

Liar or Just Doesn't Know?

By John Reed

FOR the past year or so many people have been calling Woodrow Wilson a hypocrite. Mollie Steimer got fifteen years for doing it; Oswald Garrison Villard hasn't been arrested yet. The defenders of the President still repeat, after every new atrocious act of his, that he just doesn't know.

The Soviet Government of Hungary has fallen, and the capitalist press is exulting over the fact that this catastrophe is due chiefly "to the pressure of Captain Thomas Gregory, American food controller in Hungary." In other words, the United States Government starved the Hungarian People's Government to death; and that by direct order of the President of the United States. Can Wilson's friends still tell us that he doesn't know?

They will have very little to say after the latest Presidential pronouncement—the statement about American troops in Siberia, and why they must be kept there. It contains a number of misstatements of fact which, if they had been uttered by anybody else, would be called lies, and treated as lies should be. However, having been emitted by the Great White Father, the people of the United States will probably suppress their uneasy doubts, the stock market will react favorably, and President Wilson will continue to prosecute his private war against the Russian people.

The President's statement alleges the following reasons for sending American troops to Siberia and keeping them there:

1. To save the Czecho-Slovak armies from "destruction by hostile armies apparently organized by, and often largely composed of, enemy prisoners of war."

2. "To steady any efforts of the Russians at self-defense, or the establishment of law and order, in which they might be willing to accept assistance."

3. To protect Mr. John F. Stevens and a corps of American Engineers who are operating the Siberian Railroads under an agreement with Japan, for the purpose of:

a. Feeding, clothing and supplying the people of Russia and Siberia.

b. "The forces of Admiral Kolchak are entirely dependent on these railways."

4. "From these observations it will be seen that the purpose of the continuance of American troops in Siberia is that we, with the concurrence of the great allied powers, may keep open a necessary artery of trade. . . ."

The President evidently did not take the trouble to read the Acting Secretary of State's announcement of Intervention in Russia, on August 5th, 1918; in that extraordinary document mention was made, not of "saving the Czecho-Slovaks from destruction," but of *protecting the rear of the westward-moving Czecho-Slovaks*. As for the "armies... organized by enemy prisoners of war," that hoary myth was exploded by members of the British and American Military Missions, who journeyed through Siberia at the request of the Soviet Government, and reported to their Governments that these legendary "armies of enemy prisoners" did not exist.

We refuse to believe that the President is still ignorant of the kind of Russians who are making "efforts at the establishment of law and order," or of the kind of "law and order" they want to establish. The corrupt adventurer Horvath, the mercenary Semenov, the bloody-handed Kolchak and the renegade Denikin are

the sort of Russians whose "efforts" American troops are supporting. There was the shadow of an argument to be advanced while Messrs. Avksentiev, Zenzinov & Co. maintained their soap-bubble "Government" at Omsk; although these shameless politicians represented no one in Russia except themselves, still they upheld the tradition of capitalist "democracy." But Kolchak and Denikin don't bother with childish make-believes such as Constituent Assemblies; they stand frankly for a restoration of a Czarism in Moscow, and in furtherance of this end they do not hesitate to butcher men, women and children, to suppress every shadow of popular organization—not only labor unions and political parties, but even cooperative societies, zemstvos, and schools. In their hands the grain withheld from the starving masses of Central Russia is made into vodka, with which to stupefy the peasants. Their armies are composed of former Czarist officers, Chinese and Japanese mercenaries, the scum of eastern Asia. They slaughter, rob, rape; they torture women and children, starve whole populations; it is treason to criticize them, punishable with death. They are selling the Russian land, mines and forests to foreigners. The Imperial ensign, surmounted by the twin black eagles of the Romanovs, has been hoisted on the quay at Vladivostok, in the presence of a guard of "honor" of Allied troops.

This is the kind of "effort at self-defense" that American troops are "steading." This is the "law and order" they are endeavoring to "restore." Woodrow Wilson knows it. He knows it. He dares not ask Congress to sanction this expedition in support of brigandage, nor has Congress ever declared war on Russia.

