unsure about the future of its own battalions in Siberia, requested that CEF(S) “administrative details” remain in theatre for the time being. The Canadian government refused.¹² So much for imperial cooperation.

When the first troops left Siberia on 21 April, there were few people disappointed to see them go. After all, they had contributed little to the anti-Bolshevik cause. Apart from a small number of Canadians stationed at Omsk, and those who went there on special assignment, Elmsley’s troops had remained in and around Vladivostok, thousands of miles from the front. Even the most anti-Bolshevik of British politicians, Secretary of War Winston Churchill, recognized that the CEF(S) had done next to nothing in the war on Bolshevism. “If they were not allowed to go beyond Vladivostock,” Churchill commented later that spring, “there was not much use in their taking up the limited accommodation available.”¹³ Dennis left the Far East assuming that the military withdrawal would mean the “consequent demobilisation Canadian Red Cross organization” unless his relief scheme was put into place.¹⁴ Once back in Canada, he informed CRCS headquarters that he expected Young and the rest of the Siberian mission personnel to sail from Vladivostok around 20 May.¹⁵

Only a few days after Dennis sailed for home, though, and eleven days prior to the departure of the first CEF(S) troops, a call went out for members of the force who

¹²NAC, Borden papers, vol. 103, microfilm, reel C-4334, 56415, War Office to Gwatkin, 24 Feb. 1919, and NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 363, file 121, Gwatkin to War Office, 14 Mar. 1919.

¹³In a long letter to Borden, dated 1 May 1919, Churchill asked that the Canadian government be more flexible in its policies so that more volunteers might be recruited to join “our various missions to the loyal Russian armies.” Department of External Affairs, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, 1:66–67.

¹⁴NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ 101, Dennis to Eliot, 1 Apr. 1919.

¹⁵CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:291, minutes of the EC meeting, 6 May 1919. Dennis’s letter, written from Montreal, was dated 25 Apr.

wished to volunteer to remain in Siberia. Those interested in an extension of their wartime service were invited to apply for work with any of the British, Allied, or Russian forces, or join the Canadian Red Cross.¹⁶ It was now more than six months after the armistice, and most Canadians were happy to be finally headed home after a few pointless months in “Vladi.” But not all looked forward to beginning a new life (or continuing an old one) in postwar Canada. The military authorities knew that at least some men would prefer to stay in Siberia with the guarantee of a paycheck and the chance for adventure in revolutionary Russia. In the end, some Canadians joined the BMM and others took civilian jobs in the Far East, with several joining the ranks of the American Red Cross and YMCA.¹⁷ The ARC had an excellent reputation in Siberia, according to one former CEF(S) member:

By the way, there’s one [good] thing I do want to say about the Americans. People say they’re given to bragging. Well they’ve got one thing to brag about and to brag hard about—and that’s the American Red Cross in Russia! It’s the best thing ever. It’s fine. I wish you’d make a note of that. Tell people that if the boys of all the Allied forces could drop their arms and enlist under the American Red Cross they’d do it like a shot—every man-jack of them.¹⁸

One of the Canadians who ended up with the ARC was Polish-born Sergeant Henryk (Henry) B. Bartosiewicz. He had intended on joining the Canadian relief mission, explaining to a superior officer that he had “secured an appointment with them as

¹⁶See the following memorandum in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 369, file B.H. 55-3: “Transfer from Canadian Expeditionary Force (S): Officer and Other Ranks Wishing to Remain in Siberia,” 10 Apr. 1919. There are copies of this in many files, including the Daily Orders of CEF(S) units.

¹⁷According to the numbers given by the minister of militia to the Canadian parliament, nearly 150 men remained behind in Siberia. Of these, 83 were discharged or resigned; 33 became “Imperial instructors”; and 26 joined the BMM. See House of Commons, *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*. 4th sess., 13th parl. 1920. 10–11 Geo. 5, 1:995. For more specific information, see NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, files numbered FORCE HQ C100-3, and files in vol. 369.

¹⁸Stewart Byron McCulloch, quoted in “Back from Siberia,” *British Columbia Federationist*, 9 Jan. 1920, 5. Thanks to Vadim Kukushkin for bringing this article to my attention.

Russian Interpreter.”¹⁹ But two weeks later, after receiving his discharge from the military, he left Vladivostok aboard an ARC train headed for Omsk.²⁰

Apart from Bartosiewicz, at least three dozen men applied for service with the CRCS. The specific reasons for desiring a transfer to the Canadian Red Cross were not usually indicated in an soldier’s application, but there are a few instances where it is possible to discern something of what moved these men to volunteer to stay on in Vladivostok and help in the relief efforts. Some may have liked the work that they were doing and the military lifestyle. Others probably jumped at the chance to secure employment in Siberia in the knowledge that this might prove more difficult in Canada. One man, for example, applied for a position with the CRCS as a druggist, while another asked to work “as a Mechanical Transport Repair-Man.”²¹ A lieutenant from the 259th battalion and seven members of his company all applied for work with the CRCS, a testament to the officer’s popularity among his men, and their desire to continue serving together.²² A few Russian-born men applied, too. One of these, Private M. Kovcevich, explained his decision in this way: “I would, as a Russian, like to stay in Siberia to help the Allies in their work of reorganizing Russia also I consider it my duty.”²³ Though they did not say so in their applications, others may also have felt sense of moral or

¹⁹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file Force HQ C100-3 “Canadian Red Cross,” H. Bartosiewicz to Camp Commandant, 5 May 1919.

²⁰“Winnipeg boy has Kolchak’s silver belt,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 31 Jan. 1921, 6.

²¹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ C100-3 “Canadian Red Cross,” A. B. Choquette to OC 259th Bn., 13 Apr. 1919, and A. B. Bledsoe to OC 260th Bn., 12 Apr. 1919.

²²These were Lt. T. J. Morin and seven men from “D” Company, 259th Bn. Morin later cancelled his application after being recalled by the Department of the Interior, where he had worked as an immigration officer. *Ibid.*, letters from Morin to Adjutant, 259th Bn., 13 Apr. and 8 May 1919. The applications of the seven others are also in this file.

²³*Ibid.*, M. Kovcevich to OC 16th Inf. Bde. Sub-Staff, 11 Apr. 1919.

humanitarian obligation. After all, Canadian soldiers were aware of the region's refugee problem and the lack of adequate medical and sanitary supplies in Vladivostok and the interior. This knowledge had clearly moved Lieutenant Tompkins when he applied to work for the CRCS in mid-March. He told his wife he was "crazy to get into work of this kind": "I felt, though I wished to go home, that the only thing for me do to was to offer my services and do anything I could to heal this running sore."²⁴ Several would-be aid workers indicated a willingness to serve with either the CRCS or the British, suggesting that their wish to stay in Siberia had little to do with humanitarianism. Some volunteers later withdrew their applications, perhaps changing their minds about returning home as those around them eagerly packed their bags. They may also have worried about the future of Red Cross work in the region.²⁵

In the end, it seems only one of those who volunteered for the CRCS was taken on by the mission that spring. This was forty-two-year-old Captain John Samuel Atkinson. Before the war, Atkinson had worked as a teacher and sales manager, and had served overseas prior to enlisting in the CEF(S). He had arrived in Siberia in January as a member of the 259th Battalion, and he may have come to appreciate the work that the Red Cross was doing in Siberia after spending nearly three weeks at the No. 11 Stationary Hospital.²⁶ Atkinson's application to transfer to the CRCS mission was dated

²⁴Tompkins, *Canadian's Road to Russia*, 418 and 422, S. R. Tompkins to E. Tompkins, 17 and 20 Mar. 1919.

²⁵This information comes from various documents in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ C100-3 "Br. Mil. Mission" and "Canadian Red Cross," and *ibid.*, vol. 374, file ADMS 2-7.

²⁶*Ibid.*, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ C100-3 "Canadian Red Cross," Young to OC 259th Bn., 13 Apr. 1919; NAC, WW1 personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-92/166, box 290-9, Atkinson, John Samuel, CPT.

13 April, but he had already told Young, in the latter's words, "sometime ago . . . that he was willing to volunteer for service with the Canadian Red Cross." On 14 April, Young asked that Atkinson report to him "as soon as possible" as "I now urgently require the service of this officer." Atkinson reported for duty at the CRCS the next day.²⁷

Those who, like Atkinson, wanted to carry on in Siberia could count on the strong support of the British Military Mission, which saw the Red Cross's work among White Russian troops as an important component of its own anti-Bolshevik efforts. Up until the November armistice, the British government thought of Siberia and the other interventionist sites mainly in the context of the First World War. The goal of the intervention had been to reopen the eastern front. Soon after hostilities with Germany ceased, it was clear that British government policy had changed. Though there had always been at least an underlying distaste for Bolshevism, beginning in the fall of 1918 British policy became outrightly anti-Bolshevik. The first major sign of change came on the heels of the end of the Great War, when both the Foreign Office and the War Cabinet decided to do, as one official put it, "everything possible to support and strengthen existing [anti-Bolshevik] organizations."²⁸ In Siberia itself, Knox urged his government to play a much larger role in the anti-Bolshevik struggle.²⁹ He never got his way, but the British, through Knox's military mission, did supply Kolchak's forces with uniforms,

²⁷NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ C100-3 "Discharge or Transfers . . .," Young to Brook, 14 Apr. 1919 and 16th Inf. Bde. to Force HQ, no date.

²⁸Lord Robert Cecil, the Foreign Office's parliamentary undersecretary, quoted in Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*, vol. 2, *Britain and the Russian Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 14. For a discussion of Britain's Russia policy in the fall of 1918, see 9-18.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 2:30.

munitions, and equipment, and established several training schools for Russian officers and NCOs.³⁰ Members of the British mission also took part in the distribution of medical supplies, clothing, and general “comforts” to White Russian soldiers in the winter and spring, seeing first-hand the good that CRCS services and supplies did for boosting morale. “Apart from the material comfort and benefit the gifts occasioned in themselves,” Knox’s aide-de-camp would write in June of Red Cross aid to Russian soldiers and their families, “the moral propaganda inspired by the kind thought of the British Empire towards Russia in such a substantial form did much to assist us.” The BMM was loathe to see this end, especially as a new offensive was under way.

For the White Russian army, the spring of 1919 was the start of a critical period in the civil war. Anti-Bolsheviks had controlled all of Siberia from the Pacific Coast to the Ural Mountains since the Czecho-Slovak uprising nearly a year earlier. Kolchak’s territory had even included a small area west of the mountains since Perm had been captured in late December 1918.³¹ In an attempt to go further west and ultimately defeat the Red Army, Kolchak launched an offensive in March 1919. At first, the campaign went well for the Whites, leading the War Office to claim near the end of April that the offensive “has hitherto been very successful.”³² That same month High Commissioner Eliot urged his government to recognize the Omsk “All-Russian” government as the legitimate government in the former Russian Empire, something Knox would continue to

³⁰Knox, as directeur de l’arrière of the Russian army, was also in charge of all Allied aid to Kolchak. *Ibid.*, 2:35; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 120.

³¹Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000), 133. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 181.

³²NAC, Foster fonds, vol. 41, file 198, General Staff, War Office, “Appreciation of the Internal Situation in Russia,” 25 Apr. 1919, 22.

lobby for through the fall.³³ In May Knox apparently believed that it would not be long before Kolchak's armies formed a united front with the anti-Bolshevik units fighting in the North of Russia, and he was already planning to move his base from Omsk to Arkhangelsk.³⁴

It was also during this time of White military success that the bulk of British military aid arrived in Omsk.³⁵ And the British were not the only western power with an interest in Kolchak's fortunes. Reports from Siberia were optimistic enough for the Americans, British, French, Italians, and Japanese to send a note to Kolchak on 27 May that specified several political conditions, and promised him assistance with "munitions, supplies, and food" if he agreed to their terms. Kolchak replied in early June, agreeing to all the conditions, and on the twelfth the Supreme Council promised their continued support.³⁶ As the CEF(S) was completing its withdrawal from Vladivostok, then, there was much optimism among Allied representatives that the Whites would win the war. Though anti-Bolshevik fortunes in Siberia would soon take a turn for the worse, for the moment the British mission thought it important that the CRCS continue its work.

Canadian soldiers were pulling out of Siberia for political and military reasons, but there was still a chance that the CRCS would give its blessing to the maintenance of its unit in the region. After all, even though the Red Cross worked closely with the armed

³³Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 2:162, 245.

³⁴See NAC, Warden fonds, diary, entry for 11 May 1919. Colonel Warden dined with Knox at Omsk, and the dinner conversation included much discussion about BMM policy. Joining with the White forces in the North was something the British had hoped the Czechs would accomplish a year earlier.

³⁵Weapons, ammunition, uniforms, and other equipment were sent in large amounts between March and June 1919. On British aid to Kolchak, see Mawdsley, *Russian Civil War*, 143–144.

³⁶Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 2:166–170.

forces, it was still an independent relief organization. Borden had noted as much to the head of the tsarist Russian Red Cross in Paris, informing him in March—more than a month after the final decision to recall the CEF(S) had been made—that he thought the CRCS mission would remain in Siberia “pendant plusieurs mois encore.”³⁷ Brigadier-General James M. Blair, Knox’s second in command and acting head of the BMM in Vladivostok, hoped that the relief mission would stay behind. On 26 April he cabled both the British War Office and Gwatkin, urging that the CRCS be allowed to remain in Siberia. To London he wrote:

No definite reply yet received if on the departure of the Canadian Expeditionary Force the Canadian Red Cross, who are anxious to remain, are to be allowed to do so. I most strongly recommend that authority be obtained for this organization to remain and work in conjunction with this mission as it is of very great service to us. I further request that you will press the British Red Cross Society to support this organization with funds and stores. No better organization could be found for their support, it is doing real work and amongst conditions which must be seen to be appreciated[. I]t is supporting British prestige.³⁸

To Ottawa he added that the CRCS had “been of great assistance in supplying urgent needs of our British Troops and of the Russian Forces who have continually testified to the value of their work.” Blair asked that supplies also continue to be shipped.³⁹

At the end of April there was still no firm word on the future of the CRCS Siberian mission, and time was running out. The military could not leave those who had applied for work with the CRCS hanging much longer, especially since the force was already evacuating. Young received a “very urgent” message, and was asked to reply

³⁷NAC, Borden papers, vol. 159, microfilm, reel C-4368, 85351, Borden to V. Goloubeff, 20 Mar. 1919. The CRCS sent supplies to help soldiers and civilians in South Russia at the request of the Russian Red Cross and delegates from the various new South Russian states at the Peace Conference. See CRCS, *Annual Report 1919*, 42–43.

³⁸NAC, Borden papers, vol. 103, microfilm, reel C-4334, 56430, Blair to War Office, 26 Apr. 1919.

³⁹NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 363, file 120, Blair to Gwatkin, 26 Apr. 1919.

immediately, “stating definitely whether the Canadian Red Cross is to continue as an organization in Siberia after the departure of the C.E.F.(S), or not.”⁴⁰ Young responded that he was unable to provide a firm answer, but he expected to hear from British and Canadian authorities in the next few days on this issue.⁴¹ He was undoubtedly awaiting the outcome of Blair’s cables.

In early May Gwatkin informed Blair that the matter had been referred to the CRCS Executive Committee.⁴² The Canadian government had no interest in supporting Britain’s anti-Bolshevik crusade. Military authorities in London took more interest in the BMM’s request after they received Blair’s message on 1 May. The situation then became rather more complicated than it had at first seemed. Whether the Red Cross mission remained behind was not simply a matter for the CRCS anymore. Two days later the director of military operations, Major-General Percy de B. Radcliffe, sent a copy of Blair’s message to Borden, who was once again in London. Radcliffe noted that he “fully” concurred with “Blair’s recommendations and would be grateful” if Borden “could see his way to support them”: “There is much sickness and misery in Siberia and the splendid services of the Canadian Red Cross of which General Blair, and indeed everyone who has come into contact with them in Siberia, speaks so highly, can ill be dispensed with.” Borden, as hoped, then cabled Ottawa, declaring that he was “of opinion General Blair’s request should be supported and the Canadian Red Cross organization

⁴⁰Ibid., vol. 373, file FORCE HQ C100-3 “Discharge or Transfers to BMM . . .,” Brook to Young, 29 Apr. 1919.

⁴¹Ibid., Young to Brook, 29 Apr. 1919.

⁴²NAC, War Diary, General Staff, Siberia, RG 9 III-D-3, vol. 5057, file 959, microfilm, reel T-11119, May 1919, app. XXVIII, Gwatkin to Blair, 4 May 1919. The cable was received in Vladivostok on 17 May 1919.

should be retained there if possible.”⁴³ Mewburn, the minister of militia, and his deputy minister contacted Red Cross Chairman Marshall. The members of the CRCS Executive Committee, meeting on 6 May, “were unanimously of the opinion that if suitable arrangements could be made the Red Cross should remain in Siberia.”⁴⁴ Maybe so, but they apparently did not think that “suitable arrangements” existed. Marshall replied to Mewburn that they did “not think it wise that Canadian Red Cross should remain in Vladivostock when Canadian Troops are removed. Much as we would like to help fear taking responsibility.” The government sent Blair the bad news. His proposal was “not approved.”⁴⁵

As far as CRCS headquarters was concerned, the matter was closed and the mission members would soon be on their way home. In mid-May Dennis attended a meeting of the Central Council, where he outlined the society’s work in Siberia during the past five months. It seems that he also concurred with the decision to close the Siberian mission.⁴⁶ Dennis had left the Far East before the BMM’s lobbying efforts began; he may have been unaware of the strong British support for his mission’s continuation. If he was also miffed at his plan’s rejection, there is no indication of it. Word had reached Vladivostok by this time that, as the assistant adjutant and quartermaster general explained it, “the Canadian Red Cross will not continue its activity

⁴³NAC, Borden papers, vol. 103, microfilm, reel C-4334, 56429, Radcliffe to Borden, 3 May 1919, and *ibid.*, 56434, Borden to White, 5 May 1919.

⁴⁴CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:291, minutes of the EC meeting, 6 May 1919.

⁴⁵As quoted in NAC, Borden papers, vol. 103, microfilm, reel C-4334, 56451, W. R. Creighton to G. W. Yates, 7 May 1919. This letter indicated that a cable to Vladivostok had already been dispatched. If so, the telegram must not have reached its destination, because the same reply was sent again on 21 May.

⁴⁶“Some Serious Situations in Siberia Saved by Canadian Red Cross Society,” *Bulletin* 45 (June–July 1919): 13. This article claims it was Dennis who recommended the closing of the mission, but it is not clear when he did so.

as an organization in this country and consequently all applications for service are to be considered cancelled.”⁴⁷ The mission had already lost some of its members, as well as all those representatives formerly attached to the British Red Cross. Brooke, the medical director, left Vladivostok on 9 March, and the chaplain Mackenzie-Naughton, who had provided valuable assistance to the mission, left aboard the first troop transport on 21 April.⁴⁸ Of the original CRCS team, only Matron Potter remained; she returned to Canada with her husband on 5 June aboard the SS *Monteagle*.⁴⁹ Young and his accountant had earlier received permission to remain behind after this date, but only “for the purpose of winding up Canadian Red Cross business.”⁵⁰

It appears that Gwatkin’s negative response to Blair’s late April request may only have reached CEF(S) headquarters on 22 May.⁵¹ With the receipt of this message, it was clear that the Red Cross would not be maintaining its relief mission in Siberia after the departure of Canadian soldiers. Disappointed, but apparently unwilling to give up on its efforts to keep the CRCS personnel where they were, the British mission came up with a plan it thought would allow relief work to continue. The BMM concluded that even if the CRCS mission would close along with the departure of the military force, this did not

⁴⁷NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ C100-3 “Canadian Red Cross,” Brook to HQ, 16th Inf. Bde., 13 May 1919.

⁴⁸Two Canadians who had been working for the BRCS were also gone by this time, as were all other BRCS personnel. See NAC, WW1 personnel files for Boddington, Brooke, Mackenzie-Naughton, and Purvis. On 10 Apr. one CEF(S) official noted that “the British Red Cross has been closed down for some days and all officials connected with it dispersed.” NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 369, file B.H. 55-2, R. W. Stayner to HQ 16th Inf. Bde.

⁴⁹NAC, Grace Potter’s WW1 personnel file.

⁵⁰NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file Force H.Q. 49, 2 May 1919. Young had requested this a few days previously: *ibid.*, Young to Brook, 30 Apr. 1919. Young’s accountant was Sgt. Corrigan. See below, p. 144.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, Gwatkin to Blair, 21 May 1919.

necessarily mean that the relief work had to end. Nor was it out of the question for the Red Cross workers themselves to stay on and work under the BMM banner. Lieutenant-Colonel Charles G. Wickham, the BMM's assistant quartermaster general, writing for Knox, proposed to Elmsley that the Red Cross staff be allowed to remain in Vladivostok. Wickham made the point that

it would be a serious set back to British prestige in this country if no British organization of this sort existed.

I propose therefore to start a department of this Mission to collect and distribute such gifts, comforts and relief as can be obtained and to appeal to all Oversea organizations who are supporting or have supported British or Canadian Red Cross, to continue their efforts on behalf of this new Department.

Wickham informed the Canadian commander that several individuals and groups were already in the process of arranging suppliers for the proposed department:

Sir George Buchanan⁵² is pressing the British Red Cross in London and will, I think, be successful.

The War Office are taking up the question and appear to be prepared to dispatch shipments of stores required.

Colonel McDonnell [*sic* - McDonell], D.S.O. already has kindly written to Canada pointing out the very great shortage of Medical Supplies and has promised to give active assistance on his return.

[Organizations in] Japan and China are supporting us as well.

I think therefore, that there is sufficient justification for this Department.

Most importantly, Young was on board with the proposal. According to Wickham, the assistant commissioner had agreed, should it be approved by his superiors, "to undertake [the department's] organization, obtaining as far as possible the personnel required, from the Canadian Red Cross." "I should be much obliged," Wickham continued,

if you would approve such personnel of the Red Cross being transferred to this Mission as may decide to volunteer to remain.

The organization is well in touch with the situation and with existing sources of supplies. They have, throughout the time that they have been here, rendered most valuable assistance to this Mission.

⁵²The former British ambassador to Russia and chairman of the British-Russian Relief Committee. See "British-Russian relief," *Times* (London), 27 Sept. 1918, 3.

If you are in agreement with the principle of the establishment of this Department, I would request you would recommend to the Canadian Red Cross, that they hand over to it all stores, funds, etc. at present on hand in this country and that on return to Canada you, and the Officers of your Staff, will do whatever is possible to urge upon the Authorities there, the urgent need of continuing their support for this department.

I can guarantee that anything that it sent to it will be quickly and fairly distributed, direct through our own Officers, to the places where most needed.

