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**On 21 December 1918,
French-Canadian
Soldiers Mutinied In The
Streets Of Victoria,
British Columbia:
Their Story Has Never Been
Told:**

**“A Serious Inquiry Of The Social
Movement That Emerged Within
The Canadian Working Class To
Force Their Return Home”**

“Working-Class Leaders Of The Socialist Party Of Canada And Federated Labour Party Provided A Vocal Critique That Transformed Latent Discontent Among The Troops Into Collective Resistance”

[Thanks to Michael Letwin, New York City Labor Against The War & Military Project, who sent this in.]

[This is a long article for GI Special, but brings little known resistance to light. T]

By Benjamin Isitt, The Canadian Historical Review 87.2 (2006) 223-264

Benjamin Isitt is completing his PhD in Canadian history at the University of New Brunswick. Under the supervision of Dr Gregory S. Kealey, Isitt is specializing in the political history of the Canadian working class, with specific attention to the labour movement in British Columbia and social-democratic politics.

Isitt has conducted extensive research on domestic unrest during the First World War and on Canada's military intervention in Siberia. His doctoral dissertation examines the transition from an 'old left' to a 'new left' in British Columbia in the decades following the Second World War, in relation to changes in the economic structure of the province. A recipient of the Canada Graduate Scholarship, awarded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRCC), Isitt resides in Victoria.

Mutiny From Victoria To Vladivostok, December 1918

On 21 December 1918, French-Canadian soldiers mutinied in the streets of Victoria, BC. Their story has never been told.

Conscripts in the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force, these young men broke ranks while marching from the Willows Camp to the troopship Teesta, about to embark for Vladivostok, Russia.

Revolver fire sounded through the city, as the obedient men were ordered to whip the mutinous back into line.

At the point of bayonets, the march proceeded up Fort Street and through downtown Victoria to the outer wharf.

Twenty hours passed before the last dissenters were herded aboard the Teesta. In the ship's hold, along with twenty-one tons of gear for the YMCA and 1700 tons of

ammunition, a dozen ringleaders were detained in cells, the two worst handcuffed together.

At 4:15 A.M. on 22 December 1918, the 259th Battalion of the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force set sail for Vladivostok.

Introduction

'Time will reveal some strange things in the great Siberian drama,' the Semi-Weekly Tribune, newspaper of the Victoria Trades and Labour Council, declared two days before the mutiny.

This forgotten chapter of the First World War presents several challenges of research and interpretation. Straddling military history, working-class history, and the social history of Canada and Quebec, this story fits uneasily into any one field. The Canadian experience of war has been temporally, geographically, and thematically bounded by the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918.

A handful of historians have examined Canada's intervention in Russia, while others sought to explain the demobilization riots that erupted among Canadian troops in the British Isles; studies of the Siberian Expedition, however, underestimate the dissent among the troops, the connection of this dissent to anti-conscription sentiment in Quebec, and the process through which this dissent translated into mutiny.

Absent is a serious inquiry of the social movement that emerged within the Canadian working class to force their return home.

Within the field of working-class history, domestic expressions of industrial unrest have been privileged over local responses to international events such as the Russian revolution. To date, no study has focused on Canadian labour's response to the Siberian Expedition.

This topic raises important questions, such as the dual role of soldiers as workers, and the way class tensions were manifested within the armed forces, providing fertile ground for expanding our understanding of the working-class experience in Canada.

As William Rodney observed in 1968, 'the real story of intervention and Canada's role in it has still to be written.'

As the last guns sounded on the Western Front, 4000 Canadian troops assembled at Victoria for deployment to Siberia.

Born at a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet in London in July 1918, the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force (CSEF) was plagued from the outset by lack of clarity about its aims; a month after the main body of the force arrived in Siberia, the order was

issued from Ottawa to begin preparations for evacuation. Few troops in the CSEF ever saw direct fighting.

Ambivalence in Allied strategy prevented their deployment into the interior of Siberia. Most of their time was spent training White Russian conscripts and conducting routine security operations around Vladivostok – responding to looting, theft, assault, and murder in the port city. The threat of Bolshevik insurgency precipitated countermeasures by the Canadian command and the deployment of a small number of troops to the village of Shkotova.

An attempt to move a body of troops up the Trans-Siberian Railroad was thwarted by a strike of Russian rail-workers, while another train carrying the horses and men of the Royal North West Mounted Police (RNWMP) was wrecked near Irkutsk.

By June 1919, all but a handful of troops had returned to Canada.

