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JOHN F. STEVENS

IN RUSSIA, 1917-1922

A Seminar Research Paper

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ABSTRACT

John F. Stevens in Russia, 1917-1922 is a seminar paper written as partial fulfillment of requirements for a master's degree at Wisconsin State University at La Crosse between the fall semester of 1967 and the summer session of 1968.

John Stevens was one of America's most capable yet little known construction engineers during the period from 1880 to 1923. During this time he worked in the development of the Great Northern Railway and solved many of the engineering problems in the construction of the Panama Canal. Stevens also worked to operate the railroads of eastern Russia from 1917 to 1922.

In his work on the Russian railways, Stevens was a combination diplomat-general manager-engineer. At times the entire responsibility for railroad management was on his shoulders. For months at a time he also served as the only active representative of the United States intervention into the Russian Civil War.

Stevens' work in Russia had three phases. In 1917 he headed an Advisory Commission to inspect facilities and make suggestions. He stayed on to head the Russian Railway Service Corps. Stevens finally served as America's leading voice on various inter-allied committees dealing with the railway question. He accomplished all this though he was in his late sixties.

PREFACE

When the United States entered World War I it began to share all the concerns of those nations fighting the Central Powers. In April, 1917 one of the greatest of these concerns was the domestic situation in Russia. That country had suffered great losses at the hands of the German army and was in the initial stage of revolution. The Allies viewed this situation as grounds for intervention into the internal activities of their faltering associate.

The Russian railway system was the domestic facility of utmost concern to the Allies. It was of prime importance that Russia's lines continue to operate in support of the war effort. The United States responded to this necessity by offering to assist in underwriting, inspecting, supervising and operating some of the Russian railroads. The State Department placed John F. Stevens in charge of this task.

Stevens was an American engineer who had assisted in constructing the Panama Canal and the Great Northern Railroad. He traveled to Russia in the service of his country and stayed almost six years even though he was in his upper sixties. His work in Russia continued past World War I, through much of the Russian Civil War, and on to 1922. To the best of the writer's knowledge there is no documented coverage of all of the five years that Stevens spent in Russia. The object of this paper is to supply such coverage.

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CHAPTER I

THE UNITED STATES RAILWAY ADVISORY COMMISSION TO RUSSIA

The idea of allied intervention into the operation of the Russian railways increased as the possibility of the United States' entry into World War I became greater. This idea crystalized immediately after the United States declared war. David Francis, the American ambassador, notified the State Department that the Provisional Government of Russia would welcome assistance in operating some of the Russian railways.¹ As a result of this request, the regime expected to be able to facilitate the supply of its troops to the European front as well as to increase its stock of railroad equipment.

The president of the United States and the State Department responded to the Russian request. A plan for assistance in inspection, operation and supply of Russian railroads was designed, centering around the idea of sending a technical mission to that country.² Mid-April of 1917 saw an impressive group of American railway experts assembled by the State Department.

The delegation included men of great competence in all facets of railway building and operation. Henry Miller, Vice President of the Wabash Railway;

¹Stevens, "Memorandum". part 1, paragraph 1.

²Foreign Relations of the United States. (Washington: Government and Printing Office. Chapter 4, 1917) p. 28.

John Galenzer, a bridge engineer; George Gibbs, a mechanical engineer; and Wm. Darling, former Chief of the Northern Pacific Railway participated. John F. Stevens was mission chairman.³

Stevens' appointment logically resulted from his record. This included the solving of many of the technical problems connected with the building of the Panama Canal. He had also been responsible for engineering much of the route of the Great Northern Railroad. Stevens was especially known for his ability to cut through unimportant obstacles and get things done. President Wilson added his endorsement of the engineer's competence by appointing him Minister Plenipotentiary just before the mission left for Russia.⁴

The officially -named United States Railway Advisory Commission to Russia left Washington for Vladivostok on May 9, 1917. The group left the capital armed with promises of assistance by the United States government. This apparently meant the supply of whatever locomotives, cars and rails were found to be needed in Russia. Many private railroad companies also voiced support for the Commission.

³New York Times, May 11, 1917.

⁴Ibid. see "Sculping the Steel Blazer", Literary Digest, Vol. 79, 1926: pp. 36-38., Stevens, John F. "Is a Second Canal Necessary", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 8, 1930. pp. 417-429.