The letter closed with a handwritten note: "P.S. I have just seen a cable from Canada stating that the Red Cross are prepared to continue shipping supplies provided that their distribution can be guaranteed."⁵³ As further evidence of the need for medical supplies in Siberia, Wickham attached a copy of a telegram written by Knox asking for help "in the interests of humanity": "Have inspected hospitals all along the front and found hospitals in terrible state. Russians are doing all they can but owing to lack of supplies cannot give even necessary help to wounded soldiers. Bandages, gauze, linen of all kinds, absorbent cotton, surgical, instruments and chloroform required at once."⁵⁴

At this moment of military success for Kolchak's army, the BMM's heads were determined to support the anti-Bolshevik cause in any way they could. Promises of medical supplies had already been made. The final stumbling bloc in making sure that the necessary goods reached those in distress was having staff on hand to look after handling and distribution. Since the CRCS officers already had experience doing this, it made sense that they would be urged to stay on and work directly for the BMM. Unfortunately for the British, Canadian military authorities felt that their hands were tied: Young had already been allowed to remain in Vladivostok to handle distribution of any remaining

⁵³NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file Force H.Q. 49, Wickham to Elmsley, 26 May 1919. There is a copy, without the postscript, in NAC, Borden papers, vol. 61, microfilm, reel C-4309, 30853.

⁵⁴NAC, Borden papers, vol. 61, microfilm, reel C-4309, 30850, Knox to British Consul General, Shanghai, 18 Apr. 1919.

stores, and the BMM was told that if they wished these to be given to them, they needed to arrange things with the assistant commissioner. “Your suggestion that the personnel of the Canadian Red Cross should be left behind to organize the department you propose to establish,” the British were informed, “is not approved as the wishes of the Canadian Government in this matter are clearly expressed in [Gwatkin’s] cable” of 21 May. Of course, the BMM was free “to communicate direct with Ottawa again if you wish to re-open the question.”⁵⁵

Despite the seeming finality of this letter, the matter was not closed, and further communication with Ottawa did not prove necessary. The next day, 29 May, in a sudden turn of events, Elmsley took matters into his own hands and resolved the situation. “As impossible consult you before sailing,” Elmsley informed the militia department, “have authorized Colonel D Young Remount Depot and Captain J S Atkinson 259th Battalion and four Other Ranks to continue here charge Red Cross for period not exceeding two months . . . Have taken this step urgent request British Mission who claim cannot handle Red Cross supplies now arriving in Siberia.”⁵⁶ It seems that this decision was also made without consulting or informing the CRCS.⁵⁷ There must have been a flurry of activity and discussion between the Young, top CEF(S) officials, and BMM representatives for Elmsley to go against what had been considered the clear wishes of his government. Judging from his time in Siberia, he was not one to make such decisions. Young was

⁵⁵NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file Force H.Q. 49, Brook to BMM, 28 May 1919. The CRCS did indeed direct Young to turn over his supplies and funds to the BMM: CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:15, minutes of the EC meeting, 10 July 1919.

⁵⁶NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file Force H.Q. 49, Elmsley to Defensor, 29 May 1919.

⁵⁷There is no indication in the minutes of the 10 June EC meeting that Young had done anything other than close up his work. CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:15.

notified that he and the five other men would be added to the small Canadian rear party, which was staying behind to wrap up CEF(S) affairs, as of 1 June so they could work with the BMM.⁵⁸

Those remaining included, in addition to Young and Atkinson, Private (later Acting Sergeant) William Thomas Wilbert Brown, Acting Sergeant James John Corrigan, Sergeant Frederick Arthur Fanning, and Acting Sergeant James Douglas Lever. Brown, aged thirty-five, had been with the Base Depot in Siberia, and had worked as an “Iron Moulder” in Toronto before entering the armed forces.⁵⁹ Young’s accountant, Corrigan, who was, at twenty-four, the youngest of the group, had been a clerk and cashier in civilian life. Like Young, he was a member of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, and had known the his boss since before coming to Siberia in early February to serve with the Remounts.⁶⁰ Sergeants Fanning and Lever, both aged twenty-seven, were with the No. 11 Stationary Hospital, and had arrived in Siberia with the advance party in late October. Both had indicated “clerk” as their occupations upon enlistment in the army. Fanning had spent some time the previous winter working on hospital trains transporting British troops between Omsk and Vladivostok. Interestingly, Lever was from Mount Dennis, Ontario, a small community now part of Toronto named for Colonel Dennis’s great-

⁵⁸NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 369, file B.H. 55-2, Brook to Young, 29 May 1919. Brook informed Young the same day, presumably earlier in the day, that Atkinson’s application to transfer to the British mission could not be considered because “there is not now time for this application to be submitted to Ottawa for approval.” Ibid., file FORCE HQ C100-3 “Canadian Red Cross,” Brook to Young, 29 May 1919.

⁵⁹NAC, WW1 personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 1191-27, Brown, William Thomas Wilbert, 3040956; NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file Force H.Q. 49, Pte. Wilbert Brown’s declaration of intent to remain in Siberia, no date.

⁶⁰NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 372, file Force H.Q. 49, Young to Brook, 30 Apr. 1919; NAC, WW1 personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 2017-4, Corrigan, James John, 300640. Corrigan was the witness when Young signed his will in Dec. 1918.

grandfather.⁶¹

Apart from the small rear party, all CEF(S) personnel had departed from Vladivostok by early June. Over the next month the six CRCS men, all now “on command” to the British mission, undoubtedly spent much time with British officers and men and worked much more closely with them than they had before. It was during this time that Atkinson and Young had a meeting with Wickham to discuss the possibility of changing the CRCS’s mind about its Siberian unit. As Atkinson remembered a few years later, “Young said that if he could only get back to Canada and tell the Canadian Red Cross about conditions in Russia, they would not be so apt to close the Siberian Mission.” Wickham agreed to cover Young’s expenses, providing further evidence of the importance of the CRCS’s work to the BMM’s larger goals in Siberia.⁶² Douglas Marr Brown later explained the decision:

The Canadian troops, while in Siberia, had seen the great suffering of the Russian people, had often thought that, as we were supposed to be in that country to help the people why shouldn’t we do all in our power to relieve their necessities. So Colonel Young left the work to be carried on by the Assistant Commissioner [i.e. Atkinson] and returned to Canada to take up the matter of relief work among the Russians with the officials at home.⁶³

With high hopes of keeping his job in the Far East, Young, accompanied by Corrigan, left Vladivostok on 4 July 1919.⁶⁴ Camilla Khorvat, head of the Harbin branch of the Russian Red Cross, wished him “a very happy voyage and a speedy return”: “When you arrive at your Mother Country, tell all your citizens that the Russian people will bear and

⁶¹NAC, WW1 personnel files, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 2989-28, Fanning, Frederick Arthur, 527247; *ibid.*, box 5607-31, Lever, James Douglas, 2606852. Fanning accompanied Captain Menzies to Omsk in the winter. On Fanning see also NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 374, file ADMS 2-1, nominal role, and *ibid.*, vol. 376, file ADMS 20-1, J. H. Box to Clarke, 19 Dec. 1918.

⁶²CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 7:86, minutes of the EC meeting, 2 Sept. 1925. Atkinson was “almost sure” that Wickham had pledged to “pay the expense.”

⁶³CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 2.

⁶⁴NAC, Young’s and Corrigan’s WW1 personnel files.

forget the hardships they have to survive, but the generosity and readiness with which the Canadian Red Cross and you, their worthy representative, rendered them assistance will always be alive in their memory.” Before setting sail from Japan, Young stopped in Peking, Shanghai, Tokyo, and Yokohama, where he “secured the active co-operation of the British organizations in” those towns for continued aid work in Russia. The British Red Cross must also have agreed to finance Siberian relief by then: Young spent £5,000 of their money on gauze and absorbent cotton while in the Far East.⁶⁵

Lobbying the CRCS to Resume Relief Shipments to Siberia, Summer 1919

After the decision was taken in Toronto to close the Vladivostok relief mission, and Elmsley decided to keep a few men on anyway to help the BMM, efforts got underway to urge the CRCS to send more relief shipments to Siberia.⁶⁶ Some of Young’s last official acts as assistant commissioner for the CRCS Vladivostok mission included writing letters to his superiors in Toronto that pointed out “the need which exists in Siberia.” He was not the only one urging that the Red Cross support continued relief efforts in the region. As Wickham mentioned in his April proposal, Lieutenant-Colonel Geoffrey Lidbrook McDonell, a Canadian working for the BMM, sent a general appeal for supplies to “private individuals in Toronto and Ottawa.” McDonell’s appeals were forwarded to CRCS headquarters, which considered them, along with the contents of Young’s letters, during the Executive Committee meeting on 10 June: “It was decided to make up a

⁶⁵“Our Supplies in Siberia Assist Kolchak to Conquer Bolshevism,” *Bulletin* 46 (Aug.–Sept. 1919): 13–14.

⁶⁶The last CRCS goods had been shipped in March on Dennis’s instructions. CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 4:264, Dennis to Marshall, 12 Mar. 1919 and NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 363, file 120, Elmsley to Defensor, 13 Mar. 1919.

special shipment, as the articles named both by Col. Young and Col. McDonell [presumably articles such “as bandages, gauze, and absorbent cotton”⁶⁷] are in stock in large quantities.”⁶⁸ Dennis also offered his advice, and indicated that he would meet with Marshall to discuss the situation. Lord Glasgow, a captain in the Royal Navy and director of naval transport in Siberia, also lobbied the CRCS to resume relief shipments to Siberia when he travelled through Canada on his way back to Britain.⁶⁹

Marshall’s support was clearly a prerequisite for any Red Cross action, but government officials were also being pressured by men who had seen service in Siberia. As an organization legally independent of the government, no politician or bureaucrat could force the CRCS to do anything not expressly outlined in its charter. Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering their close relationship during the war, this separation between the Red Cross and Ottawa was not always recognized by outsiders. Lord Glasgow, for example, took the BMM’s message to Gwatkin and Borden, who was then back from Europe. In early July, Gwatkin addressed the following cable to the British mission: “Have seen Lord Glasgow. Our medical department can supply immediately drugs, dressings and technical equipment in large quantities, and Canadian Red Cross can supply clothing and equipment for patients. Cable requirements if any at once.”⁷⁰ “Lord Glasgow,” Borden wrote to Marshall a few days earlier,

called on me this morning to point out the urgent need for medical relief and supplies for the Russian forces in Siberia. It appears that while the American Red Cross are bringing relief to the Siberian population they will do nothing on behalf of the Russian soldiers, their reason apparently

⁶⁷These were the “chief demands in Siberia” according to a newspaper article: “Peace-time work of the Red Cross,” *Toronto Globe*, 18 June 1919, 10. No source for the comment was indicated.

⁶⁸CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:15, minutes of the EC meeting, 10 June 1919.

⁶⁹According to *ibid.*, 5:24, minutes of the EC meeting, 15 July 1919.

⁷⁰NAC, Borden papers, vol. 61, microfilm, reel C-4309, 30865, Gwatkin to BMM, 5 July 1919.

being that to do so would look like military intervention. Lord Glasgow states that there is a great shortage of medical supplies in Siberia and that adequate supplies are nowhere available on the other side of the Pacific; the suggestion, therefore, is that the Canadian Red Cross Society, because of our geographical position, might be willing to send supplies[.] He adds that the British Mission in Vladivostock are setting up an organization which will be able to receive and distribute such supplies. I am enclosing, for your information, a copy of certain communications on this subject which Lord Glasgow left with me.

Lord Glasgow informs me, however, that Colonel Douglas Young, of the Canadian Red Cross Society, is about to report to you fully on this whole matter.

While agreeing to bringing these representations to your attention I informed Lord Glasgow that the Canadian Red Cross Society was not a Government body, and that we could exercise no control over its policy.

Borden then asked Marshall to provide him with “a confidential memorandum explaining the whole position in which you found yourselves there, and the reasons which led to the withdrawal of your organization in Siberia.”⁷¹

Marshall replied to Borden’s letter in early July. The chairman gave Borden some basic information about the Siberian mission, including that it had taken over from the British Red Cross unit. In response to Borden’s query about why the mission had withdrawn, Marshall explained, in words that were perhaps slightly unbecoming the head of a humanitarian organization, that

had our troops remained we would have been glad to continue the work, but upon them being recalled the writer declined to take the responsibility of leaving four or five Canadians at the mercy of the people of Russia, and therefore gave instructions that all supplies together with whatever monies we had on hand should be turned over to the British Mission. This we understand Colonel Douglas Young did.

In a late communication received from Colonel Dennis I am informed that Colonel Young should arrive home at an early date, and it is intended to have a conference with him, and, if he can assure us that the goods will be properly looked after, we can undoubtedly make some more shipments.

When in Ottawa yesterday I had a conference with the Minister of Militia and also General Fotheringham, and it is evident that your Government have a very large supply of drugs on hand which would no doubt render valuable service in Siberia. If the government would either arrange to ship these over themselves, or turn them over to the Canadian Red Cross Society we would, once we were assured by Colonel Young that the conditions were satisfactory, ship them immediately.

I think there is no question that many of the drugs that the Militia Department have on hand will only deteriorate and become of little value if not used by an early date.

May I say that I also received a letter from Lord Glasgow explaining the position to me.

⁷¹Ibid., 30848–30849, Borden to Marshall, 30 June 1919.

I am strongly of the opinion that if you could have a conference with the Minister of Militia we could find means to dispose of a large quantity of your drugs and hospital supplies in Siberia where they would undoubtedly render good service.

As soon as I have had an interview with Colonel Douglas Young I will write you again in the matter.

It is just one year ago since we met in Paris to present the Canadian Red Cross Hospital to the French. What a remarkable change in the world's affairs since that date!⁷²

Borden then replied that he would ask "General Mewburn to attentively consider your suggestion regarding the possible utilisation of Canadian army drugs and hospital supplies in Siberia, providing Colonel Young is, on arrival, able to assure you that conditions there are satisfactory."⁷³

The CRCS finally made a firm commitment to send supplies to Siberia in mid-August. After receiving word that the government would sell them the needed drugs, the Executive Committee of the CRCS agreed to ship \$50,000 worth of goods from its own stores and at least \$5,000 worth of drugs. "Owing to what appears to be a great necessity for supplies in Siberia," Marshall wrote to Borden on 13 August, "I am to-day issuing orders to have the supplies packed, and within the next day or so will send to Ottawa requisition for the drugs. Should the necessity continue, and it is deemed wise for us so to do, we will doubtless make further shipments."⁷⁴ A few days later Marshall visited the CRCS warehouse in Montreal, where the shipment was being packed. Even so long after the end of the war, the CRCS had a large stockpile of supplies that had never made it overseas and were not needed in Canada. By early September, after Marshall met with Mewburn, Fotheringham, Gwatkin, and Colonel H. D. Johnson, the government agreed to

⁷²Ibid., 30861–30862, Marshall to Borden, 5 July 1919.

⁷³Ibid., 30869, Borden to Marshall, 7 July 1919. Marshall's letter was forwarded to Mewburn: ibid., 30870, Yates to Mewburn, 7 July 1919, and 30866, letter to Yates, 11 July 1919.

⁷⁴CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:28–29, minutes of the EC meeting, 12 Aug. 1919; NAC, Borden papers, vol. 61, microfilm, reel C-4309, 30871, Marshall to Borden, 13 Aug. 1919.

cover the costs of shipping four carloads of supplies to Siberia. Marshall was then asked to instruct Laycock to reopen his Vancouver office to handle the shipment when it arrived from eastern Canada.⁷⁵

Young's Trip to Canada and Reopening the CRCS Mission, September 1919

In all of the discussions and decisions about sending supplies to Siberia, the destination was always the BMM and not a Canadian Red Cross mission. Concerned as usual about the safety of any goods shipped, the CRCS wished the goods to arrive “in charge of a suitable officer”⁷⁶—presumably Young, whom the Toronto officials were expecting to return to Canada at any moment—but the idea of reopening their Vladivostok mission seems not to have entered into their plans. Not long after headquarters agreed to begin relief shipments to Siberia, though, Young arrived in Canada to lobby them to do just that. He was back by the end of August. His trip was well-timed to influence decisions taken at the Central Council meeting in Winnipeg, held on 9 and 10 September. Ahead of the meeting, Young spoke with the Duchess of Devonshire, who was both the wife of the governor general and president of the CRCS.⁷⁷ He likely also met with Marshall, who had been eager to see him on his return from Siberia, and other council members.

What Young said in his various meetings is unknown, but it seems likely that he emphasized first and foremost the social devastation in Siberia and the medical needs of Russian soldiers and civilians. This was the case when Young spoke with a reporter from the *Daily Sun* after his arrival in Vancouver. The resulting article stressed the

⁷⁵CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:33, minutes of the EC meeting, 2 Sept. 1919.

⁷⁶Ibid., 5:29, minutes of the EC meeting, 12 Aug. 1919.

⁷⁷The duchess had been president since May 1917. CRCS, *Annual Report 1917*, 22.

humanitarian catastrophe in Siberia and what Canadians could do to help:

That the most appalling conditions obtain in Russia, particularly in regard to the supplies of disinfectants and sterilized medical necessities, is the statement of Col. Douglas Young, who arrived in the city on Tuesday from Russia. Hospital supplies of all kinds, including absorbent cotton and disinfectants, are necessary immediately, if the situation is to be ameliorated before the coming winter. Col. Young described in a graphic manner the hardships which the soldiers and civilians have to put up with. He told of Russian soldiers dragging themselves into dressing stations and advanced hospitals with no covering to infected wounds save a dirty rag torn from their clothing, which in many cases was in rags.

These conditions, which apply to the army, the best cared-for part of the population, are doubly grave from the standpoint of the civilian. Refugees from the iron rule of the Bolsheviks in Central Russia are flocking to centres and in Omsk it is estimated that over 8,000 unfortunates have no shelter other than dugouts and holes scratched in the ground. Owing to insanitary conditions and the unusual congestion, epidemics of typhus and other diseases have broken out in many places with an attendant death rate of amazing proportions.

The Canadian Red Cross society has been doing yeoman service and since last February has sent many thousands of pairs of pyjamas for use as under-clothing, but its efforts cannot hope to cope with the situation. The Russian Red Cross, which has been reorganized under the leadership of General Horvath, is using its best endeavors to combat the various deficiencies of clothing and drugs, etc., but the demand far exceeds the meagre supply. The necessary articles are not in the country and unless outside aid is forthcoming immediately, the coming winter gives promise of being one of the worst that the people of Russia have experienced.⁷⁸

Young's prediction, which sounded very much like Dennis's warning of a year earlier, was perhaps on the minds of Central Council members when they met in early September. Young did not attend the meeting. Instead, on Borden's suggestion, he was addressing members of parliament about his experiences in Russia.⁷⁹ In his talk, according to a newspaper report of the event, he made several key arguments for why Canadians should continue to help Siberia. First, he reminded the parliamentarians of Bolshevik atrocities, committed against not only White troops but also seemingly innocent civilians. To back up his statements, Young showed "a remarkable collection of photographs."⁸⁰ Second, he made the case that CRCS support increased the prestige of

⁷⁸"Unable to secure medical supplies," *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 26 Aug. 1919, 3.

⁷⁹NAC, Borden papers, vol. 179, microfilm, reel C-4381, 97976, G. W. Yates to W. S. Middlebro, 9 Sept. 1919; CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:40, minutes of CC meeting, 9–10 Sept. 1919.

⁸⁰NAC, Borden papers, vol. 179, microfilm, reel C-4381, 97977, Yates to Middlebro, 9 Sept. 1919. At least some of these photos presumably documented Bolshevik atrocities, and may have been supplied by the BMM in the hopes that visual evidence of the enemy's brutality would help sway

Canada—and, more importantly, the British Empire—among the Russian people. Third, taking a cue from his former boss, Colonel Dennis, he stressed the importance of the Siberian market and warned that a Bolshevik win in the civil war would give Germany control of Russia’s riches. Sending Red Cross supplies was what Canada could “do to help the down-trodden Russian people” and help sweep “the menace of Bolshevism” from Russia.⁸¹

If Young used any of these arguments in his discussions with top Red Cross officials, it would help explain the important decisions taken at the Winnipeg meeting with regard to continued CRCS work in and for Siberia. At the meeting Marshall updated the councillors on the Siberian situation. The assembled delegates were also likely shown letters that praised Red Cross work in Siberia, stressed the need for medical supplies, and fed into national and organizational pride. Captain Cazalet, for one, had headily written, perhaps with the Red Cross’s leadership in mind, that “the work done by the Canadian Red Cross has really very materially bound closer those ties which bind the Empire together.”⁸² It would have been music to the council members’ imperialist ears. Governor General the Duke of Devonshire, who was patron of the society, “endorsed the necessity of aiding Siberia by means of Red Cross supplies.” After some discussion, the delegates agreed to continue shipments of supplies, rubber-stamping the Executive Committee’s

Canadians to keep up relief shipments.

⁸¹These comments are based on a newspaper report of Young’s address: “Must assist the Russians,” *Toronto Globe*, 11 Sept. 1919, 11. This article is reproduced in app. 2. See also “Lt.-Col. Douglas Young on Russian horrors,” *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 10 Sept. 1919, 11.

⁸²A few letters were published in the Aug.–Sept. issue of the *Bulletin*, which appeared after the Winnipeg conference. Some of the letters may have been written with the intention of influencing the Red Cross decision-makers.

decision and Marshall's actions. In a strong statement of support for Siberian relief, the Council agreed to ship supplies worth \$100,000. This was twice the amount endorsed earlier by the Executive Committee.⁸³ It was also precisely the amount that Dennis had requested from the trade department for Siberian relief in December 1918, a sum the CRCS had refused to provide any part of after being approached by Maclean. When it came to clout with CRCS decision-makers, the acting minister of trade was clearly no match for Borden and a handful of heavy hitters in the British and Canadian military establishments. The council also thought it advisable to have someone "accompany the supplies to give detailed attention to the distribution." In other words, Young had his job back.

The issue that took up the most time at the Central Council's September meeting was discussion of the society's new peacetime program. Until recently the CRCS had only been active during wartime, as stipulated in the 1909 charter. This was also true of some other Red Cross societies around the world, but the First World War brought important changes. The war had devastated life on so many levels and in so many places; physical damage and psychological scars were everywhere in evidence in Europe and among POWs and soldiers; and in Canada, returning combatants brought influenza home with them. Fifty thousand Canadians died of the disease. As an organization dedicated to health during wartime, it was not a stretch for the Red Cross to wish to transform itself into a organization that would work to improve the health of all Canadians after the "war to end all wars." In early 1919 the CRCS had asked the government to amend its charter

⁸³CRCSNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:39-40.

to allow it to “aid in the prevention and alleviation of human ills and suffering” during peacetime.⁸⁴ Parliament had approved the change in June, adding the following line to the list of CRCS duties in the charter: “In time of peace to carry on and assist in work for the improvement of health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering throughout the world.”⁸⁵ The September Central Council meeting was the first opportunity for the society to consider its new peacetime agenda. Completion of war work was stressed.⁸⁶

The shift of the CRCS from a war- to peacetime organization would cause future problems for the Siberian Red Cross personnel. For the moment, however, Young returned to Vladivostok assured of considerable, ongoing support from the society. After leaving Ottawa, he addressed meetings in Regina and Calgary, where he pointed “out the seriousness of conditions in [Siberia] and the necessity for continuing Red Cross relief.”⁸⁷ He then set sail for Vladivostok in late September. Corrigan did not return to the Far East with him, having received his discharge from the military earlier in the month.⁸⁸ If the contents of the CRCS publication, the *Bulletin*, were any indication of why the society had been willing to continue its support of Siberian relief work, Young had a strong mandate to “Assist Kolchak to Conquer Bolshevism.” Atkinson and the five other

⁸⁴CRCS, *Annual Report 1918*, 26. See also correspondence in NAC, Borden papers, vol. 248, microfilm, reel C-4418.