The Siberian Expedition was part of a larger Allied campaign to alter the outcome of the Russian revolution and install a more sympathetic government in Russia. From Murmansk and Archangel to Baku and Vladivostok, Canadian troops joined soldiers from thirteen countries in a multi-front strategy of encirclement designed to isolate and defeat the Bolshevik regime in Moscow.

In Siberia, the Canadians backed a succession of White Russian governments, headed by General Dmitri Horvath, Grigori Semenov, and finally, Alexander Kolchak, former admiral of the czar's Black Sea Fleet, who seized power at Omsk in November 1918.

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

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

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

The mutiny that erupted in the streets of Victoria on 21 December 1918 was located at the intersection of class and national cleavages.

It provides a compelling window into persistent tensions in Canadian society, tensions that were amplified in the heat of wartime.

The historic antagonism between French and English, heightened around the issue of conscription, combined with the political radicalism of British Columbia's working class.

The French-Canadian conscripts who arrived in Victoria were mustered from the districts around Quebec City and Montreal, which had experienced rioting in opposition to the Military Service Act; in the British Columbia capital, they encountered a robust socialist movement that identified with the aims of the Russian revolution and launched a determined campaign to prevent their deployment to Siberia.

In street-corner meetings and in packed auditoriums, working-class leaders of the Socialist Party of Canada and Federated Labour Party provided a vocal critique that transformed latent discontent among the troops into collective resistance.

Both class and ethnicity drove the conscripts toward mutiny; neither can sufficiently explain the complex motivations behind an event that military and press censors did their best to conceal at the time.

At this junction of social forces – the converging interests of working-class Quebecois and British Columbia socialists – a violent standoff erupted in Victoria.

Why Siberia?

To understand the working-class response, and also the growth of discontent among the troops, it is essential to understand the rationale behind the Siberian Expedition.

From the outset, Canada's aims in Russia were complex, fluid, and confused. Military strategy, international diplomacy, economic opportunity, and ideology influenced the decision of Canada and its allies to intervene in the Russian civil war.

Militarily, the Siberian Expedition must be understood in the context of Russia's transition from trusted ally to de facto enemy.

In March 1917, as unrest mounted in Petrograd and the Romanov 300-year rule neared its end, a group of Canadian military officers toured Russia, meeting with Czar Nicholas II and other Russian leaders. 'Russia is now thoroughly supplied with munitions,' Victoria's Daily Times reported. 'The Czar's huge armies are prepared ... industries and transportation are fully organized ... everything is in readiness for a great offensive, simultaneously with a similar move by the Western Allies.'

Within a week of this optimistic report, the czar abdicated the throne.

By November, the Bolshevik party under V.I. Lenin had displaced the pro-war provisional government and entered into negotiations with Germany and other belligerent nations that ultimately removed Russia from the war – and liberated German forces for battle on the Western Front. The Allied Supreme War Council, meeting in London in December 1917, pledged support to those elements in Russia committed to a continuation of war against Germany.

The stage was set for Allied intervention.

In a speech to the Canadian Club and Women's Canadian Club in Victoria's Empress Hotel in September 1918, Newton Rowell, president of the Privy Council, described the loss of Russia as the most 'tragic surprise' of the war. The Siberian Expedition was necessary, he said, 'to reestablish the Eastern front' and 'support the elements and governments of the Russian people, which are battling against German armed force and intrigue.'

This theme of Germanic influence on the Bolshevik side tapped into public fear of 'Hun' aggression and harked back to Lenin's famed passage through Germany in a sealed railcar; it provided justification for opening fronts far removed from Germany and continuing fighting after Germany's surrender. Allegations of Bolshevik atrocities, including the supposed 'nationalization of women,' were amplified to bolster public support for the Siberian campaign.

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

Diplomacy also shaped Canadian policy in Siberia, as political and military leaders sought greater power and independence within the British Empire. As Rowell told the Canadian Club, the achievements of Canadian troops during the war had won for the country 'a new place among the nations,' obliging Canada to do her part on the world stage.

He informed Parliament that, after refusing a request from the British War Office to send another contingent to France, Canadian leaders felt obliged to provide a brigade for Siberia. Borden underscored this diplomatic motivation in a letter to a skeptical colleague, as domestic opposition to the Siberian Expedition mounted: 'I think we must go on with this as we have agreed to do so ... (I)t will be of some distinction to have all the British Forces in Siberia under the command of a Canadian Officer.'

More significant than diplomacy, however, was the economic motivation.

For decades Canadian, American, Japanese, British, and German investors had eyed the resource wealth of Russia's Far East and the region's consumer market. The German-controlled Kunst & Albers Company had established a vast retail-wholesale network in Siberia before the war, an enterprise similar to the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada.