The Advisory Commission, with its secretaries and staff, arrived at Vladivostok on May 31, 1917. Representatives of the Provisional Government of Russia were on hand to meet the Commission. These officiares had planned to conduct the group to Petrograd immediately upon their landing but Stevens insisted on clearing up the Vladivostok railway yards first.

The situation at the eastern end of the Trans-Siberian Railway indeed demanded immediate attention. Seven hundred, thousand tons of vitally needed war supplies were piled in the Vladivostok yards. Stevens and his group set to work and in a few days supplies were at least running westward where none had been going before.⁵ In order to insure that the shipments would continue, American and Russian authorities agreed that Stevens would have the Vladivostok terminal under his direct control.

After beginning work on the Vladivostok problem, the Advisory Commission began a thirteen day trip to Petrograd. The Provisional Government representatives arranged the trip to be as comfortable as possible. The delegation traveled only during the day and made frequent stops. At these stops the Americans were met with pleasant receptions, which they often overlooked in order to gather data on the operation of the railway.⁶

⁵Stevens, "Memorandum". part 1, paragraph 3.

⁶Ibid., paragraph 4.

When the Advisory Commission reached Petrograd all the members in the group agreed as to what they had seen. They had observed that the Trans-Siberian Railway had been well built and was repairable. They had also observed that the main problem in operating the line lay with the railway personnel. The workers appeared to be discontented, idle, and insubordinate.⁷ Stevens later found that these attitudes pervaded even the highest level of railroad management in Russia.

The overall direction of Russian railroads had long been in the hands of a Technical Board. This Technical Board consisted entirely of learned scholars who had no practical experience in railroading. Stevens met with this group in Petrograd and found that its members had no incentive or interest in their jobs. His sessions with the Russians resulted in weak promises for railway improvement.

The meetings proved to have an adverse effect upon Steven's health. Soon after the meetings he fell sick. The illness did not prove to be serious but it was an indication that the work of improving the Russian railways could be very much of a strain for a sixty-four year old man.⁸

⁷Ibid., paragraph 5.

⁸Ibid., paragraph 6.

Stevens was healthy and back on the job by late June of 1917. He continued to inspect railway facilities, met with dignitaries, and forwarded requests for equipment to Washington. Stevens naturally considered these activities to be part of his job but there were those in Washington who viewed them to be out of line.

Elements in the United States State Department had concluded that many of the diplomatic activities that Stevens was carrying on could be best done by a separate mission which could devote full time to dealing with the Provisional Government in coordinating the war effort.⁹ By May 10, 1917 Washington appointed a strictly diplomatic mission with Elihu Root as its Chairman.¹⁰

Root was immediately concerned with the position of his mission in relation to that led by John Stevens. Root suggested that the Railway Advisory Commission be placed under the authority of the diplomatic mission.¹¹ President Wilson at first saw no reason why Stevens should be answerable to Root. However, Root did not fully accept the President's opinion and continued to point out the possible problems of his relationship to Stevens.

⁹Foreign Relations, Chapter 4, 1917. p. 29.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 337

¹¹Foreign Relations of the United States. (Washington: Government and Printing Office. 1919) Lansing Papers, Vol. II, p. 331.

Stevens continued in his work unaware of the fact that he was being watched by Root. The engineer accelerated his efforts to solve the problems of the Russian railways. He divided his group and sent the members off in different directions in order to inspect more track. Stevens also decided to by-pass the Russian Technical Board and go right to the people who had the proper authority.

Stevens first consulted General Brusilov, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army. The meeting proved to be no more successful than those with the Technical Board. Brusilov's staff members even revealed that they had absolutely no knowledge of the railway situation. They only knew that they were having great difficulties getting supplies.¹²

When Stevens met with no success in talking with Brusilov and his staff members, he arranged an audience with Kerensky himself. At the meeting with the head of the Provisional Government of Russia Stevens negotiated for the implementation of suggestions made by his delegation. Kerensky was cooperative and issued orders following the American's suggestions.¹³ These orders were the first great step in improving Russian Rail Service but the way in which they were obtained led to altercations between the American missions in Russia.

¹²Stevens, "Memorandum". part 1, paragraph 7.

¹³Ibid., paragraph 8.