⁸⁵House of Commons, *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*. 2d sess., 13th parl. 1919. 9–10 Geo. 5, 3:3162–3164.

⁸⁶CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:45.

⁸⁷This was what Young spoke of to the Calgary Board of Trade. CRCS, Alberta Provincial Branch, *Annual Report 1919* (Calgary: Provincial Head Office, 1920), 18; CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:53, minutes of the EC meeting of 30 Sept. 1919.

⁸⁸CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 6:3, Marshall to A. Stanley, 16 Sept. 1919, cited in the minutes of the EC meeting, 8 Dec. 1921; NAC, Corrigan’s WW1 personnel file.

Canadian relief workers attached to the British Military Mission in Vladivostok had presumably been doing this all summer, distributing left-over CRCS and CEF(S) medical supplies, donations from British aid societies in China and Japan, and goods provided by the British Red Cross. In mid-October, after Young had already left Canada, Knox cabled Young to tell him to stay and organize relief work in Canada,⁸⁹ but it was later established that the message “was sent under a misapprehension, and that in view of the large amount of supplies being forwarded from the Canadian Red Cross and with the promise of continued support from Canada, there would be ample work for Colonel Young” in Vladivostok.⁹⁰ Young was back at his far eastern post by early November.

* * *

During the Great War, the Canadian Red Cross was willing and eager to do whatever it could to support the war effort. In the Siberian military expedition, organized and initially dispatched before the armistice, the loyalty and fierce patriotism of the relief organization was very much in evidence. National pride and self-confidence was not far behind, the latter feeling reinforced in February when the British Red Cross mission in Siberia came under the direction of dominion officers. Even so, when the CEF(S) withdrew, the CRCS gave little or no thought to having its representatives remain in Siberia “at the mercy of the people of Russia.” Thankfully for the BMM and those on the receiving end of Canadian generosity, it did not take much lobbying—and ego massaging—to convince the Red Cross leaders of their organization’s indispensability to the British cause and, rather more hyperbolically, the future well-being of the Russian state. Most

⁸⁹CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:60, minutes of the EC meeting, 21 Oct. 1919.

⁹⁰Ibid., 5:64, minutes of the EC meeting, 20 Nov. 1919.

Canadians were tired of war; tired of the outside world's problems. The CRCS's leadership was less inclined toward the new Canadian insularity. The various individuals who urged the continuation of the Red Cross's humanitarian work in Siberia could always make a strong case for the necessity of relief work. But there were many calls on the CRCS's generosity in the postwar period; necessity alone cannot explain why headquarters reversed its decision on the maintenance of its relief unit in Vladivostok.

Though the CRCS was its own master, it was still one of the top patriotic organizations in the country and had spent the war years working closely with military and government officials in pursuit of the same ends. Because of this, while it was not a foregone conclusion that government pressure would reverse the Red Cross's decision to close its Siberian mission, it was a good bet. Borden, once he realized the political difficulties of keeping Canadian soldiers in Siberia, and when the British failed to supply adequate justification for the intervention after Germany's defeat, refused to lend his support to the continuation of Britain's ill-considered Siberian activities. Relief work was a different matter entirely: There were no Canadian lives at stake. Instead, imperial and national pride was potentially on the line and, simply put, any achievement for the CRCS was an achievement for Canada. The maintenance of the CRCS mission was a small thing that Canadians could do to fulfill their responsibilities as actors on the world stage.⁹¹ Borden and the Red Cross decision-makers, most of whom probably shared Dennis's imperialist bent, were also undoubtedly pleased to know that the CRCS mission

⁹¹For a general discussion of Canada's relationship with the British and the wider world during and after the war, see Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English, *Canada, 1900–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 229–231.

had proved so “indispensable” to the empire.

Aiding soldiers and civilians in desperate Siberia was laudable humanitarian work, even if the motives for it were not purely altruistic. Even so, it is important to recognize that the recipients of Red Cross endeavours would come from only one side of the civil war. This was something the CRCS was not shy of publicly proclaiming. Here is the *Bulletin*, editorializing on one of the reasons for reopening the Vladivostok mission:

The reign of the Bolshevist [beyond the Urals] must of necessity be one of self-destruction if he is kept within the boundaries of the territory which he devastates and corrupts, for he neither constructs nor provides for a future, but should he break those bounds the result would be disastrous from every standpoint. Siberia and eventually Russia would become German and Germany would have resources which would render her better prepared in her next war than in her last. So the efforts of Kolchak and the All-Russian Government will react for civilization as well as Russia, and the co-operation of the Canadian Red Cross in assisting to maintain their army at a state of efficiency cannot be over-estimated.⁹²

The first Geneva Convention had stipulated that all wounded or sick soldiers, no matter their nationality, would be treated. During the Boer War Ryerson’s young society had claimed the moral high ground by aiding “Briton, Boer and Colonial alike.” In the First World War the language of neutrality all-but disappeared. And when it came to Bolshevism and Russian civil war, the Red Cross agreed to take an active role in the British anti-Bolshevik campaign. Canada was not at war with the Bolsheviks. Britain and the Canadian Red Cross—rhetorically speaking, at least—were.

⁹²“Our Supplies in Siberia Assist Kolchak to Conquer Bolshevism,” *Bulletin* 46 (Aug.–Sept. 1919): 13.

CHAPTER 5

‘IN THE INTERESTS OF HUMANITY’: SIBERIAN ADVENTURES, FALL 1919–WINTER 1921

You ask why I am anxious enough to go to the Red Cross to work overtime? Well, you see I am not over here for my health exactly and there is more money attached to the job there. Believe I shall get another dollar and a half a day. Not to be sneezed at these hard times! The poor soldier should get all he can.¹

Company Quarter Master Sergeant Douglas Marr Brown

If I could only fly over and personally explain the conditions over here, and the wonderful amount of good that the Canadian Red Cross is doing, I know that the people at home would realize the necessity in the interests of humanity for helping these poor suffering souls who are simply crying out in their agony for help.²

Lieutenant-Colonel David Douglas Young

If Young was returned to Vladivostok to help Kolchak rid Russia of Bolshevism, he was too late. As it turned out, British officers had urged the continuation of Canadian Red Cross aid to the White forces in Siberia during the dying days of Kolchak’s westward push and, consequently, of British support for the short-lived Siberian dictator. After some early successes, by the middle of the summer his forces were rapidly retreating ahead of the advancing Red Army.³ And by the time the CRCS was ready to send Young back to Vladivostok, the British government had decided that Kolchak was a lost cause. Even Churchill and Knox, in July and August, respectively, had given up on the “Supreme Ruler.” The latter claimed further support would be a waste of resources. On 5

¹CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 6, item 156, 30 Nov. 1919.

²Letter from Vladivostok, quoted in “Canada may name delegate,” *Toronto Globe*, 13 Apr. 1920, 10.

³Mawdsley, *Russian Civil War*, 154.

August the War Office informed Knox of its decision to withdraw support from Kolchak. Instead, it would concentrate on supplying General Anton Ivanovich Denikin, the White leader in South Russia who was still in the early stages of his offensive.⁴ A short-lived offensive in September raised hopes for a Kolchak victory in Siberia.⁵ By New Year's Day, 1920, however, the Red Army could claim victory over most of Siberia west of Lake Baikal.

An important reason for the Central Council's strong support of Young's mission—to participate in Britain's anti-Bolshevik campaign—thus ended even before the new commissioner set sail for Vladivostok in late September. But the needs of Siberians from a humanitarian point of view were arguably more than they had ever been. As a society newly committed to, as was the entire Red Cross movement, the “improvement of health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering throughout the world,” the CRCS shipped supplies to and supported Young's relief work in Siberia until the fall of 1920. As Vladivostok emptied of its foreign inhabitants, and civilians and White Russian soldiers fled ever further east to escape the Red Army, the humanitarian crisis showed no signs of ending. During 1920 the Canadian relief workers lobbied their superiors in Toronto to keep their mission open: There was no end in sight to the social devastation in the Russian Far East. At least two of the three last mission members had also become fond of “Vladi,” and hoped to extend their stay. In the end, it was a battle they lost, but not before they helped thousands of Russian soldiers and destitute refugees, and had a few adventures of their own. The relief workers returned home for good in early 1921.

⁴Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 485–486; Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 2:207.

⁵Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 533–538; Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 2:232.

This marked the end of the Canadian Red Cross's involvement in civil war Siberia.

**Adventures in Civil War Siberia
and Vladivostok, Fall 1919–Fall 1920**

Vladivostok had been under Allied military control since the summer of 1918, and “the respected, statesmanlike and diplomatic” General Khorvat “had enjoyed wide-ranging authority in the Far East” as Kolchak’s governor.⁶ A year later, the railwayman’s tenure in office came to an end when, in July 1919, Kolchak removed him, bringing in the more hard-line General Sergei Nikolaievich Rozanov in his stead. It was a bad omen; Allied leaders were not pleased. Rozanov brought large numbers of Russian troops into Vladivostok in September, ignoring an Allied agreement that stipulated that only their own soldiers were to keep order in the city. For his part in the ensuing affair, Blair was fired by Knox at the end of the month.⁷ Eliot, who had been instrumental in supporting Dennis’s relief scheme, had also left Siberia by the fall.⁸ These two men joined the growing ranks of the city’s former foreign residents. Gone too by early November, was the HMS *Carlisle*, the two British battalions—the Middlesex and Hants completed their evacuations by 8 September and 1 November, respectively—and many members of the British mission. The remaining BMM and CRCS personnel were left feeling “rather naked”⁹ and “deserted.” According to Captain Reginald A. Savory, “Wickham’s right-hand-man,”¹⁰ “the atmosphere grew gloomier, the streets emptier and the knots of

⁶Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 560.

⁷Ibid., 560–563; Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 2:242–243.

⁸Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 2:232.

⁹A. C. S. Savory, “Vladivostok: 1919–1920,” *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 71 (Spring 1993): 15.

¹⁰CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 6, item 151, 2 Nov. 1919.

gossipers at the street-corners more furtive.”¹¹ Upon his arrival in Siberia, Young cabled CRCS headquarters: “Situation very grave; urgently require wool and flannel.”¹² These items could be used to make warm clothing for soldiers and civilians.

Before more supplies could be shipped, the political situation in Vladivostok worsened.¹³ On 17 November General Rudolf H. Gajda launched a revolt against Rozanov’s rule in the city. Though the young Czech officer had successfully guided Kolchak’s Siberian Army into Perm a year earlier, the two men had never fully trusted one another. In the summer of 1919 they had a falling out and Gajda gave his loyalty to the Socialist Revolutionaries. It was in the name of this rival political movement opposed to both Bolshevism and the right-wingers surrounding Kolchak that Gajda hoped to overthrow Rozanov. The attempted coup was a failure—Gajda’s supporters were denied entry into the city—and Rozanov’s troops, with the help of the Japanese, had no difficulty brutally putting it down.¹⁴ What exactly the CRCS man may have done remains unknown, but Captain Atkinson was decorated by the Russian authorities “for valiant service performed during the Gajda Revolution.”¹⁵ Wrote Sergeant Douglas Brown to his mother: “We have had quite an exciting week here as you would probably see by the papers. Just a little revolution but the military forces won this time. But I imagine their

¹¹Savory, “Vladivostok,” 15.

¹²CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:64, quoted in the minutes of the EC meeting of 20 Nov. 1919. The cable was received on 3 Nov. See also comments on the terrible condition of refugees in Vladivostok, late 1919, in Savory, “Vladivostok,” 18.

¹³CRCS HQ decided to put off more shipments until Young and Laycock could update them on the situation. CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:64, minutes of the EC meeting of 20 Nov. 1919.

¹⁴Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 475–477, 567–570.

¹⁵CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, 58A 1 103.4, file 9, item 224a, Young to J. W. Robertson, 8 Mar. 1921. Only a few months before, while he had been in command of the Russian army, Gajda had thanked the Canadian Red Cross for supplies donated to Russian troops at Ekaterinburg. See above, p. 57.

tenure of office is drawing to a close according to news and rumors from up country.”¹⁶

It was. Gajda’s attempted coup had come on the heels of the fall of Omsk to the Red Army in mid-November. Kolchak, increasingly unpopular with Siberian residents and the Czecho-Slovak forces that had made his regime possible, fled east toward Irkutsk only hours before his former capital was taken. Many other residents of the city, including most government officers and Allied representatives, had already boarded trains or otherwise begun their trek away from the advancing Reds. The dictator’s ever-shrinking forces quickly lost control of other Siberian towns, and he stepped down as “Supreme Ruler” on 4 January 1920. His regime had lasted a little over a year. As his train approached Irkutsk, which now had a pro-Bolshevik government, Kolchak gave himself up to a group of Czecho-Slovaks promising safe conduct. A week later, on 22 January, Kolchak was handed over to the Irkutsk authorities. The Czechs valued their own safety over that of Kolchak; if turning him over to the Bolsheviks would allow them safe passage through hostile territory, it was a deal they were willing to make. In early February, the former leader was executed.¹⁷ This was the beginning of the end of the White movement in Siberia, dealing it both a strong psychological blow and confirming the earlier Allied decision not to continue supporting the anti-Bolshevik cause in the region. The humanitarian catastrophe that was the retreat across Siberia—“that longest and most tragical retreat of which history has any knowledge”¹⁸—reached its height at the onset of winter. Here is Douglas Brown on the “mad rush down the Trans-Siberian

¹⁶Ibid., file 6, item 154, 23 Nov. 1919.

¹⁷For more on “the fate of Admiral Kolchak,” see Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 626-665.

¹⁸Sylvian G. Kindall, *American Soldiers in Siberia* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1945), 246. Kindall was a member of the American Expeditionary Force in Siberia.

Railway as beggars description”:

Everybody seemed panic-stricken. The railway through most of its length is double-tracked and traffic came eastward on both tracks. For miles and miles there was one train after another until the head grew dizzy trying to count them. Winter came [*sic*] upon them in all its severity. Half of the cars were merely freight or cattle cars with no means of heating; many of those with stoves had no fuel and no time to procure any; thousands were starving; in the hurry many had neglected to bring sufficient clothing and were freezing to death; the only water was melted ice or snow and that was far too precious to be used for washing; typhus, the most dreaded of all the sicknesses in Russia, broke out; so crowded were the trains that it spread like wildfire and hundreds and hundreds perished and were thrown out beside the track; engines were continually breaking down and stalling the whole long stretch of railway; might was right and the strong took from the weak, everybody was for himself and the only law was that of the pistol; nationhood was wellnigh forgotten—here were Russians, Poles, Czecho-Slovaks, British, Americans, Chinese, French,—all in one undescrivable huddle of misery. Omsk and Tomsk fell; Irkutsk became the prey of the Bolsheviks; Kolchak was captured¹⁹

The membership of the Canadian relief mission that was doing what it could to help alleviate the suffering had changed by the beginning of 1920 from the six men who had remained behind the previous June to work for the British mission. Of the latter group, only Atkinson, the secretary-treasurer, Lever, working as a stenographer, and Young remained. Corrigan had returned to Canada with his boss in July—and stayed there. Young sailed back for Vladivostok accompanied instead, it seems, by Lieutenant Allister Campbell Gillespie, a former member of the CEF(S). Gillespie had first arrived in Siberia in late February 1919 as commander of the Remount Depot, and left in early August after delivering horses to Omsk. He would have known Young from the time they both spent in Vancouver prior to embarking for Vladivostok—Young as director of remounts, and Gillespie as an officer in (and later officer commanding) the Remount Depot.²⁰ Gillespie had apparently come “back to Siberia to go up the line for the Red

¹⁹CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 4.

²⁰NAC, WW1 personnel file, RG 150 acc. 1992-93/166, box 3539-28, Gillespie, Allister Campbell, LT; NAC, War Diary, Assistant Director of Veterinary Services, Siberia, RG 9 III-D-3, vol. 5058, file 966, microfilm, reel T-11120, entry for 13 Mar. 1919; NAC, War Diary, Remount Depot, Siberia, Nov.–Feb. 1919; NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ 100-1, Brook to BMM, 2 June 1919.

Cross.”²¹ November saw the departure of Sergeants Fanning and William Brown.

Fanning joined the staff of the American Red Cross in Siberia: It paid better.²² And

Gillespie did not stay long in Siberia: He was back in Toronto by late January 1920.²³

The mission also had some local staff, including, in early December, “Miss Raite—interpreter, Miss Bondak—matron’s assistant (pretty much by herself just now as the matron is busy elsewhere), Austrian Prisoner at the warehouse, and a Chinese office boy. Oh, yes, two chauffeurs—one for the car and one for the truck. That is pretty much the staff at present—pretty small.”²⁴

Joining this group in late 1919 was Company Quartermaster Sergeant Douglas Marr Brown, whose services Young requested shortly after his return to Vladivostok.²⁵ The thirty-one-year-old had originally come to Siberia as a volunteer with the CEF(S), eager to avoid being sent “to that awful western front where they are not at all careful whether they kill anyone or not.”²⁶ Upon his arrival in Vladivostok in early December 1918 with the main contingent, Brown had expected to spend a couple of months doing

²¹CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 6, item 157, 7 Dec. 1919.

²²On Wilbert Brown’s departure date see his WW1 personnel file at the NAC. On Fanning, see CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 6, item 153, 16 Nov. 1919, and NAC, Fanning’s WW1 personnel file. Brown noted that two “Canadian stay behinds” were discharged and went to the ARC that week. Fanning left Vladivostok the following September. See CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 8, item 201, 13 Sept. 1920.

²³CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:79, minutes of the EC meeting of 27 Jan. 1920. Gillespie was apparently “just returned from Siberia.”

²⁴CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 6, item 157, 7 Dec. 1919. A Miss Tania Verestchagine was the mission’s interpreter and typist later on. See *ibid.*, file 8, item 198, 23 Aug. 1920. “Miss Vertschagin, niece of the well-known Russian artist,” had previously been Wilgress’s secretary. Wilgress, *Memoirs*, 53. She later “joined [the] Hongkong Bank [in Vladivostok] as Typist and Bookkeeper.” CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, J. W. B. Cattell to D. M. Brown, 4 Mar. 1921.

²⁵CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 2.

²⁶CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 4, item 80, 25 Aug. 1918.

little before going home.²⁷ In April, however, he applied for a transfer to either the CRCS or the BMM once he was no longer needed by his unit, the 16th Field Company, Canadian Engineers. His supervisor, Captain Charles Sumner Lund Hertzberg, recommended his application, and went on to praise Brown, for whom he clearly had high regard. He noted Brown's work had been "exceptionally good and conscientious"; that "he is very well educated and his conduct has been exemplary in every way"; and that he considered Brown "quite capable to carry on in any clerical appointment that may be vacant."²⁸ No wonder the NCO was snatched up for service with the BMM. He took up his new job in May.²⁹

Life with the military mission went well enough: Brown had friends in town among foreigners and Russians alike, had plenty to keep him busy in his spare time, was living in comfortable quarters, was doing little work, and had received a pay raise.³⁰ As he noted in early July, after spending the weekend on Russian Island, "The fates are certainly smiling on me, in fact you might say they were almost grinning aloud."³¹ When British troops started leaving the country, many BMM members went with them, forcing the mission to downsize its organization. "So I believe," Brown wrote on 19 October, that "I am to be transferred to the Red Cross. Rather hope so as the work is rather nice—superintending goods coming in and going out and keeping books. Ordinary store work.

²⁷Ibid., item 98, 11 Nov. 1918. See also NAC, WW1 personnel file, RG 150, acc. 1992-93/166, box 1133-21, Brown, Douglas Marr, 2005471.

²⁸NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 373, file FORCE HQ C100-3 "Br. Mil. Mission," Brown to OC 16th Field Company, Canadian Engineers, 11 Apr. 1919. Hertzberg's comments are on the back of Brown's application. Such extended positive comments were rare.

²⁹CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 5, item 123, 25 May 1919.

³⁰See Brown's letters to his mother and brother, John, in *ibid.*, items 124–127, and file 6, items 128–150.

³¹Ibid., file 6, item 129, 7 July 1919.

Then there is extra money in it Never refused, you know.”³² Two weeks later Brown was still with the BMM, though Atkinson was “very anxious to have me and Colonel Wickham, the chief push here, promised him that he could have me the beginning of this month.” Brown became increasingly unimpressed and annoyed with his British bosses.³³ Though earlier in the year he had jokingly complained of too little work, the departure of so many of the BMM’s staff had resulted in much more being expected of him. The hardworking NCO did not appreciate being taken advantage of. In early November the Red Cross wrote two or three letters to the BMM asking for Brown.³⁴ He was finally allowed to report to the CRCS on 1 December. Brown explained to his mother that working for the relief organization would mean more money in his bank account.³⁵

After joining the CRCS mission, Brown quickly settled in to his new job and surroundings in the Red Cross office on Aleutkaia,³⁶ one of Vladivostok’s main arteries. During his second week with the relief organization he was kept busy loading supplies for a trip “up country,” moving medicines to a storage facility, and searching for incoming goods. At the end of the week he could boast to his mother—he wrote to her every Sunday—that he had “a fairly good reputation around here now,” and was a valued, trusted, and relied-upon member of staff. After his recent troubles with the BMM, Brown liked working for the Red Cross. He was also happy to be in Vladivostok, was

³²Ibid., item 148, 19 Oct. 1919.

³³Ibid., item 151, 2 Nov. 1919.

³⁴Ibid., item 152, 9 Nov. 1919.

³⁵Ibid., item 156, 30 Nov. 1919.

³⁶There is a photograph of the office at 14 Aleutkaia in Robert C. Smith, *A Canadian in Siberia 1918–1921*, B.N.A.P.S. Exhibits Series, no. 12 (n.p.: British North America Philatelic Society, 1999), 49. This work is based on a museum exhibit of Douglas Brown’s letters. There is a copy at the Centre for Research on Canadian-Russian Relations at Carleton University.

taking Russian lessons with an eye to fluency, and was looking ahead to a future in the region.³⁷ But Brown and his superiors were not done having to deal with the BMM, which clearly controlled to some extent the personnel of the CRCS:

the Red Cross had an awful fight to get me from the British Mission and now, after only a month with them and just when I am getting things nicely in hand, the Mission orders me back. The R.S.M. is being invalided home and I have been swearing about it ever since I received a definite order to return. Col. Young and Capt. Atkinson have been fighting it for a week but of course the Mission have the whip-hand.