When Russia's provisional government ordered the firm be sold, a Canadian intelligence officer saw 'a wonderful chance for Canada.' Trade commissioners had been posted to Petrograd and Omsk in 1916, and a Russian purchasing mission was established in Canada; exports to Russia reached \$16 million, making it the seventh largest market for Canadian goods.

In June 1917, Russia's consul-general to Britain, Baron Alphonse Heyking, described Siberia as 'the granary of the world' and urged, 'Let capitalism come in. It will develop quickly.'

The Bolshevik revolution interrupted these efforts to develop the Russian economy along capitalist lines. Rather than welcome foreign investment and trade, the new regime nationalized the assets of Russians and foreigners.

'This vast country is in a very precarious position from the standpoint of trade and commerce,' Rowell warned. 'She needs capital and expert guidance in the work of reconstruction ... (With) more intimate relations the greatest benefit may result both to Canada and Siberia.'

In October 1918, as Canadian troops were mustered to Victoria, the Privy Council authorized the formation of a Canadian-Siberian economic commission, including representatives of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Royal Bank of Canada; the latter opened a branch in Vladivostok at the end of 1918.

The Allied countries also had a direct financial interest in the defeat of the Lenin regime.

An estimated 13 billion rubles in war loans had been repudiated by the Bolsheviks.

Against this outstanding debt stood the Imperial Russian Gold Reserve, the largest holdings of the precious metal in the world.

Valued at over 1.6 billion gold rubles, one quarter of this gold had been shipped from Vladivostok to Vancouver in December 1915, June 1916, November 1916, and February 1917, to guarantee British war credits; it was transported on the Canadian Pacific Railway and stored for several months in a Bank of England vault in Ottawa.

The portion remaining in Siberia has its own intriguing story, moving from one train to another, and from town to town, as the czar and an array of White generals retreated eastward.

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

The final motivation behind the Siberian Expedition was ideological. In all industrialized countries, the events of 1917 amplified divisions between the social classes.

As working-class grievances against profiteering and conscription mounted in Canada, with labour demanding the 'conscription of wealth,' the Russian revolution provided a powerful symbol of resistance.

Fear of revolution informed Allied policy from the outset.

An editorial in the Federationist summed up a growing sentiment among BC workers: "There is no other sign post upon the social horizon pointing the way to peace than the movement which is now typified in the Russian Bolsheviks."

“Well may rulers and robbers hail its advent with terrified squawks and bourgeois souls quake with terror at its probable triumph. For with that triumph their game of loot and plunder will end.”

To radical sections of BC labour, the Bolshevik insurrection was celebrated as a bold response to the two-fold scourges of war and capitalism; it provided a framework through which BC workers came to interpret their own class position.

Within the Canadian elite, however, the Bolshevik revolution was received with grave misgivings, viewed as a catalyst to domestic unrest and an example of radical movements that were left unchecked.

The Siberian Sapper, newspaper of the CSEF, warned that 'Bolshevik missionaries are spreading their doctrines in every country in the world ... There is a mad dog running loose among the nations, and it would seem to be the duty of the nations to handle it as mad dogs are usually handled.'

This fear of domestic Bolshevism was intensified by statements such as those of Joseph Naylor, president of the BC Federation of Labour and a socialist leader of the Vancouver Island coal miners: 'Is it not high time that the workers of the western world take action similar to that of the Russian Bolsheviks and dispose of their masters as those brave Russians are now doing?'

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

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

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

A Beachhead On Russia's Eastern Flank

In December 1917, there were 648,000 tons of Allied munitions and war supplies in the Siberian port of Vladivostok.

The security of Allied military and commercial interests in the city was compromised by the election that month of a majority of Bolshevik deputies to the local Soviet.

Given the severity of the situation, British, Japanese, and American warships were deployed to Vladivostok, lying at anchor in the harbour.

In April, 500 Japanese marines landed ashore, as 50 Royal Marines left the cruiser Suffolk to guard the British Consulate.

By June 1918, the Allied powers had launched an attack to establish Vladivostok as a beachhead on Russia's eastern flank. Fifteen thousand Czecho-Slovaks, aided by Japanese and British marines, seized control of the city, toppling the local Soviet.

A group of armed gruzshchiki (longshoremen) staged a standoff in the Red Staff building, and though outnumbered forty to one, resisted until the building was hit with an incendiary bomb, killing dozens.

At the funeral, attended by 17,000 workers and adorned with the banners of forty-four unions, Konstantin Sukhanov – a twenty-four-year-old student and president of the Vladivostok Soviet – declared defiantly, 'The Soviet for which they died shall be the thing for which we live – or if need be – like them, die.'