Mr. Root took special notice of Steven's activities and endeavored to keep the State Department informed of them. A message which Stevens released to the Russian people on July 4, 1917 was of most importance to Root. Parts of the statement clearly indicated that the engineer had taken powers that were very much beyond the authority of a technical advisor.¹⁴ President Wilson was informed of Steven's message and was forced to make the clearest statement that had yet been given regarding the position, aims and objectives of the United States Railway Advisory Commission to Russia.

On August 15, 1917 Wilson's office sent the following telegram:

Dear Mr. Stevens: In view of the fact that when (sic) when the Commission under Mr. Root arrives in Russia there will be counting the American Embassy, three bodies in that country conferring with the Russian Government on behalf of the United States, it seems advissable (sic) to clearly define the functions of the two commissions, in order that there may be no confusion in the minds of the Russian Government.

I would be pleased therefore, if, in your conferences with members of the Russian Government and other persons in Russia with whom it may be necessary to discuss the objects of your mission, you would have your mission restrict themselves to the topic of transportation, the supply of materials for the construction of railways, and the furnishing of men to manage and operate the lines. As Mr. Root has the rank of Ambassador and as his commission will deal with general policies, you are instructed to confer with him and his commission upon their arrival, and thereafter negotiate with the Russian Government in accordance with his suggestions.¹⁵

¹⁴see Appendix A.

¹⁵Lansing Papers, Vol. II, p. 330., Draft B.

President Wilson's telegram did place the position of the Railway Advisory Commission in the proper prospective, but it arrived too late to serve as a reprimand. Stevens had already accomplished his objective. The results of the tours of inspection were in, promises from the head of government had been obtained and the Russian people had been presented with the Commissions version of what it thought its duties and powers were. Stevens began to complete the work of the United States Railway Advisory Commission to Russia.

Several decisions and recommendations made up the Stevens report. It asserted that the only Russian railway line worth rehabilitating was the Trans-Siberian, Chinese-Eastern system.¹⁶ Stevens estimated that this achievement would require a credit of \$375,000,000. This sum would be necessary to enable the Russian Government to buy locomotives, cars, and equipment.¹⁷ Stevens also recommended that certain equipment still at the Panama Canal construction site should be shipped to Russia.¹⁸ He suggested that all supplies be sent to Vladivostok and that complete assembly shops be set up there. The final recommendation was that a force of Americans should accompany the supplies to supervise their use.¹⁹

¹⁶Stevens, "Memorandum". part 1, paragraph 9

¹⁷New York Times, July 15, 1917

¹⁸Foreign Relations, Chapter 4, 1917. p. 28

¹⁹Ibid.

When the Advisory Commission assembled its report there seemed to be no more real need for the Commission itself. Griener, Gibbs and Darling all asked permission to leave for the United States. There was no reason to hold these men, so Stevens granted their desire. The men returned to America via Shanghai. The departure of three men reduced the Commission to Stevens, Miller and a few clerks. This reduced group decided to make one last tour of inspection.²⁰

The last trip that the United States Railway Advisory Commission to Russia made concentrated on the availability of coal along the Trans-Siberian Railway. The members traveled east from Petrograd at a very slow rate in order to become fully informed of the fuel supply along the right of way. The trip took fifty days and uncovered many fueling problems all along the line.²¹

By the time Stevens and Miller reached Vladivostok many of the recommendations that they had made were already improving service. Miller then left for the United States and Stevens was the sole member of the Commission in Russia. The Commission actually ceased to exist when Miller left, but Stevens had been asked to stay on to receive American men and supplies.²²

²⁰Stevens, "Memorandum". part 1, paragraph 10.

²¹John A. White, The Siberian Intervention (Princeton University Press, Princeton: 1950), p. 147.

²²Foreign Relations, Chapter 4, 1917. p. 310.

CHAPTER II

THE RUSSIAN RAILWAY SERVICE CORPS

By the end of July, 1917 the Provisional Government of Russia had to cope with a serious shortage of railroad technicians. The regime could not spare men from the war front to accomplish the work recommended by the Advisory Commission. Kerensky turned to the American Embassy for assistance and requested that railroad technicians from the United States be sent to Russia. Stevens verified the need for the technicians and made suggestions as to the numbers and types of experts that were appropriate.²³

The request for the unit of railroad technicians must have been dealt with in the same way that all matters regarding the various missions to Russia were handled. The President, the State Department, and the Army took advantage of wartime emergency powers to institute, direct and finance the missions. In the less than two years of the American experience in World War I, the Congress became involved with the missions to Russia only in a vague way. According to the Congressional Record, House of Representatives Joint Resolution 110, passed by the House in 1917, is the only Congressional mention of missions to allied countries made during the war.