The move would also mean a pay cut. Brown decided to resign rather than go back to the BMM. “Of all the mis-managed outfits I ever saw,” he fumed, “this one takes all prizes, even including the booby.”³⁸ A few days later, despite the best efforts of his Canadian bosses, the situation had not changed:

Colonel Young and Capt. Atkinson fought it as hard as they could but it was of no use and I was ordered to report on Friday morning to Capt. Riviere, the A.Q.M.S. under whom the office is run. When I went over I told him that I did not think that I was getting a square deal and wanted to see the O.C.³⁹ He objected and didn’t give me any satisfaction. So at last he said, “If you are not satisfied to come over here, you can go home.” “Very good, sir, I’ll go home,” I said—rather to his surprise and chagrin. So he wired for accommodation for me on the “Empress of Asia” which leaves Japan on the 30th of January. Leave here on the 17th—(Shall have company as Heritage, the man they wanted me to relieve, is going at the same time)—have about ten days in Japan, call at Hong Kong and Shanghai I believe, and then to Vancouver. Feels rather good to think that I shall be through with the army in another couple of months or so. Liked it at the Red Cross, but did not want to come back to the old grind again [at the BMM]. Besides, it is time to get out of this country as the Bolsheviks will soon be here! Awful coward, eh?⁴⁰

Fortunately for Brown, Young “was not through fighting for” him. The Red Cross commissioner “put one over on the Mission,” Brown explained in early January: “He was going up the line himself and when he booked his passage he calmly booked one for me also and told the Mission that I was going up the line with him. We start either Saturday

³⁷CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 6, item 158, 14 Dec. 1919.

³⁸Ibid., item 162, 31 Dec. 1919.

³⁹This was Lieutenant-Colonel Wickham. Knox left Siberia on 26 Dec. 1919 after being ordered home. See Graves, *America’s Siberian Adventure*, 338, and Savory, “Vladivostok,” 20.

⁴⁰CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 163, 4 Jan. [1920].

or Sunday and expect to go as far as Chita. . . . Taking two carloads of supplies with us for refugees.”

As the Colonel says, “We may be three weeks and we may be three months up there” If there is a great need of stuff he will leave me in charge up there and come down. Then Capt. Atkinson will take some more supplies up to me. If there isn’t so much suffering as reported, then I suppose we shall distribute what we are taking up and then come right back. . . . We are going up on a “Typhus Train”—that is, a special medical train to combat typhus. Would not get the chance of going if we were not “Red Cross”.⁴¹

After some trouble readying the train, Brown and Young left Vladivostok on Monday night, the twelfth of January.⁴² This was Brown’s first time away from Vladivostok and he relished the opportunity for adventure. Unfortunately, the train did not get far. When it reached Harbin in the early hours of 19 January, there was a telegram waiting for them: Wickham was recalling them to Vladivostok. Apparently,

He had got alarmed because of some of the rumors he had heard from up-country. Hence the telegram.—and the American train kept on going of course. Disgusted! Well, rather! . . . It is so silly to have had to come back, but better luck next time. Other trains go back and forth,—there is no earthly reason why a Red Cross outfit can’t go.

Brown was angry with the “wonderful British Mission” for cutting short his first trip into the interior.⁴³

Wickham had good reason to be concerned about the safety of his charges. Bolsheviks took a group of British Railway Mission personnel, including two Canadians, prisoner in the Siberian interior in early January; they were released only ten months later.⁴⁴ Also in the first half of January, eight American engineers with the Russian Railway Service Corps and several members of the American Red Cross were reported

⁴¹Ibid., item 164, 8 Jan. [1920].

⁴²Ibid., items 165 and 166, 11 and 14 Jan. 1920.

⁴³Ibid., item 167, 25 Jan. 1920.

⁴⁴“Canadians held as prisoners in Siberia by Reds,” *Toronto Globe*, 2 Dec. 1920, 7; “From a Russian gaol,” *Times* (London), 23 Nov. 1920, 14.

captured by the Bolsheviks one hundred miles west of Nizhneudinsk.⁴⁵ Other relief workers also fell victim to the Bolsheviks during and after the Red Army advance. In the fall of 1919, for example, Henry Bartosiewicz was taken prisoner along with other relief workers on his ARC train. According to an interview he later gave to the *Manitoba Free Press*, they were “ordered to help in the hospital, looking after their wounded. We were released after two weeks and given our train and 50,000 roubles, with permission to go back, on the understanding that we were to take the chief emissary to Vladivostok on our train without giving him away.”⁴⁶ Though Brown did not think that the BMM should have ordered his party home in January, the danger of being captured may have hit home for him and his superior officer when they met one of the American railwaymen taken prisoner, Colonel Blunt, in April 1920.⁴⁷ It certainly should have when a Harbin paper falsely informed readers a month later that, as Brown told it, “the [Canadian] Red Cross train had been attacked at Chita, its personnel murdered, and the train pillaged.” Upon hearing the news, Marshall must have thought back to his earlier worry about “leaving four or five Canadians at the mercy of the people of Russia”! The BMM assured CRCS headquarters that the news was incorrect: Young had not been shot by the Bolsheviks. The Toronto officials had not believed it anyway.⁴⁸

⁴⁵“Red forces making way into Crimea,” *Toronto Globe*, 26 Jan. 1920, 18. The ARC personnel were released several weeks later: “Members of U.S. Red Cross released in Siberia,” *Toronto Globe*, 26 Feb. 1920, 4.

⁴⁶“Winnipeg boy has Kolchak’s silver belt,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 31 Jan. 1921, 6.

⁴⁷CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 5 Apr. 1920.

⁴⁸CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 184, 13 May 1920; CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:132, minutes of the EC meeting, 21 May 1920; “Suburban notes,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 5 May 1920, 10. See also CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 13 May 1920; comment of the men’s reported execution by the Bolsheviks in “Use kitchen knives in Siberian surgery,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 Mar. 1921, 24; and comment on Young’s reported shooting in “Place of volunteers in the Red Cross work,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 27 Oct. 1920, 22.

Despite the potential dangers, trips “up the line” were among the highlights of the relief workers’ time in Siberia. Vladivostok itself did not lack for excitement either, as the previous fall’s events had shown. There were more political changes to come in the city. When Brown left with Young on his first relief expedition, Vladivostok was still in Rozanov’s grip. When the two CRCS men returned on 22 January the unpopular military leader had just over a week left before being ousted in a coup. The situation in Vladivostok was “very tense” that last week of the month, and on the twenty-sixth, partisans entered Nikolsk and took over the reigns of power.⁴⁹ “As that is the first place of any size up the line,” Brown wrote home, “we expected something to happen here soon.”

Of course all sorts of wild rumors of Bolshevik armies on the way here were circulated but nothing definite happened until Thursday [29 January] when the city was placed under strict martial law.

The next day, delegates from Nikolsk arrived and met with Rozanov and a Japanese representative. The city’s residents got conflicting reports over what would happen next, but the situation was considered serious enough that in the “evening all American civilians in town were ordered by the American consul to go to the American Red Cross Barracks and to stay there.”⁵⁰ On the morning of 31 January revolutionary forces entered the city and Rozanov’s government crumbled. Historian Canfield Smith has noted that the “coup was, by all accounts, bloodless.”⁵¹ Rumours in town told a different story:

On Saturday rumors were early afloat that there had been fighting at First River, that there was shooting at Gneeloi Oogal (“East Bks.” direction), that a big fight was on at Sudenka [*sic* - Sedanka] (one of the summer resorts a short distance out) and so on. Many American[s] were

⁴⁹Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 13, 15.

⁵⁰CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 168, 1 Feb. 1920.

⁵¹Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 16.

patrolling the streets, the Japanese had machine guns at the station, Russian soldiers were numerous and no Russian officers were in sight, and the Russians had some big guns on the street just opposite our office.

Rumors spread that Rozanoff and his staff had fled (in fact nothing definite is announced yet as to where Rozanoff is although he is believed to be at Jap headquarters).⁵² About ten or eleven a crowd of Russian soldiers came down and took possession of the military headquarters offices and soon red flags, red ribbons, &c. were much in evidence. There was much cheering, the bands played the “Marseillaise” and everybody seemed overjoyed and the city took on a holiday appearance.⁵³

Indeed, a red flag even flew over the office of the British Military Mission.⁵⁴

The next day,

everything has continued in holiday vein. Many troops have come in and there are all sorts of red decorations. The crowd at present is good-natured and happy, the sale of liquor has been forbidden, and if the right ones do the leading the revolution will have been a great success. Let us hope that the “dark” (uneducated) people do not get carried away by unscrupulous demagogues.⁵⁵

The regime change was quickly accepted and the city became quiet once again.⁵⁶ The new government, the Provisional Zemstvo Government of the Maritime Province, appeared to be dominated by Socialist Revolutionaries, but Lenin’s Communist Party was really in control. The presence of the Japanese forced political moderation, and Moscow supported the formation of a “buffer state.”⁵⁷ In mid-February Brown reported that “everything has been quiet again this week, but the Russian press is becoming more and more bitter against the Japs, and I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if one fine day there wasn’t a bit of trouble with them.”⁵⁸ A month later, the city was decked out in red once again, and residents were demanding the withdrawal of all foreign troops:

Friday [12 March] was a great big Bolshevik holiday here. The city was decorated

⁵²This was true. Rozanov was then spirited away to Japan, as were others. *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵³CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 168, 1 Feb. 1920.

⁵⁴Savory, “Vladivostok,” 22.

⁵⁵CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 168, 1 Feb. 1920.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, item 170, 8 Feb. 1920.

⁵⁷Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 18, 24–26. See also N.G.O. Pereira, *White Siberia: The Politics of Civil War* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 152.

⁵⁸CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 171, 15 Feb. 1920.

everywhere with red—flags, streamers, banners, arches, &c, &c. Fancy lights at night. There was a monster parade in the morning of soldiers, sailors, tradesmen and workers of all kinds, and school children. They marched down Svetlanskaia (the main street) and Aleutkaia (our street), turned at the station plaza, and went back. So we saw the whole gorgeous pageant from our windows. The street was just packed all the way from Svetlanskaia to the station and then the tail of the parade was still on Svetlanskaia. Many of the school children, instead of walking, were conveyed on decorated motor lorries. One of these lorries had on it in English “My home is my castle” and then in Russian— “Down with intervention”. That is the great cry at present (Дорогой ИНТЕРВЕНСЯ [*sic*])[.]⁵⁹

The Japanese allowed the results of the 31 January coup to stand for a little over two months before, as Brown predicted, they took action. On the night of 4–5 April, the Japanese launched an offensive throughout the province. The attack was well-timed—it was Easter weekend—and in Vladivostok the Japanese encountered almost no opposition. “By the early hours of April 5,” according to Canfield Smith, “all major governmental institutions and means of communications had been seized, all Russian forces remaining in the city had been disarmed, and many Russians, including government and Party leaders, had been arrested.”⁶⁰ The Americans would never have allowed such blatant interference in Russian affairs, but they had completed their evacuation from Siberia on the first of the month, clearly another reason for the offensive’s timing. The zemstvo-Bolshevik government had been popular in the city, and the Japanese encountered plenty of non-military resistance. A news report based on an interview with Atkinson explained:

The occupation of Vladivostok by the Japanese produced many interesting complications. The city was Red in sentiment, and industrial activity stopped as soon as the little yellow men took charge of the government. Telephone girls refused to perform their duties, street car operators quit their work, everything was at a standstill. The Japanese righted conditions by turning over the reins of government to the Red forces and allowing them to administer the affairs of the big city. The Japs, however, maintained the right to police the city and keep a strong force constantly patrolling the streets. The district adjoining Vladivostok is also policed by the Japanese. These protective measures have been taken in order to protect Japanese property in Siberia and also to prevent an

⁵⁹Ibid., item 176, 14 Mar. 1920.

⁶⁰Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 40. For more on the attack, see 41–43.

invasion of Sovietism into Japan.⁶¹

Young and Brown were not in Vladivostok when the Japanese launched their attack. They had left the city on 31 March on their second “joy ride” together. Unlike their abbreviated January junket, this time they travelled on a dedicated British-Canadian Red Cross train and brought thirteen cars of supplies, including “medicines, hospital necessaries, and refugee clothing of all sorts.” In addition to Brown and Young, the “train team” included two British officers, Captains Peacock and O’Driscoll; Dr. M. Carthew, also working for the BMM; a fatigue party of four POWs to do the work of loading and unloading; a Chinese cook; three POWs as batmen; and one Chinese “boy.”⁶² They planned to go as far as Krasnoiarsk and Tomsk, cities well inside the newly expanded borders of Soviet Russia.⁶³ No doubt the destination was chosen because of letters such as this one, written by the British high commissioner, which reported serious suffering:

I am told, and I believe it is a fact, that numerous trains at the moment are standing on the line westward of Irkutsk loaded with refugees of whom all or nearly all are frozen to death. It is only natural that disease should have taken an enormous toll among this afflicted population and I am convinced that the figure of deaths which have taken place on the Siberian railway this winter, if ever they become approximately known, will almost defy belief. It has been no uncommon incident for sanitary trains to arrive at Irkutsk or further west with the whole of the medical personnel dead or incapacitated, and the sick and wounded reduced to perhaps a tenth of their original number. It is conditions such as these that the Red Cross have to face.⁶⁴

Getting past Irkutsk would require passing through Semenov-Japanese held lands and into Soviet Russia. To have managed to get a train out of Vladivostok at this time was

⁶¹“Capt. J. S. Atkinson returns to Siberia,” *St. Thomas (Ont.) Times-Journal*, 12 Nov. 1920, 1.

⁶²CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entries for 1 Apr. and 10 May 1920. Dr. Carthew had been the regimental medical officer for the Middlesex at Vladivostok. See NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 375, file ADMS 18-1, M. Carthew to Clarke, 7 Nov. 1918. A picture of the “train party”—the two Canadians, three Britons and, it seems, the four “fatigues” men—is in CWM, Brown collection, photo album, J-1 (19920041-003), p. 9.

⁶³CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 178, 28 Mar. 1920.

⁶⁴Quoted in “Canada may name delegate,” *Toronto Globe*, 13 Apr. 1920, 10. The British high commissioner was then H. W. Lampson. See Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 2:252–253.

somewhat of a feat, as testified to by the head of the international Red Cross prisoner repatriation mission. Attempting to go into Bolshevik territory was even more difficult.⁶⁵

At first, though, apart from the expected transportation delays and technical and infrastructure difficulties, the trip went well. The first stop was Nikolsk-Ussuriisk, where they arrived in the early hours of 1 April. Here was located “a large hospital which serves as a distributing centre for sick and wounded soldiers evacuated from the Siberian front, and this hospital, according to the statements of the Russian medical staff in charge, has been able to maintain itself only, thanks to the assistance given by the Canadian Red Cross.”⁶⁶ Not long after their arrival, Brown and Young were awakened by a doctor asking for supplies. Young spent four hours “interviewing various applicants. Even so close as this to Vladivostok the need is great,” Brown thought, “so what must it be farther up the line?” They dealt with the most urgent requests, including giving several large cases of refugee clothing to the Town Council. The next day was spent travelling through Manchuria, where they gave out no supplies since, in Brown’s words, “the Chinese work for a living.”⁶⁷ The CRCS men arrived in Harbin on 3 April, a Saturday, where they could do little over the Easter break. Harbin was an important supply centre; once the banks opened many food supplies were purchased there.⁶⁸

News of Japanese activities in the Russian Far East reached the men on 6 April.⁶⁹

Five days later the CRCS train was held up at a small station. The Japanese were to

⁶⁵Montandon, *Deux ans chez Koltchak*, 102–105.

⁶⁶Quoted in “Canada may name delegate,” *Toronto Globe*, 13 Apr. 1920, 10.

⁶⁷CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entries for 1 and 2 Apr. 1920.

⁶⁸CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 180, entry for 9 Apr. 1920; CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 9 Apr. 1920.

⁶⁹CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 182, 6 Apr. 1920.

blame: Twenty-five miles to the East, at Khailar (Hailar), “the Japanese, the miserable little brutes, arrested some eight or ten Russian engineers and trainmen, marched them off, and shot them, because they were suspected to having Bolshevik sympathies. The rest of the engineers around there took to the woods, and the track and sidings are blocked with trains without anyone to move them.” The engineers on the CRCS train were afraid, but were assured safe passage would be demanded for them because they were working for the British.⁷⁰ There was no mistaking the occupants of the train: A Union Jack was prominently displayed on the side of each car.⁷¹ The train was moving again the next day, and by 13 April they were in Manchuria City (or Station), where Japanese flags were everywhere in evidence. At the station there was an American Red Cross train that had been unable to go further west and, with all its supplies, was awaiting orders to return to Vladivostok.⁷² Clearly, would-be helpers could never count on reaching their destinations in civil war Siberia. In this case it was the Japanese who blocked the Americans’ passage.⁷³ The British-Canadian train had no such trouble, leaving for Chita at midnight. By this time, the Czecho-Slovak evacuation from Siberia was in full swing. Brown counted many “crowded Czech echelon[s] going east” during the trip to Chita, and he “gave one of the Czechs who spoke English well a few books as he said they were terribly hard up for reading matter.”⁷⁴ In June, nine thousand Czecho-

⁷⁰Ibid., item 180, entry for 11 Apr. 1920. The men were also given rifles at this point: CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 11 Apr. 1920.

⁷¹See the photos of the train in CWM, Brown collection, photo album, p. 7.

⁷²CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 13 Apr. 1920. See also Montandon, *Deux ans chez Koltchak*, 113.

⁷³Montandon, *Deux ans chez Koltchak*, 117–118.

⁷⁴CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entries for 9 and 10 Apr. 1920.

Slovak troops arrived in Canada on their way back home. They were welcomed with fruits, sweets, cigarettes, and (for the officers) cigars by the CRCS's Vancouver branch.⁷⁵

The train arrived in Semenov's city late in the evening of 15 April. On the men's first full day in Chita, Young busied himself "interviewing some of the powers that be," no doubt negotiating passage to the West.⁷⁶ Ten days earlier a new political entity known as the Far Eastern Republic had been proclaimed which was supposedly independent of Soviet Russia. Its Bolshevik founders claimed an immense swath of territory—everything east of Lake Baikal, including the Chinese Eastern Railway through Manchuria⁷⁷—but the military situation meant the new "buffer state" was largely fiction. The Japanese, Semenov, and what was left of Kolchak's once-large armies still controlled Chita. The Japanese were also occupying the railway through Manchuria.⁷⁸ Semenov and the Japanese, each for their own reasons, showed no signs of giving up the fight just yet. Despite the enmity between the Japanese and the Bolsheviks, the relief workers still hoped of being allowed to venture into the Far Eastern Republic. After all, Danish delegates had successfully gone west attached to a Chinese Mission train on 17 April.⁷⁹

Apart from Semenov, the most important White military leader based in Chita at this time was General S. N. Voitsekhovskii. An ethnic Russian, Voitsekhovskii had distinguished himself during the Czecho-Slovak drive across Siberia in 1918. He had

⁷⁵CRCS, British Columbia Division, *Annual Report 1920* (Vancouver: Office of the British Columbia Division, 1921), 11. For more on their journey through Canada, see A. Balawyder, "The Czecho-Slovak Legion Crosses Canada, 1920," *East European Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (June 1972): 177–191.

⁷⁶CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 16 Apr. 1920.

⁷⁷Pereira, *White Siberia*, 152.

⁷⁸Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 34.

⁷⁹CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 17 Apr. 1920.

taken command of Kolchak's Second Army in early November 1919, and had been among the last to escape from Omsk before the city was captured by the Red Army.⁸⁰ After the loss of Krasnoiarsk in January 1920, General Vladimir Oskarovich Kappel, who was in command of what remained of Kolchak's forces, his men, and their families left the railway and escaped to the East. The five weeks it took them to reach Lake Baikal is fittingly remembered as the "Ice (or Icy) March." On 25 January, the day before he died of frostbite, Kappel transferred supreme command to Voitsekhovskii.⁸¹ It was under the his leadership that the Whites advanced on Irkutsk in early February. The Bolshevik-dominated government then in power who were interrogating Kolchak had the admiral killed the night before the troops passed by the city. The "Kappelites" then crossed the frozen Lake Baikal, and continued on to Chita. Once there, Voitsekhovskii subordinated himself to the Japanese vassal.⁸²

Voitsekhovskii was among the first recipients of Red Cross goods upon the train's arrival at Chita. He also received ten cases of ordnance supplies that the BMM had sent for him.⁸³ Though the British government had long ago decided against further assistance to Kolchak, their representatives in Siberia were seemingly not through supporting the Whites in the Russian East. Voitsekhovskii dined with Young on 22 April. Two days later the colonel "paid a visit to that part of the front held by General Voistherovsky [*sic*]." "He seems much impressed with the good points generally of Voistherovsky and

⁸⁰Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 545, 549.

⁸¹Mawdsley, *Russian Civil War*, 231; Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 656.

⁸²Mawdsley, *Russian Civil War*, 232–233; Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 28–29. See also Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 662.

⁸³CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 18 Apr. 1920.

his brother officers—they are so different from Ataman Semenoff and his bunch of thieves. It is too bad,” Brown lamented, “that Voistherovsky cannot see his way clear to joining with the Bolsheviks and help to lead them in right channels.”⁸⁴ It was a naive wish.⁸⁵

Revolutionary Russian politics may not have been Brown’s strong suit, but he was a hard worker and he, along with the rest of the CRCS train team, distributed many supplies while they were stuck in Chita. Major recipients included the Military Hospital, the Railway Hospital, the Railway Workers’ Union, the Zemstvo Board and its hospital, and the Kappelites, whom Brown knew as the “Ural Division.”⁸⁶ These soldiers were certainly in need of all the medical and other assistance the CRCS could give them: One British officer, Captain McCullagh, later wrote that when Voitsekhovskii’s force of twelve thousand arrived in Chita, three-quarters of the soldiers were infected with typhus, a disease he called the “crowning horror” of the retreat;⁸⁷ Brown wrote that during their “terrible winter march through the woods,” the Whites had “left half their number on the roadside where their bodies soon became food for the army of Siberian wolves which followed them”;⁸⁸ and it was probably on this trip that Young found “2,000 men of Kappell’s [*sic*] army in hospitals, with either hands or feet frozen off.”⁸⁹ There were also

⁸⁴CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 22 and 24 Apr. 1920.

⁸⁵He was prepared to negotiate with the more moderate socialists in the Maritime Province, however. On Voitsekhovskii’s attempts at cooperation with the Maritime government, see Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 29–31. Negotiations were cut short by the Japanese offensive.

⁸⁶The Kappelites consisted “largely of workers from the Urals.” *Ibid.*, 28. Brown was seemingly unaware of the connection between “a company of soldiers known as the ‘Ural Division’” and General Voitsekhovskii. CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 24 Apr. 1920.

⁸⁷McCullagh, *Prisoner of the Reds*, 31. For more on the typhus situation see pp. 16, 18 and 31–35.

⁸⁸CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 5.

⁸⁹“Tells of conditions existing in Siberia,” *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 3 March 1921, 15.

many smaller distributions to those in need. And medical supplies, clothing, and ordnance were not the only goods on the train given out at Chita. At the request of a friend in Vladivostok, ten cases of bibles were delivered to a representative of the Bible Society.⁹⁰

The CRCS men also arrived in Chita in time to find themselves in the middle of an active war zone. Even so, Brown was upset that the Japanese did not want the train to go further west.⁹¹ His disappointment at having lost a chance for more adventure was likely compounded when Young went off to help British civilians who had been stranded at Irkutsk.⁹² Brown and the other men also lived rather well while on the train, perhaps another reason for his wanting to extend the trip.⁹³ The NCO's much older former roommate, when he visited the train at Harbin, "was very much surprised to find that I had a whole car to myself—said I was living like a general After twenty-one years' service he has to share a coupe with three others and a baby bear! Better to be lucky than rich."⁹⁴ After Young's return, the men spent several more days in Chita giving away supplies. They then headed back toward Vladivostok. There was less to do on the return trip. Supplies were given to a sanitary train at Manchuria City, the Russian Red Cross in Harbin, and the hospital and zemstvo (i.e. local government) in Nikolsk.⁹⁵

When Brown and Young arrived back in Vladivostok on the evening of 19 May,

⁹⁰CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entry for 21 Apr. 1920.