Two days later, Japanese, British, American, French, and Czech officials placed the city under their 'temporary protection.' By the end of July, all administrative, judicial, and financial functions had been assumed by the White cabinet of General Dmitri Horvath.

Across the Pacific in British Columbia, the summer of 1918 was marked by acute industrial conflict.

Organized workers were on the brink of the first citywide general strike in Canadian history.

The Victoria Trades and Labour Council–backed newspaper The Week was suppressed by government order after publishing the terms of the Allies' secret treaties.

Burgeoning colonies of draft resisters had taken shape in the Comox Valley of Vancouver Island and near Howe Sound on the mainland.

Labour leader Albert 'Ginger' Goodwin was shot dead while evading the Military Service Act, while miners' leader Joseph Naylor was jailed for assisting draft resisters.

On both the industrial and political fields, British Columbia labour developed organizational muscle. Aided by wartime labour shortages, new organizations took root among shipyard workers, longshoremen, sawmill workers, telephone operators, teamsters, school teachers, fire-fighters, police officers, and laundry workers.

Led by militants in the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), British Columbia's labour movement was entering into a period of unprecedented unrest, preparing to mount a challenge to the moderate leadership of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. Electorally, the Federated Labour Party (FLP) established branches across the province, backed by the provincial labour federation and a team of organizers that included J.S. Woodsworth.

The FLP's lone parliamentarian in the BC legislature, Jim Hawthornthwaite of Nanaimo, aligned himself with the Russian revolution:

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

In both Russia and Canada, working-class unrest was fuelled by discontent with the high cost of living, shortages of food, carnage on the battlefields, compulsory military service, and restrictions on civil liberties.

In both countries, the roots of unrest could be traced to the class system itself, to the determination of the domestic elite to engage in war, and to the efforts of sections of the working class to alter basic economic relationships.

As radicalism in the industrial and political branches of BC labour intensified, Prime Minister Borden requested that his director of public safety, Montreal lawyer C.H. Cahan, investigate the proliferation of Bolshevik influences in Canada.

Against this domestic backdrop, the Imperial War Cabinet convened in London in July 1918. Borden joined British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and political and military leaders from Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, to formulate Allied strategy on the Western Front – and commit forces to the emerging fronts encircling Bolshevik Russia.

In his memoirs, Borden writes that on 27 July 1918 'we discussed our contingent for the Siberian expedition.'

The next day, Borden received a wire stating that the Privy Council 'approves principle of sending expedition, leaving you to arrange cost and other detail.'

Earlier that month, American President Woodrow Wilson committed 7000 US troops to Siberia.

As Allied leaders assented to the Siberian campaign, 1000 troops in Britain's 25th Middlesex Regiment made their way from Hong Kong to Vladivostok, to serve under the Canadian command.

By the end of August, 15,000 of 73,000 Japanese troops had landed in the city. American soldiers sailed from the Philippines, as an array of foreign armies made their way to Siberia: 2000 Italians, 12,000 Poles, 4000 Serbs, 4000 Romanians, 5000 Chinese, and 1850 French troops.

When combined with the Czecho-Slovak Legion and White Russian forces, the total Allied troop strength in Siberia exceeded 350,000.

On 13 August 1918, the details of the Canadian Siberian Expeditionary Force were revealed publicly: 'Canada to Send Force 4,000 Strong to Help Russia in Siberia,' the

Daily Colonist announced. Victoria was selected as an assembly point, along with New Westminster and Coquitlam.

Major-General James H. Elmsley returned from London and began accumulating his army at the Willows Camp, located on the edge of Victoria, as military officials arranged for the shipment of 3,000,000 rounds of ammunition from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Even at its inception, however, the CSEF was plagued by indecision in senior ranks. Gen. S.C. Mewburn, minister of militia and defence, questioned whether the troops could be raised voluntarily, asking Borden, 'How will the public of Canada view the raising of another Force to be sent to another theatre of war ... in view of the present unrest in Canada.'

In Regina, 'B' Squadron of the RNWMP Cavalry unit enlisted 181 horses and 215 men, all volunteers. From British Columbia to Nova Scotia, 4197 troops were mobilized to the West Coast; as Mewburn had anticipated, 1653 were conscripts.

In addition to small units of bakers, butchers, medics, and other supporting troops – and Nursing Matron Grace Elrida Potter, the lone woman in the force – the bulk of the CSEF consisted of the 16th Canadian Infantry Brigade, which included the 259th and 260th Battalions and Britain's 25th Middlesex Regiment.

Anatomy Of The Mutiny

The 259th Battalion (Canadian Rifles) was formed in September 1918 and organized into four companies, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Albert 'Dolly' Swift, with headquarters in Montreal.