On August 13, 1917 the United States State Department wired Stevens that a group of railroad technicians would be sent to Russia.²⁴ The Department worked quickly in finding

²³Foreign Relations of the United States. (Washington: Government and Printing Office. Chapter 4, 1917), p. 24

²⁴Ibid.

the number and type of men that could meet the needs of the Russian railways. By August 16, 1917 the personnel were available and the structure of their organization was fairly well established.

Officials designated one unit as the Russian Railway Service Corps. It was attached to the Army as a special element and the members of the Corps were considered army personnel.²⁵ They drew special officer's pay. The only difference between the Russian Railway Service Corps and a regular army corps was that the railroad technicians were placed under John Steven's direct authority.

The Russian Railway Service Corps was originally composed of 250 men divided into squads of fourteen. Each member of a squad had a special skill and theoretically each squad was capable of operating one rail station and a section of track. Just prior to the Corp's leaving for Russia, it was augmented with thirty employees of the Baldwin Locomotive Company who were badly needed to assemble engines at Vladivostok. Twenty interpreters were also added to the group bringing the total number of men to 300. George Emerson, the general manager of the Great Northern Railway, with the rank of Colonel, became the field commander of the Service Corps with orders to deliver the unit to Stevens at Vladivostok.²⁶

²⁵Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 2.

²⁶Ibid.

The Service Corps departed San Francisco for Vladivostok on November 19, 1917 aboard the transport ship Thomas.²⁷ The scene in Russia during this time was one of growing chaos. The Bolsheviks had overthrown the Provisional Government on the seventh of November and by the middle of the month they were solidifying their control over Western Russia. Siberia remained under the control of pre-Czarist factions but Stevens began to be very much concerned as the Thomas approached land.²⁸

Stevens was faced with a considerable problem. He wished to encourage the operation of the Russian railways for the war effort, but the Bolsheviks had already advocated withdrawal from the war. The State Department thought that the Bolshevik attitude might change and therefore suggested that Stevens present the credentials of the Service Corps to the new government.²⁹ The Department later changed its mind on this point when the anti-Bolshevik Russians, who had been aiding the Allies, heard of the plan.

The diplomatic confusion over whom the Service Corps should report to ended when the anti-Bolshevik faction led by Admiral Kolchak let it be known that the Service Corps was not welcome in Russia. The interpreters that were accompanying the unit aroused particular suspicion.³⁰

²⁷Foreign Relations, Chapter 4, 1917. p. 31.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., p. 32.

³⁰Ibid.

The Kolchak suspicions moved Stevens to obtain State Department authority over the Thomas. He then ordered the ship not to dock in Vladivostok but to lay out to sea to await further developments.³¹

The Thomas waited at sea until December 17, 1917 while Stevens studied the political situation in Russia. He observed that the effects of the revolution were creeping eastward. Indications of this were that prisoners of war freed by the Bolsheviks roamed the countryside under arms.³² Under these circumstances Stevens was forced to board the Thomas and together with the Service Corps, make for Japan.

Stevens went to Japan because it was thought that an agreement might still be worked out whereby the Service Corps could land in Russia. In such an event he wanted the Corps nearby. The Thomas docked at Nagasaki but the men were not allowed to land. The Japanese officials were concerned with the billing for quartering the Service Corps. Two weeks of discussion were necessary before the Japanese agreed to accept the remaining credit of the Russian Provisional Government. Stevens was advised that he could use his own judgement in determining when the Service Corps could proceed to Vladivostok.³³

³¹Ibid., p. 33.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

Events in Russia during the latter part of 1917 demanded that the Allies take more forceful action. Millions of dollars worth of Allied equipment lay stockpiled in Bolshevik-held territory. In addition, many thousand troops who had been fighting for the Allied cause were now stranded all along the western Russian frontier.³⁴ As a result of this situation, Britain, France and the United States dispatched small numbers of troops. The Allied forces began to land in Murmansk and Archangel in March of 1918. In sending these troops, the Allies had no thought of facing Bolshevik forces in armed conflict but merely sought to protect their interests.³⁵

When the Allies revealed their plans to land troops in Russia Stevens decided to return to that country and arrange for the landing of the Service Corps. He assumed that the Service Corps would be protected by the Allied troops. He quickly arranged for 110 Corps members to travel to Harbin, about 400 miles inland from Vladivostok on the Chinese-Eastern Railway.³⁶ Steven's task was to spread these men out along Trans-Siberian and Chinese-Eastern track so that they could operate sizable lengths of the railway. This

³⁴Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraphs 11 and 12.