⁹¹CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 180, entry for 25 Apr. 1920.

⁹²CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entries for 28 Apr. and 1 May 1920. Young returned with seven Englishmen and a Canadian who had been an officer with the 260th Bn.

⁹³See CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 180, entries for 1, 2, and 15 Apr. 1920.

⁹⁴Ibid., item 184, 13 May 1920.

⁹⁵CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entries for 9–18 May 1920.

there were fewer people with whom they could share their stories of the trip than there had been before they left the city. Brown noted that “everything [was] quiet in Vladivostok. Looks rather lonesome with no British uniforms to be seen.”⁹⁶ The British Military Mission had finished up its work a few days earlier; Brown and Young had met the last mission members at Harbin on the thirteenth, as they were on their way to Shanghai.⁹⁷ The relationship between the BMM and the small CRCS mission had been mutually beneficial, though not without frustrations for the Canadians. On the positive side, the two shared resources, including accommodation in Vladivostok and information on the situation “up country.”⁹⁸ The BMM also paid the expenses of at least Atkinson and Brown, and its disbandment meant the loss of “several advantages such as cheap board, free room, cheap tailoring, barbering, &c.”⁹⁹ On the negative side, as the lengths to which Young had to go to acquire Douglas Brown had made all too clear, the CRCS mission had to rely at least partially on the cooperation of British officers to fulfil its staffing requirements. Despite this, the BMM’s departure was likely a bad thing for the Canadians: They could no longer count on British protection should trouble arise, and CRCS headquarters might consequently be less inclined to let them remain in Vladivostok. Lever also departed Vladivostok in early May,¹⁰⁰ leaving Atkinson alone at

⁹⁶CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 185, 23 May 1920.

⁹⁷NAC, Atkinson’s and Brown’s WW1 personnel files; CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 184, 13 May 1920. Atkinson and Brown were struck off strength from the BMM on 10 May.

⁹⁸Atkinson lived at the British mission mess. United States Senate, *The Deportation of Gregorii Semenov* (Hong Kong and Vancouver: Beamur International, 1972), 92. The relationship between the BMM and the CEF(S) had sometimes been confused and strained as well. See, for example, comment in NAC, Ardagh fonds, diary 3, entry for 1 June 1919.

⁹⁹CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 177, 20 Mar. 1920. See also below, n. 150.

¹⁰⁰NAC, Lever’s WW1 personnel file.

the CRCS office to await the return of his two Canadian colleagues. The British were ending their political involvement in Siberia as well. The foreign secretary informed the British high commissioner in mid-March that his post had been abolished.¹⁰¹ Brown told his mother that

They want me to stay on here until the wind up. Pretty nearly up to me to do so too as Lever has gone; our warehouse man, a Prisoner of War, leaves in a few days after being about six years from home; and our only office man, another P. of W. expects to go to Shanghai about the middle of June. That will leave us pretty short handed, especially as Capt. Atkinson is rather ill and has done practically nothing for the last three weeks.¹⁰²

The captain soon recovered, and in mid-June went into the Siberian interior himself. Though he had spent three weeks in Japan the previous winter, this would be the first time he ventured into Siberia since his arrival in Vladivostok in January 1919. A train car was loaded with many supplies—“if his car was big enough and he was here long enough, he wouldn’t leave us anything at all,” Brown predicted—and it was attached to a Czecho-Slovak Red Cross train. The head of the international Red Cross in Siberia panned the Czecho-Slovak train as being really a commercial mission but, whatever the intentions of his travel companions,¹⁰³ they managed to get Atkinson to Manchuria City on 8 July. He was “held up there for about two weeks; could not get further, because transportation was in such condition, until finally Ataman Semenoff happened in there with an armored train, and he took me on to Chita; had my car hitched to his train.”

I might say that at first when I made the request, not knowing what my object was, there was hesitation in taking me on, but when he found I was going up with relief or succor to British

¹⁰¹Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 2:253.

¹⁰²CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 186, 30 May 1920.

¹⁰³Ibid., items 171, 175, and 188, 15 Feb., 7 Mar., and 13 June 1920. The quotation is from item 188. On the Czecho-Slovak train, see Montandon, *Deux ans chez Koltchak*, 154–159.

prisoners, he immediately gave his consent to my car being hitched to his train and gave orders that the train should run only as fast as my car could stand.

After his arrival in Chita, Atkinson proceeded to try and arrange for the distribution of his Red Cross supplies and for passage into Soviet territory, negotiating through Semenov and the Japanese Fifth Division. The captain was in Chita for ten days, and then headed west to the Japanese front at Sokhondo, a town between Chita and Verkhneudinsk, the capital of the Far Eastern Republic.¹⁰⁴ His intended destination was Irkutsk, where “there were a number of British prisoners in the hands of the Bolsheviki.” He hoped “to get through to them with a carload of food and clothing.” Atkinson did, it seems, manage to make it into Bolshevik territory, something likely facilitated by the recent end of hostilities between the Japanese and the Far Eastern Republic.¹⁰⁵ According to a newspaper article based on an interview with Atkinson, the lone Canadian

was a prisoner of the Bolsheviks for 17 days in 1919 [*sic*],¹⁰⁶ but was used very well. He was endeavoring to take a carload of food and clothing through to the British prisoners in Omsk [*sic*], when he was apprehended by Red soldiers and was forced to remain in the car with a strong guard outside at all times. He finally succeeded in obtaining permission to get the car through with only the loss of some tobacco and cigarettes. He had no complaints to offer about his treatment by the Bolsheviks. The British prisoners were later released, having been members of the British Military Mission and captured when General Kolchak fell back.¹⁰⁷

Atkinson arrived back in Vladivostok on 17 August.¹⁰⁸

During Atkinson’s time in Manchuria and Chita, he formed a favourable first-hand impression of Semenov. He had also, while living at the British mission mess, heard

¹⁰⁴US Senate, *Deportation of Gregorii Semenov*, 92–93, 97; Montandon, *Deux ans chez Koltchak*, 169.

¹⁰⁵The two signed a treaty on 15 July 1920: Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 55.

¹⁰⁶Both Brown and Atkinson made it clear that the latter did not go “up country” until the summer of 1920. See CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 188, 13 June 1920, and US Senate, *Deportation of Gregorii Semenov*, 92.

¹⁰⁷“‘Reds’ have no regard for human life; disease and famine in Russia,” *St. Thomas (Ont.) Times-Journal*, 16 Mar. 1921, 6. This article is reproduced in app. 3.

¹⁰⁸CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 8, item 198, 23 Aug. 1920.

many reports from British and Russian officers coming “down the line” of conditions in the interior and about Semenov personally.¹⁰⁹ He went to some lengths to impress his views upon American officials in the spring of 1922 when he testified on Semenov’s behalf at a US Senate committee hearing. Asked about Semenov’s character, Atkinson replied that the British had

found him to be really a very reliable man so far as our experience with him was concerned. We had appealed to him several times for assistance and had in various ways asked him to assist us in getting our supplies through, and we always found him both sympathetic and ready of help. We had, I suppose, hundreds of trainloads of goods going through the territory to Ekaterinburg and Irkutsk and Omsk, and so on, for the British mission, and at no time was there a single interference with those trains, or anything missing. At one time we placed a trainload of Red Cross supplies left in Chita practically under his care until we made arrangements for its proper distribution, and there was not a box of it opened. He did not even ask us for anything more than we decided to give him, and we spread the goods partly to his officers and men, and others to the general Russian civil officers. He did not take anything more than we gave him, although he had the full power to have taken it all had he desired to do so.¹¹⁰

Such comments surprised the committee;¹¹¹ they also would have come as a surprise to some former American and British officers in Siberia who had complained of Semenov’s interference in railway traffic, and of his outright theft of rolling stock, equipment, and other goods passing through his territory during 1918 and 1919.¹¹² Brown never mentioned having to give supplies directly to Semenov when he and Young were in Chita in the spring of 1920, though perhaps all the goods they distributed while there was payment enough. Another explanation may be that Semenov spared Red Cross relief trains: According to Henry Bartosiewicz, “His manner of taking toll from passing trains

¹⁰⁹US Senate, *Deportation of Gregorii Semenov*, 93–102.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 94–95. Atkinson was likely incorrect in stating that there had been no interference with British military supplies. See Colonel E. S. MacLeod Prinsep, “Knox’s Mission, Siberia, 1919–1920: The Personal Reminiscences of One of its Members,” *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* 81, no. 1 (Oct. 1960): 60.

¹¹¹The Americans who testified against Semenov had little good to say about him. Another Canadian from Siberia, Colonel Warden, testified on Semenov’s behalf in Vancouver after the ataman was admitted to Canada in Mar. 1922. US Senate, *Deportation of Gregorii Semenov*, 54–55, 51.

¹¹²See Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 456–457.

was simple. He followed the rule of ‘fifty-fifty’—half of everything. Red Cross trains, were, however, respected.”¹¹³

Train cars, it seems, were a different matter. In July 1920, only days before Atkinson made Semenov’s acquaintance, the International Committee of the Red Cross mission had problems with the Cossack ataman. They eventually had to cede two of their cars to him.¹¹⁴ The British-Canadian relief train had left Chita in May 1920 with fewer cars attached than when it arrived in the city—maybe Semenov took ones emptied of supplies off the men’s hands.¹¹⁵ If so, this gave rise to no comment in Brown’s letters or diaries, even though Brown did not think highly of “Semenoff and his bunch of thieves,” nor did Atkinson ever mention it at the hearing. Instead, the captain concluded that he had found Semenov “to be very considerate and always to be relied upon when we needed help or assistance or protection in any form [in Chita].”¹¹⁶

Relief Work among Russian Soldiers and Refugees

Adventures “up the line” and having front-row seats to Vladivostok’s “comic-opera politics”¹¹⁷ were fringe benefits for the Canadians Red Cross men. In between the excitement, they carried out considerable relief work. The Vladivostok mission

¹¹³“Winnipeg boy has Kolchak’s silver belt,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 31 Jan. 1921, 6. If this was true, it seems it was not true of some of Semenov’s men. See Montandon, *Deux ans chez Koltchak*, 120.

¹¹⁴ARC and Swedish Red Cross trains did not get off so lightly. See Montandon, *Deux ans chez Koltchak*, 119–120.

¹¹⁵See CWM, Brown collection, train diary, entries for 9 Apr. and 6 May 1920.

¹¹⁶US Senate, *Deportation of Gregorii Semenov*, 97. Historians have not treated Semenov and the other Cossack atamans in Siberia nearly so kindly. See Mawdsley, *Russian Civil War*, 137; Pereira, *White Siberia*, 55, 111, and 146; and Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 385. Smele, pp. 457 and 602–605, even blames Semenov’s antics for helping ensure Red Army victories in the fall of 1919 and Kolchak’s downfall early the next year.

¹¹⁷Pereira, *White Siberia*, 147.

distributed supplies that came from Canada as well as from seventeen British aid societies in China and Japan, the British Red Cross, and goods left over by the British Military Mission. According to Atkinson, about half of the money and articles distributed by the mission to Russian refugees, not including medicines, came from the Canadian Red Cross.¹¹⁸ Brown later gave an indication of the specific items received and distributed by the relief mission:

Thanks to the people in Canada we had large supplies of underclothing for men, women and children; we had thousands of yards of flannelette and other cloth; we had many hundredweights of yarn; we had large quantities of medicines and hospital necessities. In addition to all this we received twice a month during the worst part of the period shipments of made up clothing from a British Society in Shanghai, other supplies from Hong Kong, from Peking, from Yokohama, from Tokio, and from a few smaller organizations in other towns in the East. We received large supplies of medicines and hospital sundries from the British Red Cross and from the medical department of the British Army in Siberia. We received and distributed flour and canned milk from the Chinese Benevolent Society. All these supplies we distributed where the need was greatest from Vladivostok to Chita.¹¹⁹

After the withdrawal of the British forces, these humanitarian efforts were directed primarily at Russian refugees, including orphans and victims of Bolshevik atrocities, and soldiers. The CRCS mission distributed clothing to the poor; gave clothing, medicines, and medical supplies to railway workers and their hospitals;¹²⁰ gave “considerable assistance to returning Siberian prisoners,” including employing a few of them;¹²¹ established field dressing stations for the Russian army; “provided homes for . . . destitute refugees by converting delapidated [*sic*] freight and passenger cars into dwellings”; distributed supplies among the thousands of refugees living at the railway

¹¹⁸“Red Cross Council prepares campaign,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 2 Mar. 1921, 9; “Russian refugees live in freight cars,” *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 25 Oct. 1920, 4;.

¹¹⁹CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 5.

¹²⁰CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 9, item 224a, Young to Robertson, 8 Mar. 1921.

¹²¹CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:152, minutes of the EC meeting, 30 July 1920; CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 175, 7 Mar. 1920.

yard, and transported those needing medical attention to hospital;¹²² helped equip hospital trains that travelled the railway; did “generous, noble and splendid work . . . for the Czecho-Slovak army”;¹²³ and distributed medicines and hospital supplies to hospitals in Vladivostok and other centres.¹²⁴ Assistance was also given to “the Russian Red Cross which had many willing workers in the city of Vladivostok but which was woefully [*sic*] short in supplies of all kinds.”¹²⁵ This help included the holding of a combined CRCS-Russian Red Cross concert, dance, and cabaret in early March 1920. The Canadians took care of serving refreshments, including cakes supplied by “the British women of the town.” According to Brown, “Our part of it netted about 30,000 roubles after all expenses were paid, that is about \$150⁰⁰ not very much, but will help them some.”¹²⁶ Brown who, as secretary, was responsible for writing up the mission’s reports and keeping the books, boasted that the mission

gave away in July [1920] for example over 2500 towels, over 2000 pairs of socks, 1683 shirts, 1357 suits of pyjamas, 1039 made up parcels with anywhere from eight to fifteen articles in each, and so on. Our grand total was 63 cases given as cases, 1039 parcels, and 24,818 articles. Quite a business considering how small our staff is. And of course, giving away supplies is not the only work of the Red Cross by any means.¹²⁷

Brown may also have been thinking of the mission’s role as an investigator of what would today be called “crimes against humanity.”¹²⁸

¹²²“Russian refugees live in freight cars,” *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 25 Oct. 1920, 4.

¹²³Czecho-Slovak Consul General at Vladivostok, quoted in “Tells of conditions existing in Siberia,” *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 3 Mar. 1921, 15.

¹²⁴CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 5; CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 9, item 224a, Young to Robertson, 8 Mar. 1921.

¹²⁵CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 5.

¹²⁶CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 175, 7 Mar. 1920. Brown especially liked a cake baked by the wife of the Standard Oil agent in Vladivostok, who was “famous for the quality of her ‘eats’ anyway.”

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, file 8, item 196, 8 Aug. 1920. Brown was named secretary in early June. See *ibid.*, file 7, item 187, 6 June 1920.

¹²⁸Atkinson testified that “as a Red Cross institution we would have investigated” reports of mass slaughter. US Senate, *Deportation of Gregorii Semenov*, 100.

Former members of the Russian elite, who now found themselves in dire straights and in fear for their lives, also benefited from the mission's supplies, as well as the Canadians' hospitality and intercession. Even after the Japanese offensive, Vladivostok was a socialist town. In an attempt to assuage his mother's fears, Brown noted that life in the city was "not so bad if one is a foreigner. For a Russian it is different—if he offends the powers that be he is liable to be clapped into prison any old time and wait patiently there for a change of government."¹²⁹ Of course, Vladivostok was still a better place to be than was Soviet Russia for some. This was an important reason why the city had an impressive cultural life: Many "artistes" had fled Bolshevik rule and were now entertaining audiences in Harbin and Vladivostok.¹³⁰ Most refugees, of course, were unable to find work, and had sold whatever personal belongings they had to pay for passage to Vladivostok. Another reason for their destitution was because their savings had become worthless through inflation and currency change. One of Young's friends, for example, started out with \$50,000 worth of tsarist roubles, but when he managed to take the money out of the bank, "it was valued at just one twentieth part of a cent, or worse than nothing at all."¹³¹ Upon his return home, Atkinson told a newspaper reporter that he had helped "men and women of the noblest blood of Russia":

Modestly, Captain Atkinson admitted that he had interceded on behalf of many of these poor unfortunates, and had assisted in getting one beautiful Russian princess and her three lovely children out of the country into Japan, where they are now residing. Her husband was killed during the war. Captain Atkinson helped many other prominent Russians escape the wrath of the Bolsheviks, utilizing many ingenious methods of getting them away, but he declined to discuss these incidents to any great extent.

"We were not supposed to do it," he explained. "I'll tell you, though, that the Canadian

¹²⁹CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 186, 30 May 1920.

¹³⁰See comment in *ibid.*, file 8, item 192, 10 July 1920.

¹³¹"Bolshevik rule forcing Russia into barbarity," *Calgary Daily Herald*, 5 Mar. 1921, 32.

Red Cross uniforms helped many a refugee to pass through the danger zone into safety. There was no better disguise than that.”¹³²

The BMM’s Captain Savory remembered bringing the daughter of one of his Russian friends in Vladivostok to the CRCS mission for some clothing:

There were General and Madame Inostrantsev with their daughter Mary. The Inostrantsev’s [*sic*] were among the last to survive, in some distress. Poor Mary had practically no clothes. We took her to the Canadian Red Cross, which fitted her out for a skirt far too big and long for her, a short overcoat with a tartan pattern, a Balaclava cap, and a pair of laced boots reaching almost to her knees. Even in this outrageous gear she looked beautiful.¹³³

In August 1920, Brown and Young shared their home with a refugee, who was “the wife of a Russian Colonel of the old regime and is one of the better type of Russians.”¹³⁴

The Canadians, like their British colleagues, were strongly anti-Bolshevik and felt a moral responsibility to assist their former allies from the Great War. As such, the relief workers were most proud of the help that they gave to Russian soldiers and their families. This was something they made much of upon their return home to Canada. Young, in a lengthy letter to the CRCS chairman, included the following comment on the hardships faced by “better class Russians”:

Added to this awful suffering is the realization that they are largely, indeed almost entirely, widows and orphans of the men who fought with us in the early part of the war, widows and orphans of the men who lie dead on the western battlefield, widows and orphans of the men whose dead bodies helped to form a rampart that saved not only France and England but all civilization from destruction.¹³⁵

Brown made similar comments:

So you see the people whom we were helping were the wounded who had fought against

¹³²“Reds’ have no regard for human life; disease and famine in Russia,” *St. Thomas (Ont.) Times-Journal*, 16 Mar. 1921, 6.

¹³³He was in Vladivostok until mid-Feb. 1920. Savory, “Vladivostok,” 19, 23.

¹³⁴CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 8, item 197, 14 Aug. 1920. “Madame” left later in the month: *ibid.*, item 198, 23 Aug. 1920.

¹³⁵CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 9, item 224a, Young to Robertson, 8 Mar. 1921. This letter is reproduced in app. 3. See also “Red Cross pleased Russ,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 Mar. 1921, 24.

Bolshevism, which is one of the biggest enemies the civilized world has yet encountered; the wives and children of these men; the wives and children of the men also who had held the Eastern Front against the German armies and who were either lying in German [sic] prison camps or sleeping their last long sleep on the battle fields of the Eastern Front. So do you not think they were entitled to every help we could possibly give them?¹³⁶

Atkinson claimed that many of the refugees in Siberia were “widows and orphans of officers and soldiers who fought against the Germans when allied to the British during the great war.”¹³⁷

Despite the Canadians’ enmity toward Bolshevism, the mission gave assistance to groups which and individuals who did not share their distaste for the revolutionary creed. After all, if the elections held in June 1920 were any indication, the settled residents of Vladivostok and neighbouring centres were overwhelmingly “Bolshevik”: When the new Popular Assembly met, eighty percent of the representatives were Bolsheviks.¹³⁸ And the Japanese were probably right about the railway workers. Many were undoubtedly pro-Bolshevik.¹³⁹ Though the BMM had severely reduced its commitment to Kolchak by the fall of 1919, and the anti-Bolshevik cause was in shambles, the CRCS mission, unlike the American Red Cross,¹⁴⁰ remained where it was. The mission members believed, for good reason, that, as Young put it, “Bolshevism is like an incurable [sic] cancer,”¹⁴¹ and

¹³⁶CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, pp. 4–5.

¹³⁷“Russian refugees live in freight cars,” *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 25 Oct. 1920, 4.

¹³⁸In Brown’s understanding of the term, anyway. CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 189, 20 June 1920. See also Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 53–54.

¹³⁹Railway workers tended to be among the most radical elements in Russia, especially in outlying regions, such as Siberia, which had a much smaller industrial working class than the main cities in European Russia.

¹⁴⁰See below, pp. 190–191.

¹⁴¹Young, quoted in “Bolshevik rule forcing Russia into barbarity,” *Calgary Daily Herald*, 5 Mar. 1921, 32. This view was only reinforced by reports—and harrowing human evidence—of Bolshevik atrocities. See, for example, the comments on the “10,000 men, women and children” massacred at Nikolaievsk, two hundred miles north of Vladivostok: “Dead bodies showing frightful mutilation are daily drifting down along the coast line, as a mute appeal against the atrocities. The Canadian Red Cross Society station at Vladivostok has aided some 150 refugees from this town, many of whom show marks of

largely stayed out of Soviet territory. Even so, being a White Russian was not a prerequisite for receiving Canadian aid.

Atkinson's Trip to Canada, Fall 1920

By early 1920, the \$100,000 authorized by the Central Council in September for Siberian relief had been spent.¹⁴² No doubt in an attempt to persuade the society to renew its commitment to Siberian aid, Gillespie attended an Executive Committee meeting in Toronto on 27 January. The former relief worker “gave first-hand information on the need in Siberia and the alleviation which Red Cross supplies had given. He stated that underwear, hospital supplies of all sorts, and refugee clothing were most needed, and that sewing machines would be of great assistance with the material in bulk.” Gillespie also assured the committee that any supplies sent would be distributed, and he was asked to stay over for the Central Council and annual meetings in early February.¹⁴³ Perhaps at Gillespie’s urging, “further assistance for Siberia amounting to but not exceeding \$50,000. was authorized” by the council.¹⁴⁴ By the end of the year, two-thirds of that amount had been spent.¹⁴⁵ While the sums expended by the CRCS on Siberian relief were much, much less than what the American Red Cross spent in Siberia, the Central

mutilation and torture.” “Russian refugees live in freight cars,” *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 25 Oct. 1920, 4.

¹⁴²“Co-ordinate societies for peace activities,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 Feb. 1920, 4.

¹⁴³CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:79, minutes of the EC meeting of 27 Jan. 1920.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 5:92, minutes of the CC meeting of 3–5 Feb. 1920.