'A' and 'B' companies were mustered from the districts of Kingston, Toronto, and London, ON, and received preliminary training at Niagara Camp before moving to Victoria.

'C' and 'D' companies were drawn from Montreal and Quebec City, and relied heavily on 'MSA men' – conscripts under the Military Service Act.

Of 1083 troops in the Battalion, only 378 had enlisted voluntarily.

Conscription was bitterly resented in Quebec, where historical linguistic and national tensions undermined support for the British war effort, and exploded into rioting in early 1918.

This political context helps explain discontent within the Quebecois companies of the 259th Battalion.

Morale in the 259th was also influenced by the presence of 135 Russian-speaking troops, belonging to two Russian platoons that had been recalled from the Canadian Corps in France and attached to the CSEF to provide interpretative services in Siberia.

Finally, the outbreak of the Spanish flu sowed the seeds of discontent within the 259th, forcing the quarantine of 'C' and 'D' companies in Quebec, and taking the life of seven members before they even reached Victoria.

At the end of October, the Quebecois units of the 259th Battalion boarded two separate trains for the journey to the Willows Camp.

The situation that greeted the men in Victoria was far from ideal: A wet British Columbia autumn was aggravated by the influenza epidemic.

Private Harold Steele, a twenty-year-old railway worker from Cane Township, ON, who voluntarily enlisted in 'B' Company of the 259th Battalion, described conditions at the Willows: 'The weather is the worst,' Steele wrote to his girlfriend Josie Libby. 'It rains every day and sometimes two or three times a day.'

A total of 101 people died of influenza in Victoria in 1918, while 2759 fell ill. A quarantine was established at the Willows, and all public gatherings were banned by the civic Health Committee, a prohibition that was not lifted until the end of November. According to the Daily Times, 'It may not have been the best time of year for troops to have been quartered in Victoria ... The latter part of their stay has been marked by an unusual amount of rain with an attendant sea of mud at the Willows.'

Dawn Fraser, a volunteer in the 260th Battalion and a pharmacist from Saint John, NB, put the mood of the troops into verse:

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

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

Meanwhile, the labour situation continued to deteriorate.

Within the ranks of Canadian workers, the rift between the moderate Trades and Labour Congress leadership and the socialist leadership concentrated in the western provinces widened into an open split at the congress convention in Quebec City in September 1918.

Among the grievances of the socialist delegates was the tabling of a resolution opposing Canadian intervention in Russia.

In response to growing radicalism, the Borden government approved PC 2384, outlawing fourteen political organizations and all meetings (with the exception of religious services) in the Russian, Ukrainian, and Finnish languages.

The proscribed organizations included the Social Democratic Party, Industrial Workers of the World, and Slavic radical groups including the Russian Workers Union and Group of Social Democrats of Bolsheviks.

Responding to a strike of Calgary freight handlers, the government banned all labour strikes for the duration of the war.

The SPC's Western Clarion was declared 'objectionable' under the authority of the Secretary of State of Canada, as was the pamphlet A Reply to the Press Lies Concerning the Russian Situation and Lenin's 'Political Parties in Russia,' which had been serialized in the BC Federationist only months earlier.

Peace set in on the Western Front as Canada declared war against radical labour, both at home and in Russia.

On Armistice Day, 11 November 1918, Borden wrote in his diary, 'Revolt has spread all over Germany. The question is whether it will stop there.'

The signing of the Armistice triggered a debate on whether Canadian troops should be deployed to Siberia.

As Borden sailed aboard the Mauritania en route to peace deliberations in Europe, Acting Prime Minister Sir Thomas White sent an urgent telegram from Ottawa:

“All our colleagues are of opinion that public opinion here will not sustain us in continuing to send troops, many of whom are draftees under the Military Service Act and Order in Council, now that the war is ended.

“We are all of opinion that no further troops should be sent and that Canadian forces in Siberia should, as soon as situation will permit, be returned to Canada. Consider matter of serious importance.”

T.A. Crerar, a Winnipeg farmer and businessman who would soon defect from the Union cabinet to lead the Progressive Party, was 'absolutely opposed to sending any additional forces to Siberia ...The matter of how Russia shall settle her internal affairs is her concern – not ours.'

Borden rejected his ministers' advice, maintaining that troops should leave Victoria for Siberia.

'In my judgment we shall stand in an unfortunate situation unless we proceed with Siberian Expedition ... Canada's present position and prestige would be singularly impaired.'

Anticipating that Canadian troops would not be called upon to engage in active warfare, 'beyond possible quelling of some local disturbances,' he suggested they were needed to assist the new government of Admiral Kolchak, which had recently seized power at Omsk and sought to organize anti-Bolshevik forces into a professional army.