³⁵Sidney Harcave, Russia (Lippincott Company, Chicago: 1956), p. 480.

³⁶see Appendix B.

proved to be very difficult because the Corps members were harassed by former prisoners of war who were now armed and on the loose. It was also very difficult to get cooperation from the Russian railway workers.³⁷

One group of Allied soldiers on the western Russian frontier consisted of 35,000 Czechoslovakians. They were caught along the line designated as the armistice line in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. They had no provisions and absolutely no way of joining Allied forces to the west.³⁸ The Allies decided that an attempt should be made to evacuate the Czechs eastward over the Trans-Siberian Railway.

Stevens dispatched Colonel George Emerson to Volgoda to attempt to arrange for cooperation in evacuating Allied soldiers that had become stranded along the armistice line. The State Department delayed Emerson's trip by carefully instructing him that he was not to give the Soviets the impression that the United States was prepared to recognize them.³⁹ As a result of the delay the Czech forces became desperate and activated their own plan before Emerson left Vladivostok on May 21, 1918.

The Czechs attempted a most unlikely maneuver. They began to travel east along the tracks of the Trans-Siberian Railway with the ultimate aim of reaching Vladivostok.

³⁷ Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 2.

³⁸ Sidney Harcave, Russia (Lippincott Company, Chicago: 1956), p. 479.

³⁹ Foreign Relations, 1918. p. 34.

In the course of this journey, the Czechs commandeered rolling stock and confiscated supplies. Leon Trotsky, the Bolshevik War Commissar, demanded that the Czech forces be detained and disarmed and sent Soviet forces to do it. To the surprise of all, the Soviet forces failed to disarm the Czechs and the latter reached Vladivostok on July 10, 1918.⁴⁰

The adventure of these forces had two effects. By evacuating themselves the Czechs eliminated the greatest part of the Allied need for rail service in western Russia.⁴¹ This was confirmed by Colonel Emerson who finished his western trip by suggesting that the Service Corps should confine its activities to the eastern Trans-Siberian and Chinese-Eastern Railways. The Czech adventure also demonstrated to the Allies that they had nothing to fear in the way of armed confrontation with Soviet troops. This resulted in an increase in the number of troops that the Allies were sending to Russia. Within a year 7,000 American troops, 72,000 Japanese troops and various smaller detachments of French, British and Italian forces were landed at Vladivostok.⁴²

By mid-July of 1918, Stevens was faced with the largest task that he had yet met in Russia. Many elements were assuming that the Russian railroads would be available for

⁴⁰ Harcave, loc. cit.

⁴¹ Foreign Relations, 1918. p. 35.

⁴² Harcave, op. cit., p. 480.

such things as military transport and supply and the distribution of the mountain of famine relief goods that were piling up at Vladivostok. These assumptions were being made even though Stevens had but 110 men plus the feeble help of the Russian railway workers to operate several thousand miles of railway that had long been unaccustomed to efficient operation.⁴³

Stevens set to work quickly to accomplish his task. His first move was the transference to Vladivostok of that part of the Service Corps still in Nagasaki. This was accomplished by August thirteenth. Stevens dispatched his men along the various sections of track located in areas that had the least revolutionary turmoil.⁴⁴ At first such areas were found only along the Chinese-Eastern track for about 1,100 miles inland to Manchuli. As allied forces began to arrive to provide protection for the Corps members, the length of track placed under Service Corps operation was extended to Omsk, 2,400 miles further inland.⁴⁵

The greatest hardship that the Railway Service Corps faced in attempting to accomplish its work had to do with the Russian people. The Russian railway workers were confused over the political situation and as a result were reluctant to adopt different ways of doing things.

⁴³Foreign Relations, 1918. p. 35.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 2.