¹⁴⁵CRCS, *Annual Report of the Canadian Red Cross Society for the Year 1920*, (Toronto: CRCS Head Office, 1921), 27. For more on the CRCS supplies sent to Siberia, see CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:118, 115, minutes of the EC meeting, 23 Apr. 1920; *ibid.*, 5:144, minutes of the EC meeting, 22 June 1920; and *ibid.*, 5:156, minutes of the EC meeting, 6 Oct. 1920; *ibid.*, 5:70, minutes of the EC meeting, 30 Dec. 1919; CRCS, *Annual Report 1919*, 48; CRCS, Alberta Provincial Branch, *Annual Report 1920* (Calgary: Provincial Head Office, 1921), 25; CRCS, British Columbia Division, *Annual Report 1920*, 18; “Send funds to Siberia,” *Vancouver Daily Sun*, 20 Nov. 1919, 2; and “Women’s activities,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 1 May 1920, 10.

Council's decision to continue supporting relief efforts in Siberia came at around the same time that ARC headquarters ordered the "complete recall" of its Siberian work.¹⁴⁶

Judging from comments that Brown made in letters home, there existed some uncertainty at the Vladivostok office over the mission's future in the region from February 1920. Early that month, about fifteen British mission members sailed for home, and on the eighth, Brown wrote:

Expect a British warship in here to-day, and that may clean out practically all the rest of them. Do not know exactly what we will do, but may be leaving the first of March. Don't let this influence your letter writing however as we are just as likely to be here until summer. The Colonel has a good job here and I imagine he is not at all anxious to lose it.¹⁴⁷

In March Brown told his mother, who clearly wondered when her son would return, that "the Red Cross expects to remain until September. We have just leased our warehouse for another six months and paid the rent in advance. Capt. Atkinson has wired for his wife to come out so you can see he doesn't anticipate much danger here."¹⁴⁸ The Red Cross chairman, Dr. James W. Robertson, who had earlier replaced Marshall, told the Executive Committee in late June "that Colonel Young would return to Canada about September 1st."¹⁴⁹ That date may have been chosen because it was expected that Atkinson and Brown would be demobilized from the Canadian army in August. After that, the Red Cross would have to cover much more of their expenses.¹⁵⁰ But as September approached, it seems that Young, who had retired from the Canadian military in January

¹⁴⁶The ARC spent in total about \$23 million in Siberia. Foster Rhea Dulles, *The American Red Cross: A History* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), 210–211.

¹⁴⁷CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 170, 8 Feb. 1920.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., item 177, 21 Mar. 1920.

¹⁴⁹CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:144, minutes of the EC meeting, 22 June 1920; *ibid.*, 5:116, minutes of the EC meeting, 23 Apr. 1920.

¹⁵⁰See NAC, personnel files for Atkinson and Brown. Atkinson was demobilized on 2 Aug.; Brown on 1 Sept. 1920. See also CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 177, 21 Mar. 1920.

and was receiving a pension,¹⁵¹ decided to extend his stay in Vladivostok. At the end of July, Brown reported, “the Colonel I believe wishes to remain here a little while longer—until December—and I believe is writing to the Head Office for authority.” Perhaps Young did not want to abandon Siberians in need. As Brown put it, “there are so many needy people here and we are about the only organisation now that is doing anything for them. The American Red Cross has been closed for some little time and the few of them who are left are simply winding up affairs and disposing of the automobiles, trucks, &c. &c.”¹⁵²

Though Young sent letters to Toronto on a regular basis,¹⁵³ no doubt attempting to make sure, in part, that CRCS headquarters continued to support his work, the men rested their hopes for a longer stint in Siberia on Atkinson. The captain returned to Canada in September to take “up with the Head Office the question of the future of our work in Siberia—whether it will be continued or whether we shall be recalled immediately. He rather expects the latter, but the Colonel is hoping for a longer lease of life.”¹⁵⁴ Atkinson was long overdue for a trip back home, having been in the Siberia and the Far East since coming over with the CEF(S). His trip, presumably intentionally, coincided with the meeting of the Central Council held in Ottawa on 22 and 23 October. Atkinson addressed the council on the morning of the twenty-third. The assistant commissioner began by

¹⁵¹NAC, WW1 personnel file for Young.

¹⁵²CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 8, item 194, 27 July 1920.

¹⁵³The Red Cross minutes never elaborated on the contents of these letters. See mention of them (almost always in the plural) in CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:70, minutes of the EC meeting, 30 Dec. 1919; *ibid.*, 5:111, minutes of the EC meeting, 23 March 1920; *ibid.*, 5:117, minutes of the EC meeting, 23 Apr. 1920; *ibid.*, 5:132, minutes of the EC meeting, 21 May 1920; and *ibid.*, 5:156, minutes of the EC meeting, 6 Oct. 1920.

¹⁵⁴CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 8, item 200, 6 Sept. 1920.

giving information about the “governments of Siberia.” He then discussed “general conditions,” emphasizing the economic problems and social chaos still so prevalent in the region. According the minutes of the meeting, Atkinson reported that farm production was about one-quarter what it had been in “normal” times; that hospitals were “crowded to many times their capacity”; and that there were “tens of thousands of crippled soldiers, old men and women, and hundreds of thousands of children, without homes or food, and with scant clothing.” Clearly there was a great deal relief organizations could still do.

Unfortunately, Atkinson then explained, there were few of these groups still operating. Those that were focussed their attentions on the relief and repatriation of prisoners of war. He named five organizations:

- a. Russian Red Cross, now the new Labour Russian Red Cross, doing very little.
- b. British Patriotic League, for assistance of British refugees. (Local). Without aid of Canadian Red Cross could do very little.
- c. Internation[al] Red Cross, with small resources, for repatriation of prisoners.
- d. Polish Red Cross, assisting repatriation of Poles.
- e. German Red Cross; assisted repatriation of German prisoners of war, now apparently a trade organization.

Little doubt could have been left in the minds of those present that the regular residents of Siberia were getting little assistance. The sixth organization Atkinson discussed was his own:

f. Canadian Red Cross.

CANADIAN RED CROSS:–

Facilities, free offices, free transportation on railroads, low rental for warehouse.

Started January 1919, with supplies from Canada only; since then has taken over the supplies and work of the British Red Cross, the stores of the British Military Mission and the British Patriotic League of Britons Overseas.

Stores now come from Canada, England, Manila and various relief organizations in China and Japan.

(A list of supplies on hand was given by Capt. Atkinson. These fill a warehouse, about 120' x 40' x 18' high, about two-thirds full). . . .

Cost of Siberian Work:-

Salaries & General Expenses, between \$1,800 and \$2,000 a month.

Atkinson also reported that “many appeals have been received asking that the work be continued during the winter,” and pointed out that “the Canadian Red Cross is practically the only relief organization now in Siberia.”

Figuring that the praise of Britons would help persuade the councillors of the veracity of his words and ultimately convince them to keep the mission open through the coming winter, he quoted a remarkable letter written by Robert MacLeod Hodgson, the former British consul at Vladivostok and then trade counsellor to Russia, to Earl Curzon of Kedleston, the British foreign secretary:

I consider that the Canadian Red Cross organization in Vladivostok has performed conscientiously and well duties of no small importance, and that great credit is due to Colonel Young and his staff for the pains and sympathy which they have devoted to their work. At the present time, after the debacle of intervention, and the hurried exit of all Allied institutions from Siberia, Russians generally look upon any action by the Allies in this country with unreasoning suspicion and distrust. I am glad to say that I see no sign of such an attitude prevailing toward the Canadian Red Cross, whose aid is of such a nature as to relieve real distress without exposing the society to the accusation of using its help for the furthering of political objects.

In the end, Atkinson made the following recommendations:

Your representatives in Siberia, being in close touch with the pitiable conditions there, respectfully but earnestly recommend:—

1. That the Canadian Red Cross continue its work in Siberia through this coming winter.
2. That the Canadian Red Cross send to Siberia, if possible, clothing and shoes, new or old; pyjamas, socks, woollen caps and mitts, sweaters, blankets and underwear, and white cotton or flannelette for women’s underwear.
3. That the Canadian Red Cross co-operate with the Joint Committee, not with money or stores, but with their personal help in the repatriation of the prisoners of war still in Siberia.

Atkinson then left the meeting and the councillors “very fully discussed” the situation.

Two courses of action were suggested:

It was moved by Mr. [R. B.] Bennett¹⁵⁵ and seconded by Mr. [A. P.] Black, that no further grant be made to Siberia and that the Mission be closed as soon as the supplies on hand could be effectively distributed.

Mr. [Norman] Sommerville stated that he thought this was not the time to close the Mission, but that the Red Cross should continued the work during the winter. Accordingly, it was

¹⁵⁵Bennett was president of the Alberta provincial branch.

moved by Mr. Sommerville and seconded by Judge [Francis Longworth] Haszard, that the Mission to Siberia be carried on until April 1st and definitely closed on that date; the additional cost of such not to exceed \$25,000.

The delegates voted and defeated the last proposal, supporting instead the mission's disbandment once its affairs had been wound up.¹⁵⁶

Atkinson was no doubt disappointed, and knew Brown and Young would be as well. From the perspective of those assembled in Ottawa, though, the continuation of the Siberian mission was at odds with the society's peacetime focus on the promotion of the health and well-being of Canadians.¹⁵⁷ Once Blaylock had completed the "demobilization" of the society's work overseas, the CRCS was involved in few projects outside Canada, none of which, save the Siberian mission, it administered directly.¹⁵⁸ The councillors were happy to have helped some people in Siberia but, as had been pointed out to Dennis two years earlier, the enormity of the situation that existed there was not something the society was capable or qualified to do much about. And the CRCS had sent, and was still sending, large sums of money for distribution to various Russian relief programs through the British Empire (or Imperial) War Relief Fund.¹⁵⁹ That there were those who supported the mission's continuation over the winter was perhaps evidence of the persuasiveness of Atkinson's words. It may also be that some thought it unseemly for

¹⁵⁶CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:181–183.

¹⁵⁷See the 15-page pamphlet by the EC's chairman, Dr. James W. Robertson: *Peace-Time Policy and Programme of the Canadian Red Cross Society* (Toronto: CRCS, 1920).

¹⁵⁸The CRCS and the League of Red Cross Societies sponsored the short-lived "Canadian Nursing Mission to Romania." See CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:134–135, minutes of the EC meeting, 22 June 1920; *ibid.*, 5:158, minutes of the EC meeting, 6 Oct. 1920; CRCS, *Annual Report . . . 1920*, 25; and CRCS, *Annual Report of the Canadian Red Cross Society for the Year 1921* (Toronto: CRCS HQ, 1922), 18–19.

¹⁵⁹CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:140–141, minutes of the EC meeting, 22 June 1920; CRCS, *Annual Report . . . 1920*, 23. See also list of programs who received money through this scheme the next year in CRCS, *Annual Report . . . 1921*, 19.

a humanitarian mission to abandon its work in the middle of the worst time of year for those in distress. The society's annual report explained the decision:

During the year excellent work was done in Siberia by our Commissioner and his assistants in relieving suffering and providing assistance to the hospitals and other institutions doing similar work. It was felt by the Society that, while great need existed in Siberia for such work as the Society had been doing, and while it might be anticipated that this need might continue to exist for an indefinite time, the Canadian Red Cross could not continue to carry it on indefinitely, and accordingly, instructions were issued by the Council that as soon as the supplies on hand could be properly distributed, the Mission should be closed.¹⁶⁰

Atkinson spent some time in St. Thomas, Ontario, where he had worked as a teacher before the war, and then sailed back to Siberia in November.¹⁶¹

Near the end of December, Chairman Robertson told the Executive Committee that Sir Joseph Pope, the under-secretary of state for external affairs, had forwarded "a cablegram from the British Ambassador in Tokio conveying the request of the British Consul at Vladivostok that the Mission should be continued during the winter." The chairman did not act upon it, "as the cable did not contain any information which the Council did not have before it when it reached its decision, he saw no reason why the decision of the Council should be changed. He had, therefore, given information to that effect to His Excellency who would communicate it to the British Ambassador at Tokio." The committee members "expressed their agreement with the conclusion which he had reached."¹⁶² There was no further thought of reversing the council's October decision.

While Atkinson was making a last-ditch attempt in Ottawa to save the relief mission, Brown and Young were getting comfortable for the coming winter in

¹⁶⁰CRCS, *Annual Report . . . 1920*, 22.

¹⁶¹"Capt. Atkinson home from Siberia; but will return," *Toronto Globe*, 13 Nov. 1920, 3; "Capt. J. S. Atkinson returns to Siberia," *St. Thomas (Ont.) Times-Journal*, 12 Nov. 1920, 1.

¹⁶²CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:199, minutes of the EC meeting, 21 Dec. 1920.

Vladivostok. After having spent some time living in the “Dacha Suburbs,” they both moved back to the city in October.¹⁶³ In mid-November, Brown commented, “Be quite too bad, now won’t it, if, after getting so nicely settled, we get word to close down? Probably, though, that is just what will happen.” He was right. Soon after, the following cable was received in Vladivostok: “Council decided close Commission December. Atkinson sailing eighteenth with instructions.” The news was not unexpected but, for Brown, at least, it was disheartening: “Do you know, I very much like the life here and shall be sorry to leave it for good. Do not know if I shall possibly be able to settle down again at home—going to be exceedingly difficult.” He was making twice as much as he figured he could earn in Canada; had no expenses; his quarters were more than adequate; and he also had a cook—“John,” a married prisoner of war waiting to return home—to prepare his meals.¹⁶⁴ Young, moreover, lived much better in a house just down the street from where he had first hung his hat in Vladivostok.¹⁶⁵ Brown discovered as much when he stayed there for several days in late November:

The Colonel went up-country . . . and he didn’t want to leave the house with just the servants in it so he asked me if I would live here while he is away. Naturally I consented and am at present living like the pampered child of fortune.

To begin with, the house itself is very nice. It is bungalow style and what he has of it is just nice for one. Two of the rooms are locked up and have some of the owners stuff in them. The ones the Colonel has are: parties [*sic?*], hall, drawing-room, dining-room, bedroom, bathroom, and then there is the kitchen in the basement and rooms for the servants.

The place is furnished very nicely indeed, steam-heated, electric lights (which don’t work just now), running water, and all modern conveniences. Something like living in a Canadian city in

¹⁶³CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 8, items 196, 205 and 206, 8 Aug., 10 and 17 Oct. 1920. Young’s country house was in Okeanskaia; he moved there in late June. See *ibid.*, file 7, item 190, 27 June 1920. Brown had moved to Sedanka in September to live with a Russian family. See *ibid.*, file 8, item 201, 13 Sept. 1920.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, items 194, 27 July, and 210, 14 and 16 Nov. 1920.

¹⁶⁵The flat Young shared with Wilgress and the other members of the economic commission in early 1919 was located at 10 Suifunskaiia. See NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, file 22804, Just to O’Hara, 20 Jan. 1919, and above, p. 47. Young’s last address in Vladivostok was 25 Suifunskaiia.

a \$500 a month flat.

I suppose you think that with all this the rent is very much. Don't you believe it. The contract was made in Siberian roubles which are practically worthless now so a months' rental is [less than a cent] . . . Pretty remarkable, isn't it? Contract is up in February.

But there is another viewpoint. The owner is terrified of the Bolsheviks and stays out of the way—in England. He is very wealthy and can afford to do so. He wants his house protected though and the only sure way of accomplishing that it to have a foreigner, preferably British, live in it. So the British flag always floats over it, and it is to all intents and purposes a British house. So he is satisfied even though he doesn't receive rent.

Living here is very comfortable too providing ones clothes have plenty of room around the waist. Last night, for example, for dinner I had crab, soup, roast chicken with plenty of "fittings", sweet pan-cake, tea. . . . The cook is a Chinaman and a very good cook too. The maid is a Japanese, and a Japanese "amah" is about the best servant on earth,—always most awfully pleasant and always tries so hard to please. Does everything for one except kiss him good-night and tuck him in.

The Colonel expected to be back to-morrow night, so I guess my fat life won't last long! However, my own house is very comfortable and I certainly have nothing to complain of.

No wonder Young was loathe to leave "Vladi." In early December Brown whined: "Of course I shall hate to leave Vladivostok because I have got so that I rather like the town in spite of its dirt and its squalor. Besides, I feel when I leave here that perhaps I shall have to teach again and you don't know how I dislike the idea. I don't want to!"

Closing the Mission and Returning Home, November 1920–March 1921

In late November and December, Young made a few last trips "up the line" to hand out supplies outside Vladivostok before ending his work. Many of the distributed goods aided the Semenovite and Kappelite forces and their families. By the end of August, Japanese troops had left the Transbaikal region. Without Japanese military backing, Semenov had a difficult time keeping control over Chita and surrounding areas. On 22 October Chita fell, and by the end of a month a new Far Eastern Republic had been proclaimed, with Chita as the capital. With Japanese help, the ataman himself had gone east into the Maritime Province. Voitsekhovskii and what remained of the Kappelite forces who had come so far for the White cause were also on their way east. They had

broken with Semenov the previous summer, and since August had been attempting, without much success, to arrange entry into the Maritime Province.¹⁶⁶

In late November Young travelled to Grodekovo,¹⁶⁷ a town just east of the Russian-Manchurian border, where Semenov's supporters had gathered since being ejected from the Transbaikal. At around the same time, the first group of Whites were entering Manchuria, and by December they were waiting on the outskirts of the Maritime Province.¹⁶⁸ These "unfortunate soldiers and their families, numbering between twenty five and thirty thousand, [who] were living in railway cars and camps all along the Chinese Eastern Railway," were given "tacit approval" to cross the border when the commander of the province's forces arranged "accommodations for the care of the sick and wounded."¹⁶⁹ In mid-December Young went on two more short train trips.¹⁷⁰ He later informed Dr. Robertson that

we have sent large shipments of clothing and medical supplies to the remnants of the Kappel and Semenov forces. Seventy-two trainloads of these men, many with their wives and children, and accompanied by thousands of helpless and destitute refugees, are scattered from Manchuria Station to Nikolsk-Ussirisk. Their condition is beyond all description.¹⁷¹

It may have been on one of these journeys that Young "brought relief to a train-load of people whom he found lying in tiers of three along the cars, and reduced to such a condition through want of medicine and surgical supplies, that they were operating on themselves and each other with kitchen knives, without an anaesthetic."¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 58, 55, 65, 60–62.

¹⁶⁷CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 8, item 213, 28 Nov. 1920.

¹⁶⁸Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 69, 73–75.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁷⁰CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 8, items 215 and 216, 13 and 19 Dec. 1920.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, file 9, item 224a, Young to Robertson, 8 Mar. 1921.

¹⁷²"Tells of conditions existing in Siberia," *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 3 Mar. 1921, 15.

The only thing left for the Canadian relief workers to do in Vladivostok was to close out their mission.¹⁷³ Its assets were sold or given away, and what supplies Young and the two others had been unable to distribute “up country” or in Vladivostok before the mission’s closing were handed over to the Vladivostok British Patriotic League “for the purpose of carrying on in a small way the same humanitarian work for the refugees.”¹⁷⁴ The league, which the CRCS had first come into contact with upon first setting up shop in Vladivostok in late 1918, “was reorganized and is now in the hands of competent and energetic persons.”¹⁷⁵ The new head was John Findlay, a longtime British resident of Vladivostok and someone the relief workers knew well. Findlay was a representative of the British Engineering Company of Russia & Siberia,¹⁷⁶ and had also researched the possibilities for Canadian-Siberian trade for the Canadian Department of Trade and Commerce in the winter of 1918–1919.¹⁷⁷ Young informed Robertson that to “the Vladivostok Branch of the British Patriotic League” they

gave considerable quantities of clothing, etc., for refugee relief work which they guaranteed to distribute for us, also any further shipments coming from outside sources. I arranged with the Russian Customs to pass all shipments addressed to the above mentioned League free of duty. . . . Before leaving I turned some of our office furniture over to the British Patriotic League,

¹⁷³Brown also collected information on the Canadian war graves in Vladivostok for a report that Young was to prepare. See *ibid.*, file 9, item 219, 31 Dec. [1920].

¹⁷⁴“Tells of work with Red Cross in far Siberia,” *St. John Daily Telegraph and the Sun*, 22 Mar. 1921, 12.

¹⁷⁵CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 9, item 224a, Young to Robertson, 8 Mar. 1921.

¹⁷⁶Later known as Becos Traders. John Findlay and Dorothy Findlay, “Letters from Vladivostok, 1918–1923,” ed. Dorothy Galton and John Keep, *Slavonic and East European Review* 45, no. 105 (July 1967): 497–530; CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 8, items 198, 206, and 207, 23 Aug., 17 and 24 Oct. 1920. The bibles the British-Canadian train delivered at Chita were done so at the request of Findlay. See above, p. 179. For more on Becos and Findlay, see Roger Munting, “Becos Traders and the Russian Market of the 1920s,” *Journal of European Economic History* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 69–95, which, despite the title, does discuss pre-1920 activities.

¹⁷⁷See NAC, DTC records, vol. 1369, file 21916, J. Findlay, “Report on Canadian Siberian Export Trade,” sent to McLean [*sic*], 3 Feb. 1919. There are more documents of interest in this file on Findlay and his Canadian travels.

and a portion of it to the Russian Committee of returned Russian Prisoners of War from Germany.

...

Our various contributors in the East were notified that we were closing and placed in touch with the British Patriotic League, and we appealed to them to send all the assistance they possibly could. We however received no encouragement. They state that their associations had had so much difficulty in getting supplies distributed satisfactorily previous to the Canadian Red Cross assuming the work that it was unlikely that any more shipments would be made. Later, however, when interviewing the Chairman of the Patriotic League of Britons Overseas in Tokyo, he agreed to forward supplies to Mr. Findlay, expending about Four thousand Yen.¹⁷⁸

Moderate and conservative political elements in Vladivostok also undertook efforts to send relief to the White refugees.¹⁷⁹ In 1922 the league asked the CRCS “for a grant to purchase materials”: “They pointed out that they were supplying materials to Russian women and that through their work eighty women with about two hundred dependent children were being supported.” Headquarters sent them \$300.¹⁸⁰

The three Canadians spent “Russian Christmas week” in Vladivostok and then departed from the city for good. Brown claimed that theirs was the last foreign relief organization to do so. Young was the first to leave: He sailed from Vladivostok on 12 January and headed to Japan. On the fifteenth, Atkinson and Brown boarded a train and travelled through China to Shanghai, and then sailed for Kobe and Yokohama at the end of the month. All three then boarded the SS *Venezuela* and headed across the Pacific. They reached San Francisco on 22 February and travelled north and east to CRCS headquarters in Toronto.¹⁸¹ Once back in Canada, Atkinson, Brown, and Young were

¹⁷⁸CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 9, item 224a, Young to Robertson, 8 Mar. 1921.

¹⁷⁹Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 79.

¹⁸⁰CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 6:66, minutes of the EC meeting, 1 June 1922.