White reiterated his earlier opposition, pointing out that Canadian interests in Siberia differed from those of Britain and France, because of Russia's indebtedness to those countries:

“Canada has no such economic or business interests as will justify the employment of a Canadian force composed of young men whose parents and friends desire should return at once to their ordinary occupations ... Canada should, now that the war is over and no necessity exists for the re-establishment of the Eastern front, discontinue further participation and expense. It seems clearly a task for nations more immediately interested in the finances of Russia.

“There is an extraordinary sentiment in Canada in favour of getting all our men home and at work as soon as possible.”

Indicating that opposition was not confined to labour circles, the Toronto Globe weighed in on the debate: 'Why should Canadians be forced into a service of which the purpose, if there is any definite aim, is hidden in the minds of public men? ... There has been no proposal to make Russia our enemy in any legal form. How can we say that our force in Siberia is being used for the defence of Canada?'

On 22 November, a scheduled troop sailing was postponed indefinitely by Mewburn, but this position was reversed days later when the cabinet yielded to their prime minister and decided the Siberian Expedition would proceed – with the proviso that any soldier who desired would be permitted to return to Canada within one year of the armistice.

“We are advised that this will be satisfactory to the troops now in British Columbia,” White assured Borden, prematurely, as events revealed.

The Socialists Reach Out To The Troops; 700 Soldiers Respond, More Are Turned Away

Morale among the troops at the Willows Camp waned in the face of vigorous propaganda by Victoria's labour movement, part of a national campaign against the Siberian Expedition.

Socialists targeted their efforts at members of the CSEF.

When the Victoria branch of the Federated Labour Party held its inaugural meeting on 8 December, 700 members of the Siberian force were in attendance, while 'hundreds were turned away.'

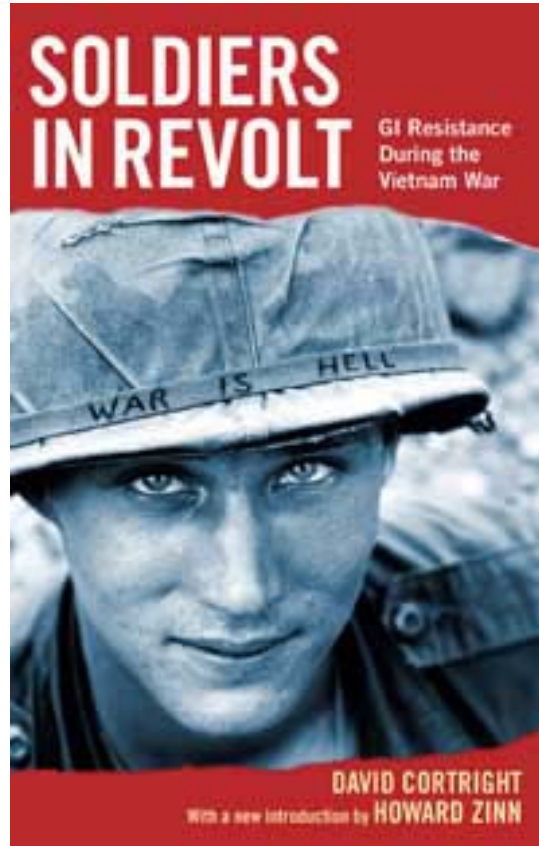
As the Federationist reported, 'The way those boys applauded the Labor speakers showed in no uncertain manner where their sympathies lay.'

Jim Hawthornthwaite, FLP member of the legislature, and party organizer J.R. Trotter took the platform, lambasting the 'capitalist press' and describing the violent overthrow of the Vladivostok Soviet the previous June.

The Daily Times, considered the more liberal of Victoria's two dailies, railed against 'certain elements of pronounced Socialistic tendencies' and claimed the Siberian Expedition was needed to 'maintain control of the trans-Siberian railroad along its whole length from the Pacific to the Urals.'

A week later, a second protest meeting was held, under the auspices of the Victoria Trades and Labour Council.

**Conclusion Of Article:
In Next GI Special**



SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: DAVID CORTRIGHT, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1975. Now available in paperback from Haymarket Books.

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**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WAR**



Vietnam: They Stopped An Imperial War

“The single largest failure of the anti-war movement at this point is the lack of outreach to the troops.” Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War

“The military are the final, essential weak point of Bush and Cheney.” David McReynolds 9.29.07

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Wounded In Kirkuk

July 24 (Reuters)

The U.S. military said their convoy came under armed attack in Kirkuk from a sedan and their soldiers returned fire, killing a passenger. One U.S. soldier was wounded during the attack, the U.S. military said.