There is much in the papers lately about American soldiers in Siberia being killed by "Bolsheviki." It is considered a dastardly thing for a people to defend themselves against invaders of their country—even though these invaders be Americans, who as everybody knows, gave a "solemn and public promise" not to interfere in Russian politics.

The President has the nerve to repeat this promise. He says, "The instructions to General Graves direct him not to interfere in Russian affairs, but to support Mr. Stevens whenever necessary." Well, what then? Apparently Mr. Stevens' purpose is to keep the Siberian Railways running. Why? A few paragraphs on the President says, "The forces of Admiral Kolchak are entirely dependent upon these railways."

Don't interfere into Russian affairs, but help Admiral Kolchak overthrow the Soviet Government!

Let us use plain words about these matters. The American troops sent to Siberia by Woodrow Wilson, and kept there by him alone, were dispatched to help overthrow the Government set up by the Russian people of their own free will, and are engaged in supporting tyranny against human liberty. In every contact Woodrow Wilson has had with the world, his decision has lain with that of the enemies of freedom and real democracy—in Hungary, Egypt, Germany, Shantung—and to that course he has pledged this nation.

We come now to the very important detail concerning Mr. John F. Stevens, whose activities (running six trains a day on the Chinese Eastern and Trans-Baikal Railways, and other democratic triumphs) fill the body of the President's statement.

The State Department's announcement of Intervention, as I recall it, doesn't say a word about Mr. Stevens. At that time the United States Government was "saving" the Czecho-Slovaks, and combatting fearful hosts of unarmed German prisoners. Mr. Stevens, then, must be explained, and the President does it. Only he doesn't tell all the facts. After relating the story of how Mr. Stevens and the Railway Commission went to Russia at the request of the Kerensky Government, and worked with that Government, the President continues: "Owing to the Bolshevik uprising, and the general chaotic conditions, neither Mr. Stevens nor the Russian Railway Service Corps was able to begin work in Siberia until March, 1918."

He skips a very important episode—an episode of which he knows. He skips this episode because it would spoil his little explanation to the Senate. It happens, however, to be the fact that the American Railway Mission, and Mr. Stevens, *could have begun work in Siberia—and in Russia—long before March 1918*, if they had really wanted to help the Russians and oppose the Germans.

When the Bolshevik uprising took place, Mr. Stevens and his Railway Corps fled to Japan, and sat there, in the best hotels, hobnobbing with the Allied and Japanese Imperialists.

While the Brest-Litovsk negotiations were going on, the Soviet Government asked the American Government to send the Railway Mission into Russia. It promised to appoint Mr. Stevens, or anyone else designated, to be Assistant Commissar of Ways and Communications, with complete authority over half the transportation lines of all Russia. The American Railway Mission was to have charge of removing all guns, ammunition and supplies from the front to where the Germans wouldn't get them, and oversee the entire work of the Russian railways.

But the American Government was not interested, evidently, in saving munitions from the Germans; it was more interested in upsetting the Soviet Government. So Mr. Stevens was ordered to remain in Japan until some reactionary figurehead could be found in Siberia to undertake the Holy War against Socialist Russia. What a dirty story!

The core of the whole miserable excuse is contained in the following clause:

"The situation of the people of Siberia, meantime, is that they have no shoes or warm clothing; they are pleading for agricultural machinery, and for many of the simpler articles of commerce, etc."

This, while the United States Government cooperates with the Allies in maintaining a merciless blockade against Soviet Russia, dooming millions of people to starvation, exposure and disease because they dare to set up the kind of government they want to live under!

"All elements of the population in Siberia look to the United States for assistance," says the President. "This assistance cannot be given to the population of Siberia, and ultimately to Russia, if the purpose entertained for two years to restore railway traffic is abandoned. . . ."

God help Russia from being assisted by President Wilson! Let him call off his private war, and call home the American boys he has sent to Siberia to shoot and be shot at upon pretexts which are obviously insincere.