¹⁸¹CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 5; CWM, Brown correspondence, Siberian correspondence, file 9, items 219, 220, and 222, 31 Dec. [1920], 11 Jan., and 22 Feb. 1921; CWM, Brown collection, SS *Venezuela* passenger lists, 58A 1 103.1. Young spoke to the media in Vancouver (2 Mar.) and Calgary (5 Mar.). See “Tells of conditions existing in Siberia,” *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 3 Mar. 1921, 15, and “Bolshevik rule forcing Russia into barbarity,” *Calgary Daily Herald*, 5 Mar. 1921, 32. The latter article noted that Young intended to write a book about his experiences. If he ever did so, I have not come across any evidence of it. A shorter version of the first article, “Use kitchen knives in Siberian surgery,”

treated as minor celebrities. Their comments on their experiences and work in Siberia, thoughts on the Bolsheviks and Soviet Russia, predictions on Russia's future, and photographs were featured in newspapers from several cities.¹⁸²

Soon after their return to Canada, there were some positive developments in Vladivostok. In March Atkinson had predicted that the Whites would emerge victorious in Russia and, soon enough, he had reason to cheer: In late May 1921, the Whites, with the help of the Japanese, retook the city. Atkinson, in a letter to his former underling, remarked that "I am sorry we missed the show, but I understand it was not a very serious scrap. The fighting lasted all night and until about noon the next day."¹⁸³ The government lasted through the summer and fall, and in the winter of 1920–1921 launched, with all-important Japanese military backing, an offensive against the Far Eastern Republic. It was unpopular and ultimately unsuccessful. In late August 1922 the Whites began another attack, but this time without Japanese assistance. On 25 October, as Douglas Brown was celebrating his thirty-fourth birthday, the army of the Far Eastern Republic entered Vladivostok. In mid-November the "buffer state," with Vladivostok and the rest of the Maritime Province along with it, was incorporated into Soviet Russia.¹⁸⁴ The Red Army had already emerged victorious over most other areas in which they had been

Toronto Daily Star, 3 Mar. 1921, 24, included a wartime picture of Young.

¹⁸²In addition to the above cited articles, see on Atkinson, "'Reds' have no regard for human life; disease and famine in Russia," *St. Thomas (Ont.) Times-Journal*, 16 Mar. 1921, 1 (with wartime photo), 6; and on Brown, "A West Quaco man home from Russia," *St. John Daily Telegraph and the Sun*, 17 Mar. 1921, 5, and "Tells of work with Red Cross in far Siberia," *St. John Daily Telegraph and the Sun*, 22 Mar. 1921, 12. Head shots of all three men were published with the headline "Back from Siberia," in the *Toronto Daily Star*, 11 Mar. 1921, 3. The original is in CWM, Brown collection, U 1.4 (19920041-002).

¹⁸³CWM, Brown collection, Canadian Red Cross Society, 58A 1 103.12, item 229, J. S. Atkinson to D. M. Brown, 10 June 1921. See also Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 95–96.

¹⁸⁴See Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule*, 99–165.

forced to fight for control.

The Canadian Red Cross Society had limited involvement in Russian relief work once the Vladivostok mission was closed. Considerable sums were sent to London through the British Empire War Relief Fund, a portion of which was set aside for Russian-related schemes. There were no appeals made for Russian causes in the early 1920s, despite the entreaties of foreign relief societies and individual Canadians. This made good sense: There was only so much money to go around. The CRCS's secretary put the matter bluntly when he informed the Russian consul in Montreal that the society would not launch a special appeal to aid refugees in the Crimea. Noting that Protestant churches were collecting donations for famine relief in China, he commented:

You will recognize . . . that an appeal of this nature which calls for help for some thirty million people must create a much greater impression than a special appeal which would be made for what I understand is about 130,000 to 150,000 Russian refugees, and we would regard it as hopeless from the beginning to obtain any considerable sum for this purpose alone.¹⁸⁵

There was no change in the CRCS's attitude when the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies established a joint program to combat the impending Russian famine in August 1921. Canadian Red Cross branches—especially in the western provinces, where there were sizeable Russian communities—did collect donations from Canadian residents for “Russian relief,” however. These were passed on to the British Red Cross and other organizations for distribution.¹⁸⁶ The CRCS,

¹⁸⁵NAC, Li-Ra-Ma collection, ser. I, vol. 22, file 714, microfilm, reel M-7610, A. H. Abbott to S. A. Likatscheff, 6 Jan. 1921. See also other correspondence in this file and CRCS, *Annual Report . . . 1921*, 20.

¹⁸⁶For more on the CRCS and the Russian famine, see CRCS, *Annual Report . . . 1921*, 20–21; CRCS, *Annual Report of the Executive Committee and Review of the Activities of Provincial Divisions for the Year 1922* (Toronto: CRCS National Office, 1923), 40; CRCNO, CRCS, ECBG, Archived Minutes, 5:260–261, minutes of the EC meeting, 15 Sept. 1921; *ibid.*, 5:269, minutes of the EC meeting, 13 Oct. 1921; *ibid.*, 5:278–279, minutes of the CC meeting, 16 Nov. 1921; *ibid.*, 6:7, minutes of the EC meeting, 8 Dec. 1921; *ibid.*, 6:13, minutes of the EC meeting, 19 Jan. 1922; *ibid.*, 6:18–19, minutes of the EC meeting,

working with other national Red Cross societies, was also able to help Canadian residents locate family members in Russia whom they had lost contact with, in some cases even assisting people to move to Canada.¹⁸⁷

And what of the relief workers themselves? Before Brown left Siberia, he had hoped to go to central Europe as a Red Cross worker, and had also seriously considered returning to Russia to work in a foreign business “when things get going here again.” This, of course, never happened. In the summer of 1921, Brown applied for work as a teacher among the Russian settlers in British Columbia: “I think that I possess special qualifications for such a position because of my experience among the Russians in Siberia and because I can speak their language to a certain extent.”¹⁸⁸ If he had to teach, he presumably thought that this would make it a little more palatable. Brown eventually ended up in Greenwich, Connecticut, where he married, and worked “in the hotel business.”¹⁸⁹ His immediate boss, Atkinson, did not think that he could go back to his old job at a commercial school in the United States. “Most of the 627 students were Germans,” he explained to the former commander of the Canadian army after his return from Siberia. “I walked out on them. Somehow, I don’t think I’d be very popular back there.” Sir Arthur Currie suggested that Atkinson, who had “a flair for organization,” “do

21 Mar. 1922; *ibid.*, 6:23–24, minutes of the CC meeting, 29 Mar. 1922; and *ibid.*, 6:78–79, minutes of the CC meeting, 10 and 11 Oct. 1922.

¹⁸⁷See especially CRCS, Saskatchewan Division, *Eighth Annual Report: Covering the Period, October 1, 1921, to December 31, 1922* (Regina: Saskatchewan Division HQ, 1923), 15.

¹⁸⁸CWM, Brown collection, employment offer, 58A 1 103.14, item 221, Brown to S. J. Willis (Superintendent of Education, BC), 13 July 1921.

¹⁸⁹CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 8, items 205 and 214, 10 Oct. and 6 Dec. 1920; *ibid.*, file 9, 11 Jan. 1921; Smith, *Canadian in Siberia 1918–1921*, 83. He was also planning in four years’ time “to send back for the Russian girl here!” See CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 9, item 219, 31 Dec. 1920.

something that will bring music to the masses and stimulate an interest in it that will exalt Canadian life.” And so the captain became director of the three-year-old Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music in 1922, a post which he held until his death in 1954.¹⁹⁰ Commissioner Young eventually made his way to New York City, remarried there at the age of fifty-eight,¹⁹¹ and worked for Abercrombie & Fitch, a retailer specializing in clothing and equipment for sportsmen. The colonel also resumed his equestrian activities, playing polo and becoming, according to the *New York Times*, “one of the foremost horse-show judges of this country and Canada.” He died in the summer of 1951 when he was sixty-nine years old.¹⁹²

* * *

The work that the Canadian Red Cross mission did in Vladivostok and elsewhere in the Russian Far East was important to and appreciated by thousands of individuals, whose lives were made a little better through the efforts of Young and his associates. This was a reward in itself. Proving correct earlier predictions that humanitarian assistance would have benefits that went beyond the immediate amelioration of illness or poverty, the mission members claimed that their work had been a kind of diplomacy by proxy: What they did reflected well on the country and augured well for relations, both present and future, between Russians and Canadians. The men received hundreds (and perhaps

¹⁹⁰“Big interest in music stimulated in children by Sir A. Currie’s dream,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 2 Jan. 1939, 5; Patricia Wardrop, Clifford O. Hunt, and Florence Hayes, “Canadian Bureau for the Advancement of Music,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* [encyclopedia on-line] (Historica Foundation of Canada, 2004, accessed 9 Aug. 2004); available from <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0000548>.

¹⁹¹“Col. D. D. Young Jr. weds in New York,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 Feb. 1940, 26.

¹⁹²“Douglas Young, 69, horse-show judge,” *New York Times*, 6 July 1951, 23.

thousands) of letters of thanks from Russians—“from the lowest peasants to the highest government officials,” “irrespective of political sympathy”—and thousands of personal expressions of gratitude before departing.¹⁹³ According to Brown, “In Eastern Siberia telling anyone that you are a Kanadski is a surety of welcome.”¹⁹⁴ And apparently “the mere mention of the fact that any one came from Canada was greeted with the remark, ‘Good, that is very good.’”¹⁹⁵ In his closing letter to CRCS headquarters, Young maintained that “in direct proportion to the terrible suffering of these people is their gratitude and appreciation of what the Canadian Red Cross has done to help them.” Those of “all other nationalities with whom we have come in contact and helped [also] cannot say enough for the Canadian Red Cross.”

I have no hesitation in stating that the Canadian Red Cross has been able to do more towards creating British and Canadian prestige than any other organization or mission in Russia, —due first to the support given me by the Canadian Red Cross in Canada, and, secondly, to the support, energy and hard work of the Assistant Commissioner, Captain J.S. Atkinson whose name I wish particularly to bring to your attention.

I also wish to bring to your attention the excellent work performed by Mr. D.M. Brown.

Before leaving I was made an Orenburg & Ussuri Cossack which is the greatest honor they could possibly confer, and I have been informed that it is the first time that a European who was not a Russian has even been made a Cossack.

Young was also awarded the Czecho-Slovak War Cross.¹⁹⁶

The relief work was no doubt emotionally rewarding, and periodic romps through

¹⁹³“Reds’ have no regard for human life; disease and famine in Russia,” *St. Thomas (Ont.) Times-Journal*, 16 Mar. 1921, 1, 6; “Tells of conditions existing in Siberia,” *Ottawa Evening Journal*, 3 Mar. 1921, 15. See also “A West Quaco man home from Russia,” *St. John Daily Telegraph and the Sun*, 17 Mar. 1921, 5.

¹⁹⁴CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 5.

¹⁹⁵“Tells of work with Red Cross in far Siberia,” *St. John Daily Telegraph and the Sun*, 22 Mar. 1921, 12.

¹⁹⁶CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 9, item 224a, Young to Robertson, 8 Mar. 1921. See also “Red Cross pleased Russ,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 Mar. 1921, 24. The Cossack honour also entitled Young “to all rights of the village and enables him to take up and cultivate one hundred and sixty acres of land.” The document admitting Young into the Cossack society is reproduced in “Bolshevik rule forcing Russia into barbarity,” *Calgary Daily Herald*, 5 Mar. 1921, 32.

war-torn Russia would have satisfied most people's desire for excitement. Being associated with a humanitarian organization in the suffering region meant at least some measure of personal prestige and power, especially for the two senior Canadians. Most of the time, the work was not physically taxing or time-consuming: The office closed at three o'clock in the afternoon, and the men had "all the Russian holidays You know the Russians dearly love holidays." Young sometimes came late to the office after a night of dancing, and was known to take long hunting weekends, or even spend entire weeks away from the city in this way.¹⁹⁷ Vladivostok was unsanitary, potentially dangerous, and bursting at the seams with penniless, pitiful refugees—four hundred thousand of them, according to Atkinson.¹⁹⁸ Even in these less than ideal conditions, though, the men lived well, both while in Vladivostok and on train missions. They spent weekends in the country or on Russian Island and had friends among the foreign and Russian residents of the town. Brown had never found a career he enjoyed before entering the armed forces. For him, relief work in Siberia was a better—and more lucrative—way to support himself. Canada had little to offer him.¹⁹⁹

Being a relief worker brought personal rewards and benefits for the Canadians in Vladivostok. There is little doubt that they, and especially Brown, over whom the threat of poverty²⁰⁰ and of being forced back into an unhappy life of teaching loomed large,

¹⁹⁷CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, items 175 and 188, 7 Mar. and 13 June 1920; *ibid.*, file 8, items 202, 203, 204, 206 and 207, 22 and 27 Sept., 3, 17, and 24 Oct. 1920.

¹⁹⁸"Reds' have no regard for human life; disease and famine in Russia," *St. Thomas (Ont.) Times-Journal*, 16 March 1921, 6.

¹⁹⁹See CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 7, item 185, 23 May 1920, and file 8, items 193 and 194, 19 and 27 July 1920.

²⁰⁰In his letters home, money was often a preoccupation. See also a remarkable letter he wrote to his superior officer, where he protested against receiving, in essence, only 85 percent of his due salary at a pay parade: NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 365, file B.H. 47-1, D. M. Brown to OC 16th Field Company,

liked the work that they were doing and how they were living in “Vladi.” But surely part of the reason why the men stayed on after most other foreigners had left, and wished to remain longer, was because they thought their efforts important: They felt sorry for their new Russian friends, and felt a moral responsibility to assist those who had fought with the Allies—first against the Germans, and then against the Bolsheviks. The mission would never have earned the trust and praise of so many aid societies and foreign and Russian officials if its members’ hearts had not been in their work. The efforts they put into lobbying CRCS headquarters—Young, through a steady stream of letters to Toronto, and Gillespie and Atkinson in person—is more evidence of this. The sights the men saw, the stories of horror they heard, and the knowledge that these people of whom they had grown so fond were headed for more hardship and suffering did affect them. The following scene, as depicted by Brown, could not have failed to pull at the heartstrings of the Canadian relief workers:

it is impossible for me to picture it vividly enough for you to get even an idea of the abject misery and suffering of these people. Women who had been accustomed to every luxury trying to keep body and soul together in some cold, dirty, wretched cattle car; children born during the mad rush wrapped in some coarse dirty garment taken from some poor unfortunate who had perished on the way and feebly crying for sustenance which the poor starving mother was unable to supply; wounded soldiers whose wounds had not been dressed for weeks. I never realized before what a strong hold life had on us and that one could live at all under such conditions as I saw.²⁰¹

Whatever the men’s political views, salary preoccupations, or fondness of long weekends and adventure, they did work “in the interests of humanity.”

Canadian Engineers, 2 May 1919. The letter was passed up the chain of command.

²⁰¹CWM, Brown collection, notes for a speech, p. 4.

CONCLUSION

In writing the history of the Canadian Red Cross Society's involvement in Siberia during the Russian civil war, and telling the story of the relief mission's members, there has been one main underlying question: What motivated these individuals and institutions to undertake or support the relief work? Whether the beneficiaries of CRCS aid were Canadian or British soldiers, White Russian troops, or civilian refugees, there were always several reasons why the provision of relief was seen as important (or not). The answers to the question largely depended on who the intended recipients of aid were, as well as on the people involved in pushing for, authorizing, or distributing Red Cross goods. Military, political, economic, and personal motivations were usually intertwined. So too were matters of institutional and national pride. The CRCS existed to help ensure Canadian soldiers were healthy and happy; Dennis, among others, believed strongly that relief was morally required and economically and politically farsighted; the British Military Mission, as part of its anti-Bolshevik efforts, was keen to keep relief work among Kolchak's troops ongoing; and being a relief worker was not a bad gig for some. Humanitarianism—a concern for the welfare of others and a desire to assist those in distress—also played a role in the relief efforts. This was especially true of individuals in the thick of things. The calculations of groups farther afield, such as CRCS headquarters, and the British and Canadian governments, were generally more political.

By the end of the First World War, the Canadian Red Cross was an important part of the Canadian war establishment. Though it operated at more than arms length from the government, the young society usually walked hand-in-hand with the Department of Militia and Defence and the army's medical services. It did so quite willingly, even eagerly. As such, when the government announced plans to send an expeditionary force to Siberia, there was no hesitation on the part of the CRCS: It offered its whole-hearted support in the military venture. After so many long years of war, the CRCS was well-equipped to administer, staff, and supply a small relief mission for "making the bed of sickness easier, bringing Christmas cheer to the troops, and supplementing the army issue of clothing." The additional responsibilities brought on by a theatre of war far from Canada or Europe were met with little or no difficulty. So too was becoming the distributor of British Red Cross supplies, a turn of events which undoubtedly gave rise to smug satisfaction at the dominion society's headquarters. It wanted to pull its weight in the war effort and, privately at least, the Red Cross's leadership would have shared the sentiments of many in Canada when it came to feelings that Canada had matured in recent years.

The primary targets of the Siberian mission's work were Canadian and British soldiers, but other troops, including Russians, also benefited from CRCS supplies. Whatever assistance civilians received through the efforts of the Inter-Allied Anti-Typhus Train was purely incidental. The Allied military forces were only concerned with the health of their own and "loyal" Russian soldiers. Through the efforts of Dennis, some relief was also given to civilian refugees, whose plight was as bad as any in postwar

Europe. Though the CRCS never undertook a major campaign after the Great War to care for civilians adversely affected by the conflict, the society did distribute supplies to devastated areas in western Europe beginning shortly before the armistice with Germany was signed.¹ This is the best contemporary parallel to the relief goods the CRCS sent to non-military populations in Siberia.

Dennis wished his countrymen and -women, and their national and imperial institutions, would do much more for the victims of wars, both international and civil, in Siberia. He was moved in large part by a conviction that the best way to ensure Canada had a prominent place in Siberia's foreign trade and development was to "introduce Canada to the Russians in the most acceptable manner," as the editors of one newspaper had put it. Dennis argued that Canada's business community would be well-served by government grants for Siberian relief. The food and clothes, moreover, needed to start arriving as soon as possible, before the Americans cornered the relief, and consequently the regular, market. The United States was Canada's biggest competitor when it came to Siberian interests. The recommendations that the economic commission made did not pan out. There was no government money for Siberian civilians that winter.

Once Dennis arrived in Siberia himself in early February 1919, he realized the difficulty of beginning trade relations in the middle of this latest Russian "time of troubles."² A new project soon landed in his lap. He got to work, drawing up ambitious plans for a large Canadian Red Cross Corps to relieve prisoners of war and civilians. Dennis intended to return to the region to oversee the multi-million dollar relief effort. A

¹See Moore, *Maple Leaf's Red Cross*, 191-206.

²Smele, *Civil War in Siberia*, 1.

part of him must have been a humanitarian: What he did and what he proposed to do simply does not make sense unless he felt some pull on his conscience. He was never paid for his services by either the trade department or the Red Cross, and presumably collaborated with Eliot on the ambitious scheme without receiving a cent in return.

Beyond Dennis's individual concerns, there were good political and military reasons to back his ambitious scheme. The causal chain of events went something like this:

Suffering led to Bolshevism, Bolsheviks were bad for Russia and the world, and hundreds of thousands of former POWs who might soon become Bolsheviks was something to be avoided. It was likely fear of Lenin's politics which recommended to British officials the usefulness of a major relief plan for civilians and prisoners of war in Siberia.

Dennis's scheme was never put into practice, and though the CRCS had pledged to aid British soldiers, headquarters ordered its representatives to return home once the CEF(S) had left Siberia. Canadian authorities had given their imperial masters time to put together a coherent Russian policy after the war's end. When it was clear that they and the other Allies could not agree on a strategy, Borden brought the troops home. This was not a problem. For those elements in Britain and Siberia who were fighting the Red Army, if only indirectly, the loss of the Canadian relief staff was another matter entirely. The British Military Mission dispatched Red Cross goods in the same shipments as bayonets and bullets, all in an effort to boost morale and provide tangible support for Kolchak's White Russian soldiers. They wanted to keep them disease-free and in good spirits. A demoralized, weak force, after all, could never beat the Red Army. The CRCS's

departure from Siberia, then, was also something to be avoided. In an attempt to avert this outcome, cables were sent back and forth between Vladivostok, London, Toronto, and Ottawa. Even Prime Minister Borden got involved. The BMM put Young aboard ship with instructions to lobby his superiors. The assistant commissioner performed his duties admirably. For good measure, he also took time to remind Canadian politicians of the “menace of Bolshevism.” In September 1919, the CRCS committed to keeping up shipments of supplies and Young returned to Vladivostok to reopen the relief mission. The famed Red Cross neutrality was nowhere in evidence in the CRCS governing bodies that September. This was no surprise: it had long ago ceased to exist in the international movement. CRCS headquarters had also been swayed in part by the high praise their mission had received from people with impressive military and political titles.

By the time Young arrived in Vladivostok the British had given up any real hope for Kolchak’s success. Instead of Russian soldiers, the primary beneficiaries of the work of the small Canadian mission soon became refugees fleeing the Bolsheviks or living in poverty in Vladivostok. The Canadian relief workers had a number of adventures and lived through some exciting times from the fall of 1919 until their departure from Vladivostok in early 1921. For Douglas Brown, having a good salary and a job he liked was especially important. Atkinson, Brown, and Young all seem to have lived well in Vladivostok and enjoyed their time there. Though they were heroes to those whom they assisted, they were also ordinary men. None of them, for example, did as one American Red Cross man had: stay behind as a private citizen to continue relief efforts.³ Still,

³This was the ARC’s Major Lively. See Montandon, *Deux ans chez Koltchak*, 225.

feelings of moral and humanitarian obligation to soldiers and their families did move these men, at least in part. The pitiable sights in Siberia would have affected all but the most cold-hearted of individuals. More than two years after Dennis had first suggested the value of relief in generating goodwill, the three last mission members could boast that their work had established Canada as a benevolent nation in the minds of some Russians. Unfortunately, the residents of the Russian Far East never had a chance to prove whether Dennis had been right about the economic consequences of this. The CRCS men left “Vladi,” and the region was incorporated into Soviet Russia.

The above narrative of events unearths a period in Canadian-Siberian relations hitherto unknown. It also speaks to a broader literature on the history of humanitarianism, non-governmental actors, and what are known in the post-Cold War era as “humanitarian interventions” by foreign military forces. Seen in this context, several key themes emerge from this thesis: (1) using soldiers for reasons other than strictly military—in this case economic and, to a lesser extent, political; (2) having ulterior motives in mind when distributing aid; (3) the relationship between the Red Cross, governments, and the army; (4) the difference a few committed individuals can make—if they are in the right place at the right time; and (5), rather more difficult to measure, the role feelings of moral or humanitarian obligation play in moving people and organizations to action. These are all considerations historians of philanthropy and of related, relatively new fields of historical research must grapple with.

APPENDIX 1

DENNIS'S PLANS FOR POW RELIEF IN SIBERIA, SPRING 1919

Dennis's Original Proposal for the CRCS to Care for POWs and Civilians in Western Siberia, March 1919

The following proposals are based on the assumption that the American and Japanese Red Cross Societies will undertake the care of all war prisoners and refugees in Eastern Siberia, the American Red Cross continuing its present hospital activities in Western Siberia. It is intended that any measures of relief in Western Siberia should extend, not only to the enemy prisoners of war, but also to the large number of Russian soldiers who are now returning from captivity in Germany and Austria, and to the large number of refugees at present living under congested conditions at many centres of Western Siberia. The latter two classes are included because any effort to relieve the condition of enemy prisoners of war while much needed help was refused to Russians would create a very bad feeling against the Allies.