WELCOME TO IRAQNAM: HAVE A NICE DAY



A U.S. soldier from Second Stryker Cavalry Regiment crosses a river near Qara Tappah, about 75 miles northeast of Baghdad in Diyala province July 22, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

Resistance Action

7.24.08 Associated Press & Reuters & By Sahar Issa, McClatchy Newspapers & July 25 (Reuters)

BAGHDAD – Insurgent fighters killed three guards and wounded two from a U.S.-allied group Thursday in drive-by shootings in northern Baghdad, an official said. The attackers opened fire as they sped by two different Awakening Council checkpoints in the Azamiyah neighborhood.

A bomb exploded near the house of Abdul-Rahman Dawood, a leading figure in the Dawa [collaborator] Party, leaving him wounded in the Baghdad neighborhood of Zafaraniyah. The party is led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Three body guards were also wounded.

Iraqi police found the body of a policeman in Yusufiya, 20 km (12 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

Iraqi police found the body of a policeman in Mosul, 390 km (240 miles), north of Baghdad, police said. The body bore gunshot wounds.

Iraqi police say at least eight people have been killed in a bombing at a checkpoint manned by U.S.-allied guards northeast of Baghdad. A police officer says the bomber blew herself up about 8:30 p.m. Thursday near a checkpoint in central Baquba. The officer says at least eight guards were killed.

A bomber wearing an explosive belt targeted an Awakening Council Commander in Baquba, Naeem al-Dulaimi at 3 p.m. Thursday. The explosion, which took place in a car dealership while Dulaimi was checking a car killed him, his two security guards and four civilians.

Guerrillas attacked a checkpoint manned by Awakening Council, a U. S backed militia, in Adhamiyah at 9 a.m. killing two members. They used silencers on their weapons, said Iraqi Police.

A car bomber targeted a checkpoint manned by Iraqi Army in al-Intisar neighbourhood, eastern Mosul killing two soldiers, injuring two others.

A sniper killed an Iraqi soldier in western Mosul, police said.

A roadside bomb struck an Iraqi police patrol, wounding three policemen in western Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said police said.

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION**

OCCUPATION REPORT

U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR; RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS



Iraqi citizens forced out of their house at gunpoint by foreign occupation soldiers from the USA are forced to lie down in the street with their faces in the dirt during a home invasion military terror operation ordered by U.S. command in Baghdad's Sadr City July 12, 2008. [Photo: REUTERS/Damir Sagolj]

[There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there.

[But your commanders know that, don't they? Don't they?]

Iraqi citizens have no right to resist home invasions by occupation soldiers from the USA. If they do, they may be arrested, wounded, or killed.

"In the States, if police burst into your house, kicking down doors and swearing at you, you would call your lawyer and file a lawsuit," said Wood, 42, from Iowa, who did not accompany Halladay's Charlie Company, from his battalion, on Thursday's raid. "Here, there are no lawyers. Their resources are limited, so they plant IEDs (improvised explosive devices) instead."



[images.google.com]

English soldiers search an American settler's house (1770's)

Declared Bill Ehrhart, a marine in Vietnam:

In grade school we learned about the redcoats, the nasty British soldiers that tried to stifle our freedom. Subconsciously, but not very subconsciously, I began increasingly to have the feeling that I was a redcoat. I think it was one of the most staggering realizations of my life.

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**“Having Declared Afghanistan A
‘Good War’, The Complicit
Enablers Are Now Anointing
Barack Obama As He Tours The
Bloodfests In Afghanistan And
Iraq”**

Obama Demanded More War In Afghanistan: “More Combat Troops, More Helicopters, More Bombs”

That he is a smooth operator and a black man is irrelevant.

He is of an enduring, rampant system whose drum majors and cheer squads never see, or want to see, the consequences of 500lb bombs dropped unerringly on mud, stone and straw houses.

24/07/08 By John Pilger, The New Statesman

On 12 July, The Times devoted two pages to Afghanistan. It was mostly a complaint about the heat.

The reporter, Magnus Linklater, described in detail his discomfort and how he had needed to be sprayed with iced water. He also described the "high drama" and "meticulously practised routine" of evacuating another overheated journalist. For her US Marine rescuers, wrote Linklater, "saving a life took precedence over security".

Alongside this was a report whose final paragraph offered the only mention that "47 civilians, most of them women and children, were killed when a US aircraft bombed a wedding party in eastern Afghanistan on Sunday".

Slaughters on this scale are common, and mostly unknown to the British public.

I interviewed a woman who had lost eight members of her family, including six children. A 500lb US Mk82 bomb was dropped on her mud, stone and straw house. There was no "enemy" nearby.

I interviewed a headmaster whose house disappeared in a fireball caused by another "precision" bomb.

Inside were nine people – his wife, his four sons, his brother and his wife, and his sister and her husband.

Neither of these mass murders was news.

As Harold Pinter wrote of such crimes: "Nothing ever happened. Even while it was happening it wasn't happening. It didn't matter. It was of no interest."

A total of 64 civilians were bombed to death while The Times man was discomforted.

Most were guests at the wedding party.

Wedding parties are a "coalition" speciality. At least four of them have been obliterated – at Mazar and in Khost, Uruzgan and Nangarhar provinces. Many of the details, including the names of victims, have been compiled by a New Hampshire professor, Marc Herold, whose Afghan Victim Memorial Project is a meticulous work of journalism that shames those who are paid to keep the record straight and report almost everything about the Afghan War through the public relations facilities of the British and American military.

The US and its allies are dropping record numbers of bombs on Afghanistan. This is not news. In the first half of this year, 1,853 bombs were dropped: more than all the bombs of 2006 and most of 2007. "The most frequently used bombs," the Air Force Times reports, "are the 500lb and 2,000lb satellite-guided..." Without this one-sided onslaught, the resurgence of the Taliban, it is clear, might not have happened. Even Hamid Karzai, America's and Britain's puppet, has said so.

The presence and the aggression of foreigners have all but united a resistance that now includes former warlords once on the CIA's payroll.

The scandal of this would be headline news, were it not for what George W Bush's former spokesman Scott McClellan has called "complicit enablers" – journalists who serve as little more than official amplifiers.

Having declared Afghanistan a "good war", the complicit enablers are now anointing Barack Obama as he tours the bloodfests in Afghanistan and Iraq.

What they never say is that Obama is a bomber.

In the New York Times on 14 July, in an article spun to appear as if he is ending the war in Iraq, Obama demanded more war in Afghanistan and, in effect, an invasion of Pakistan.

He wants more combat troops, more helicopters, more bombs. Bush may be on his way out, but the Republicans have built an ideological machine that transcends the loss of electoral power – because their collaborators are, as the American writer Mike Whitney put it succinctly, "bait-and-switch" Democrats, of whom Obama is the prince.

Those who write of Obama that "when it comes to international affairs, he will be a huge improvement on Bush" demonstrate the same willful naivety that backed the bait-and-switch of Bill Clinton – and Tony Blair. Of Blair, wrote the late Hugo Young in 1997, "ideology has surrendered entirely to 'values'... there are no sacred cows (and) no fossilised limits to the ground over which the mind might range in search of a better Britain..."

Eleven years and five wars later, at least a million people lie dead.

Barack Obama is the American Blair.

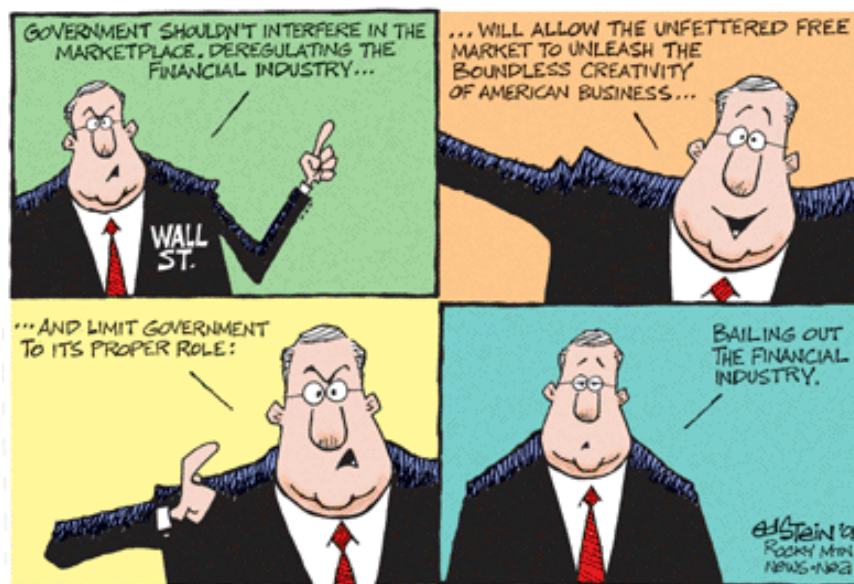
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He is of an enduring, rampant system whose drum majors and cheer squads never see, or want to see, the consequences of 500lb bombs dropped unerringly on mud, stone and straw houses.

Bill Day
The Commercial Appeal
1992 (and later 93)



CLASS WAR REPORTS



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Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces.

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