The best information available indicates that there are at points west of and including Irkutsk, in Western Siberia, 200,000 enemy prisoners of war, and to this number must be added at least 300,000 Russians in need of assistance. It may, therefore, be safely assumed that relief measures must be based upon the immediate needs of half a million souls. The districts in Western Siberia in which the camps for war prisoners are situated are: Omsk district, Barnaul district, Tomsk district, Krasnoyarsk district, Irkutsk district, and Chita district. Within these districts there are 31 concentration camps, containing, with the unregistered prisoners attached to the camps, a total of approximately 200,000.

The main centres where returning Russian soldiers and refugees are in need of assistance are: Omsk, Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, and Chita. The most pressing needs at all the points mentioned are clothing, bedding, boots and drugs. There is more or less shortage of food, but that shortage does not seem to be as pressing as those first named.

To deal with this vast relief work, the Canadian Red Cross Commissioner proposes to make Vladivostok the headquarters, with proper administrative staff, and staff to receive and forward promptly all supplies received from overseas. An assistant commissioner will be named for all the districts mentioned, and he will be provided with a staff, so that he might have a superintendent at every camp and centre of relief. A medical superintendent would be provided with sufficient staff to establish small clearing and disinfecting hospitals near each camp, and at refugee centres when needed. There would be an additional typhus train to move from point to point and aid in checking

disease at camps and refugee centres and in removing typhus cases to a central base hospital.

The largest possible supply of clothing [*sic*], bedding, boots, drugs and other articles urgently needed would be ordered by cable, and arrangements would be made through Government sources for tonnage to ship these goods rapidly to Vladivostok from Vancouver. Arrangements would be made with the Russian Government and with the Czechs in charge of certain camps that every assistance be given officers of the Canadian Red Cross in carrying out their work, while the railway authorities would be asked to give an undertaking that all possible facilities in the way of trains, warehouses and office accommodation be given the work. It is, of course, understood that the Russian railways provide free transportation for all Red Cross supplies, in the same manner as is done by Canadian and American railways.

For this work the Canadian Red Cross Commissioners asks for an immediate credit of \$10,000,000 and such further sums as may be needed from time to time. It is estimated that this amount would carry the operations on for a period of six months.

The Commissioner asks that such military officers and men as are available and at present attached to British or Canadian units in Siberia, be detailed for duty with the Canadian Red Cross Corps, and that all British and Canadian military stores at present in Siberia and suitable for relief work, while not immediately needed by military units, be turned over to the Corps. A base clearing hospital is to be provided at once at Vladivostok to which bad cases may be brought from interior points by hospital trains and treated prior to being sent home as ships are provided.

A fairly large establishment will be needed to grapple with a task of this magnitude, and the Commissioner has set forth the following requirements in that direction:

Executive.

1 Commissioner.

1 Secretary.

Administrative.

1 Chief Assistant Commissioner.

4 Assistant Commissioners.

5 Secretaries.

Purchasing Branch.

1 Chief Purchasing Agent.

1 Secretary.

Transportation and Stores.

1 Transportation Officer (Vancouver)

1 Transportation Officer (Vladivostok)

1 Secretary.

2 Warehouse Clerks.

Camp and Depot Superintendents.

10 Superintendents, Camps and Depots.

10 Secretaries.

10 Warehouse Clerks.

Accounting Branch.

1 Chief Paymaster and Accountant.

2 Accountant Clerks.

Medical Section.

1 General Superintendent,

15 Medical Officers.

1 Chief Matron.

50 Nursing Sisters.

Military Section.

1 Officer Commanding Military Section.

10 Junior Officers.

150 Enlisted Men (Guards).¹

¹Reproduced in NAC, CEF(S) records, vol. 359, file 49, Playfair, draft article, 10 Mar. 1919.

Dennis to Eliot, 1 April 1919

Dear Sir. Charles Eliot,

Lt.-Col. Young, Asst. Canadian Red Cross Commissioner, has arrived here and has shown me copy of the cable received by you from the British Government relative to the proposal submitted by the Canadian Red Cross for the care of the enemy prisoners, the returning Russian prisoners of war, and the refugees in that portion of Siberia west of Irkutsk. I have noted the decision of the British Government that arrangements have been made with the Scandinavian Red Cross to undertake the care of the enemy prisoners of war, but understand from Colonel Young that you wish the Canadian Red Cross to submit an amended proposal relative to the care of the returning Russian prisoners of war and the refugees, and after having given the matter careful consideration I have cabled you to-day as follows, which I now beg to confirm:-

“Regarding amended proposal discussed with Colonel Young, Canadian
 “Red Cross are willing undertake work care Russian prisoners and
 “refugees Siberia conditional upon acceptance of offer by British
 “Government before 15th inst., and credit five million dollars being
 “made available by them Montreal, Canada, immediately upon acceptance
 “proposal. Stop. In view immediate withdrawal Canadian Military
 “Expedition and consequent demobilisation Canadian Red Cross organization
 “cannot hold offer open later than fifteenth as we must provide extra
 “personnel from volunteers from Canadian military expeditionary forces
 “and arrange to forward supplies in ships going to Vladivostock to
 “remove troops. Dennis.”

The necessity for an immediate decision relative to acceptance or refusal of this proposal is due to the fact that arrangements have now been completed for the withdrawal before the end of next month of the Canadian Expeditionary Force Siberia, and we must of course obtain the necessary additional personnel from those who have volunteered from the military expedition to remain in Russia to carry on Red Cross work if our proposal is accepted by the British Government. There is also the further need that the large quantity of supplies and additional nursing personnel, which will be required to enable the work to be taken up actively, must be forwarded to Vladivostock by the ships that will be going there to remove the military forces. You will therefore, I am sure, understand my reason for fixing a definite date for acceptance or refusal of the proposal, and that the shortness of the time is due to the above mentioned facts.

There is also a further condition that I would like to have understood with reference to our proposal. If all the Allied troops are to be withdrawn from Siberia except the Japanese, and unless the Japanese propose largely increasing their military forces, I fear very gravely that conditions will become so disturbed that it will be impossible to us to carry on the Red Cross work in safety, and it must therefore be understood that under such conditions we will have the privilege of ceasing our activities and withdrawing our forces.

I am leaving here on the "Empress of Asia" for Vancouver on the 5th inst., and should arrive there on the 15th. In the event of our proposal being accepted, Col. Young will be able to communicate at once with me by cable, and I will arrange to make an immediate shipment of necessary stores and additional personnel, and return to Vladivostock to superintend Canadian Red Cross operations.

I need hardly say that I submit this proposal on behalf of the Canadian Red Cross solely because I feel the urgent need for British and Canadian Red Cross activity in Siberia, not only to meet the very urgent and pressing need, but for the purpose of British propaganda and in view of the additional fact that the existing British Red Cross organization in Siberia has been demobilised.

Yours very sincerely,
[J. S. Dennis]
Colonel.
Canadian Red Cross Commissioner.²

²Ibid., vol. 373, file FORCE HQ 101.

Dennis to Elmsley, 1 April 1919

Memorandum

Proposed establishment Canadian Red Cross Corps to undertake care of returning Russian prisoners of war and refugees in Siberia west of Irkutsk.

1. Commissioner.
1. Secretary.
1. Chief Asst. Commissioner.
2. Asst. Commissioners.
3. Secretaries.
3. Clerks.
- 1 Paymaster.
2. Clerks.
1. Chief Medical Officer.
1. Asst. Chief Medical Officer
15. Medical Officers.
5. Clerks.
1. Supt. Stores.
1. Clerk.
6. Warehousemen.
1. Supt. Transportation.
2. Clerks.
100. N.C.O's & Men (with arms).
1. Chief Matron.
50. Nursing Sisters.³

³Ibid.

APPENDIX 2

REPORT ON YOUNG'S ADDRESS TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, 10 SEPTEMBER 1919

Ottawa, Sept. 10.—Kolchak and Denekine must be given support by means of munitions and Red Cross supplies, if the menace of Bolshevism is to be swept from Russia, in the opinion of Lieut.-Col. Douglas D. [sic] Young, who went to France with the Royal Canadian Dragoons, and who was a member of the British Military Mission in Siberia. Lt.-Col. Young laid the facts about Russia before members of the House of Commons to-day.

What Canada can do to help the down-trodden Russian people is to send Red Cross supplies, said Lt.-Col. Young, who stated the men were being brought down from the line with their wounds bound up with dirty rags, and there was an entire absence of medical and surgical needs in the country.

Bolsheviki Rule by Terror.

Bolshevism holds sway by means of terrorism, for while thousands of people are anti-Bolshevist, the Reds control all the fertile and manufacturing territory, and those who refuse to fight or work for them are simply tortured and shot. Lt.-Col. Young showed a number of photographs of atrocities committed at Ufa, Perm and Ekaterinburg. Prisoners were hacked to pieces before being despatched, and in some cases twenty or thirty tied to one rope were led out beside an open grave and every second person was shot. The remainder were then returned to prison, and the performance was repeated day after day, until the prisoners, never knowing when their turn would come, were shot, or went insane. In many cases, persons only wounded were buried alive. The peasants and workmen both oppose Bolshevism, but must carry out the commands of those in control.

Distress of Refugees.

When Lt.-Col. Young reached Siberia, the country was flooded with refugees, and no fewer than 74,000 railway cars were being used by people as homes, in addition to the stations and sheds everywhere. The Allied Railway Mission cleared things up somewhat, but there are still more than 8,000 people in Omsk living in holes in the ground, depending on the heat from one another to keep them alive.

Factories, shops, banks and schools have been ruined by nationalization, and there is no clothing to be bought in the country. The Bolshevists have plenty of munitions and guns, having got most of those sent to Russia by the allies before the collapse of the Russian army, but they lack clothing, and have only the food grown within their territory.

The Kolchak and Denekine forces, on the other hand, are in need of munitions and Red Cross supplies to carry on their campaign.

German Menace Greatest.

In the cities, jails are crowded and disease is rife, and people go insane from terror. Fuel is scarce, because since nationalization the output of the mines has been only about five percent. of normal, but the greatest danger of all is the German menace. Germany is striving by every means to gain control of Russia for the sake of her markets, which would give her the greatest commercial outlook in the world. All necessary materials could be secured there by Germany, which would then be independent of the rest of Europe. German and Bolshevist propaganda is being circulated everywhere, and is making its way into all countries.¹

¹“Must assist the Russians,” *Toronto Globe*, 11 Sept. 1919, 11.

APPENDIX 3

ATKINSON, BROWN, AND YOUNG RETURN TO CANADA, MARCH 1921

Young to Robertson, 8 March 1921

Dear Sir:

In accordance with instructions received, I closed the Siberian Mission of the Canadian Red Cross officially on the 31st of December, 1920, but owing to delay in receipt of money required you will note a supplement attached to the Financial Statement covering expenses to the 15th of January, 1921.

Reference to our Distribution Report attached will show the distribution not only of the supplies from the Canadian Red Cross but also from other contributing associations for whom we have been the distributors for the last twenty-two months.

Briefly we might say, however, that we have sent large shipments of clothing and medical supplies to the remnants of the Kappel and Semenoff forces. Seventy-two trainloads of these men, many with their wives and children, and accompanied by thousands of helpless and destitute refugees, are scattered from Manchuria Station to Nikolsk-Ussirisk. Their condition is beyond all description.

The Railway Employees have, at extremely low pay and much personal sacrifice, done their best in keeping the line open and getting refugees away from danger zones. To them we gave considerable supplies of clothing, and also to their hospitals medicines and various hospital supplies.

To the town hospitals of Vladivostok we gave a large consignment of medicines and hospital supplies; and the Town Council, from whom we rented our Godown, waived all rental for the aforesaid Godown from September 6 to December 31, 1920. (See Town Council's letter of appreciation attached).

The daily distribution of clothing to the poor as far as possible was kept up to the last.

The Vladivostok Branch of the British Patriotic League was reorganized and is now in the hands of competent and energetic persons. To them we gave considerable quantities of clothing, etc., for refugee relief work which they guaranteed to distribute for us, also any further shipments coming from outside sources. I arranged with the Russian Customs to pass all shipments addressed to the above mentioned League free of duty. (See attached letter from John Findlay, Esq., Chairman Vladivostok British Patriotic League).

Before leaving I turned some of our office furniture over to the British Patriotic League, and a portion of it to the Russian Committee of returned Russian Prisoners of War from Germany. The remainder was sold as per Financial Report.

Our various contributors in the East were notified that we were closing and placed in touch with the British Patriotic League, and we appealed to them to send all the assistance they possibly could. We however received no encouragement. They state that their associations had had so much difficulty in getting supplies distributed satisfactorily previous to the Canadian Red Cross assuming the work that it was unlikely that any more shipments would be made. Later, however, when interviewing the Chairman of the Patriotic League of Britons Overseas in Tokyo, he agreed to forward supplies to Mr. Findlay, expending about Four thousand Yen.

I regret to report that the conditions in Siberia are daily becoming worse and you see in the bazaars and streets numbers of better class Russians selling every spare article of wearing apparel that they possibly can in order to get money to buy food for their starving children, many mothers selling the clothes off their backs and wrapping themselves in sheepskins and pieces of blankets.

Added to this awful suffering is the realization that they are largely, indeed almost entirely, widows and orphans of the men who fought with us in the early part of the war, widows and orphans of the men who lie dead on the western battlefield, widows and orphans of the men whose dead bodies helped to form a rampart that saved not only France and England but all civilization from destruction.

But in direct proportion to the terrible suffering of these people is their gratitude and appreciation of what the Canadian Red Cross has done to help them. In addition to the thousands of personal expressions of gratitude and appreciation we received many hundreds of letters expressing their gratitude to the Canadian Red Cross.

Not only are the Russians grateful and appreciative but all other nationalities with whom we have come in contact and helped cannot say enough for the Canadian Red Cross. (See the attached letters from the Czecho-Slovak Consul General, Hungarian Red Cross Mission, British Patriotic League, Orenburg & Ussuri Cossacks).

I have no hesitation in stating that the Canadian Red Cross has been able to do more towards creating British and Canadian prestige than any other organization or mission in Russia, - due first to the support given me by the Canadian Red Cross in Canada, and, secondly, to the support, energy and hard work of the Assistant Commissioner, Captain J.S. Atkinson whose name I wish particularly to bring to your attention.

I also wish to bring to your attention the excellent work performed by Mr. D.M. Brown.

Before leaving I was made an Orenburg & Ussuri Cossack which is the greatest honor they could possibly confer, and I have been informed that it is the first time that a European who was not a Russian has even been made a Cossack. (Copy of official documents attached) Also the Czecho-Slovaks have given me their War Cross. (Copy of official documents attached).

Captain Atkinson has been given the Order of Vladimir with swords for valiant service performed during the Gaida Revolution.

The above is only mentioned in order that the Executive may realize how much the Canadian Red Cross is appreciated.

Yours faithfully,
[D. D. Young]
Lieut.-Colonel,
Commissioner,
Canadian Red Cross, Siberia.¹

¹CWM, Brown collection, Siberian correspondence, file 9, item 224a.

**Report on Atkinson's Return
to St. Thomas, Ontario, March 1921**

A tale of suffering almost unbelievable and unspeakable horrors of a great mad country, where human lives are as cheap as the worthless paper money of that country, where once proud princes and princesses are subjected to indignities worse than slavery, where disease and famine stalk hand in hand, cutting a terrible swath of death—this is the tale that Captain J.S. Atkinson, a former member of the St. Thomas public school staff, an officer in the old 25th Regiment, and one of those who went overseas with the 91st Battalion, brings to the city after a three years' sojourn in revolution-torn Russia. Captain Atkinson, who has distinguished himself in almost every phase of warfare, arrived in St. Thomas Tuesday evening, almost directly from Siberia, where he has been stationed for more than three years [*sic*] as assistant commissioner of the Canadian Red Cross Society, which absorbed the work of the British Red Cross shortly after the signing of the armistice. Capt. Atkinson spent the night and a portion of Wednesday with his old military confrere, Major F. G. Stanbury, Gladstone avenue, leaving Wednesday noon for London. He was unable to state where he will reside in Canada, or in what direction he will devote his energies.

“After such a long period of war work, it is hard to decide what to do in a civil line,” Captain Atkinson explained. “And after such a long residence in Russia, it is rather difficult to get acclimatized again.”

However, Captain Atkinson is through with the war so far as the Canadian Red Cross in Siberia is concerned, having been taken over by a capable Russian organization made up of several small relief societies before Captain Atkinson left. In fact, that was about the last duty Captain Atkinson performed in Vladivostok, where he was quartered the greater part of the time. The Russian organization will continue to receive and distribute the Red Cross supplies from Canada and Captain Atkinson feels confident that they will so their work well and honestly. He reports that the Russian people in Siberia, from the lowest peasants to the highest government officials are very grateful for what the Canadians have done for them, and before he left, hundreds of them visited him and expressed their thanks. He also brings thousands of letters of gratitude.

Four Hundred Thousand Refugees.

Captain Atkinson's sojourn in Red Russia had been so full of startling experiences, of thrills and narrow escapes; he has witnessed so much cruelty and barbarity and seen so much death and sickness, that it left him rather non-communicative.

“There is so much that has been done, so many terrible things, that I do not feel inclined to talk about them,” he said. “I do not know what the reports said about the cruelty of the Bolsheviks, but I assure you the reports would have to be very, very bad to exaggerate what I know has actually occurred. I have seen refugees with their eyes pierced out and with mutilated limbs. There are at least four hundred thousand of those refugees in Vladivostok, living in hovels unfit for human habitation. Before the war, Vladivostok had a population of approximately one hundred thousand; today it has more than six hundred thousand. The increase has been made up largely by terror-stricken

people fleeing from the pitiless Reds.

“In Vladivostok one can find men and women of the noblest blood of Russia living in a state similar to the worst part of a big city’s slume [*sic*]. They are utterly destitute, nothing left. They have not even sufficient clothing to keep them warm.”

Modestly, Captain Atkinson admitted that he had interceded on behalf of many of these poor unfortunates, and had assisted in getting one beautiful Russian princess and her three lovely children out of the country into Japan, where they are now residing. Her husband was killed during the war. Captain Atkinson helped many other prominent Russians escape the wrath of the Bolsheviks, utilizing many ingenious methods of getting them away, but he declined to discuss these incidents to any great extent.

“We were not supposed to do it,” he explained. “I’ll tell you, though, that the Canadian Red Cross uniforms helped many a refugee to pass through the danger zone into safety. There was no better disguise than that.”

A Powerful Movement.

Captain Atkinson is very optimistic about the anti-Bolshevist movement that is at present stirring Russia. The movement is very powerful and is not premature, he states. It has been planned for months and he feels confident that the anti-Bolsheviks will succeed in their objective, the severing of Siberia from the rest of Russia and establishing a constitutional government with Grand Duke Nicholas, the late Czar’s brother, on the throne.²

Captain Atkinson was in Mukden, China, several days before the revolution broke out, and there he met one of the chief officers on General Semenov’s staff who disclosed many of their plans and particulars regarding the disposition of their forces.

The anti-Bolsheviks have a very large army and plenty of supplies, Captain Atkinson states. The Russian peasants have been anticipating the movement for months and are heart and soul in it.

The strength of the Bolsheviks must not be under-estimated, he warns. They have a very large army, well armed and well organized. There are very many German officers in the Bolshevik army and they have thoroughly inculcated German military tactics in their minds. Captain Atkinson estimates that the Bolsheviks have sufficient arms and ammunition to last them for two years, a large amount of it coming from Germany and a great deal having been captured from the Allies.

It will be years before the interior is back to normal conditions, if it ever returns, Captain Atkinson states, but he feels confident that Siberia will be made a separate state. The Japanese are backing this movement, and today the Japanese yen is the medium of exchange in all parts of Siberia, while the Russian ruble is practically worthless. The peasants will not accept it at all. The ruble is still the monetary medium in interior Russia, but there it is used more as a basis for barter than anything else.

Captain Atkinson estimates that about one-quarter of the normal grain crop is planted this year, and as for industrial work, thousands and thousands of factories and

²This must have been Nicholas Nikolaievich, a cousin of Nicholas II’s father, Alexander III. Grand Duke Nicholas had been commander in chief of the Russian army during the First World War.

mills are idle. He instanced the case of Vladivostok, which at one time boasted of some 36 large industries. Today one factory is operating, a glass plant. Apparently the Bolsheviks fear or respect the British and French for their interests in Russia have not been violated to any great extent. British wholesale houses are still doing business in the usual manner and a number of British mines are being operated. There have been many closed, however, on account of scarcity of labor, the Chinese coolies having fled out of fear of the Bolsheviks.

Shooting All Afflicted.

A dread new contagion have developed in interior Russia during the last few months and is causing the death of thousands, Captain Atkinson reports. It is called "sap" by the Russians, and closely resembles the glanders that afflicts horses in this country. The disease is absolutely fatal and very contagious and the sanguine Soviet government has passed an order, requiring every person found suffering from the disease to be taken out and shot immediately. Not only are the victims of the epidemic being killed, but hundreds of persons who are not afflicted, Captain Atkinson states, as the Bolsheviks are making it an excuse to get rid of many suspected citizens. The disease is very rapid in developing and death usually results in a few days. The first symptom is a severe cold in the head.

When Captain Atkinson left Siberia the disease had not made its appearance in Eastern Russia, although the residents were living in dread that it would soon visit them. There was much typhus in Vladivostok, he states, causing many deaths, but the epidemic was mild compared to that in the interior.

Captain Atkinson was a prisoner of the Bolsheviks for 17 days in 1919 [*sic* - 1920], but was used very well. He was endeavoring to take a carload of food and clothing through to the British prisoners in Omsk [*sic* - Irkutsk], when he was apprehended by Red soldiers and was forced to remain in the car with a strong guard outside at all times. He finally succeeded in obtaining permission to get the car through with only the loss of some tobacco and cigarettes. He had no complaints to offer about his treatment by the Bolsheviks. The British prisoners were later released, having been members of the British Military Mission and captured when General Kolchak fell back.

In his capacity as Red Cross commissioner, Captain Atkinson had occasion to meet several members of the Soviet government and to negotiate with them. The majority appeared to be very well educated and very plausible, he states, apparently being desirous of impressing the Red Cross officers.

Contrary to the general opinion prevailing in this country, the whole of interior Russia is not Bolshevistic in its sentiments, Captain Atkinson reports. Less than fifteen per cent. of the people are with the Bolsheviks, and many are deserting every day. The preponderance of sympathy is with the anti-Bolshevist movement.

The work performed by the Canadian Red Cross in Siberia was very extensive. In addition to receiving and distributing the food and supplies from England, they looked after the disposal of supplies from about 20 other organizations, including a large number in Japan and China. The greater part of the supplies were given to the refugees directly, although many disabled soldiers were cared for in the military hospitals. Few Canadians

realize the great scope of the Canadian Red Cross in Siberia, Captain Atkinson declares.

Captain Atkinson, after going overseas with the 91st Batt., served for some time in England, and later went to Siberia with the 259th Rifles. He was a member of the Balaclava street school staff while in St. Thomas.³

³“Reds’ have no regard for human life; disease and famine in Russia,” *St. Thomas (Ont.) Times-Journal*, 16 Mar. 1921, 1, 6.

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