Inspite of opposition the Service Corps began work to operate the railways in an improved manner. In this work many Corps members learned the Russian language and became junior diplomats.⁴⁶

The improvements in the operation of the railroads were swift and many. The first came in train scheduling. The Russians were using the old Staff System whereby trains moved slowly to avoid collision and were often delayed in side-tracking to let other trains by. The Service Corps substituted the Dispatch System which allowed for the timing of trains so that crews could have confidence that they were a given distance ahead of or behind another train at a given speed. This allowed for the acceleration of train movement as well as the accurate knowledge as to where moving trains were at any given time.⁴⁷

Other improvements came in railroad communications and bookkeeping. Stevens ordered \$200,000 worth of electric communications equipment from the United States. He had this equipment installed over the entire 3,500 miles of the line that he was operating. The repair shops were also inspected and improved. In addition the Corps began to keep train sheets which carefully recorded the activities of each

⁴⁶Ibid., paragraph 3.

⁴⁷Ibid., paragraph 6.

piece of rolling stock. In this way the Corps was able nearly to double the regular per car tonnage. The work of the Service Corps was amazing when it is considered that it was able to bring about fairly efficient railroad operation in just eight months with only 300 men.

The Russian Railway Service Corps was able to help the Russian railroads until January of 1919. At that time the counter-revolutionary forces of Admiral Kolchak began their attack westward. In the attack, Kolchak found it necessary to either make great demands on the Railway Service Corps or to take over the operation of large stretches of the railway himself.⁴⁸ In addition, an anti-Bolshevik force led by Ataman Semenov refused to follow Kolchak and began to take over parts of the railway for its own use.

The Service Corps appealed for protection by Allied forces. The Japanese were the most logical ones to provide this help because of their large numbers. They did not do so because, it soon became apparent, they were in league with Semenov. Stevens had no choice but to consider the withdrawal of the American technicians, even though the State Department urged otherwise.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid., paragraph 30.

⁴⁹ Foreign Relations, 1919. p. 570.

Once the Kolchak forces took to the field further progress in railroad development became impossible. When this happened Colonel Emerson asked Stevens for permission to return to the United States. Stevens granted this wish and promoted Emerson's associate, B.O. Johnson, from the Northern Pacific Railway as replacement for the field commander of the Service Corps.⁵⁰

The Railway Service Corps managed to remain intact even in the midst of the Russian Civil War. This was due largely to the efforts of the new field commander, Colonel B.O. Johnson. During the Russian Civil War the work of the Service Corps was largely reduced to providing transport for allied troops and war refugees and distributing famine relief supplies. The Corps continued this work until October of 1919 when Kolchak began to suffer his most serious reversals.

When it was seen that the Soviet troops were defeating the Kolchak forces, railroad activity became dangerous for the Service Corps. Deserters from Kolchak's army and elements from Semenov's group began openly to harass the Corps members. With this threat to the Corps safety, the State Department granted Stevens the power to withdraw the American personnel according to his own judgement.⁵¹ Stevens withdrew most of the American technicians and placed them under the protection of General Graves and the American forces.

⁵⁰Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 9.

⁵¹Foreign Relations, 1919. p. 432.

Stevens himself hoped that the Service Corps could stay on in Russia and either continue its work or be forced out by the Communists, but the safety of the men demanded that they remain with General Graves.⁵² Residing with the American expeditionary forces proved to be the final act of the Service Corps. Many of the men returned to the United States as soon as transport became available.

The demise of the Service Corps took place on April 1, 1920 when General Graves and the American forces embarked for the United States. Under no circumstances would Secretary of State Lansing allow Corps members to remain after Graves' departure.⁵³ Once again Stevens was left as the lone American influence on the Russian railroads.⁵⁴

⁵²Ibid., p. 542.

⁵³Foreign Relations, Vol. 1, 1920. p. 14.

⁵⁴Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 10.

CHAPTER III

THE INTER-ALLIED AGREEMENTS

On November 11, 1918 the fighting of World War I came to an end. The collapse of the Central Powers had repercussions in Russia. The Allies had lost their main justification for remaining active in Russian affairs. In spite of the ending of the war the Allies, motivated by anti-Bolshevik sentiment, demanded that aims and objectives be redefined to allow further intervention in Russia.⁵⁵

The two Allies with the most influence and interest in the matter were the United States and Japan. These countries did not quickly restate their purposes after the armistice, but their aims and objectives soon became clear. Both reverted to policies existing even before the war.⁵⁶

The United States still clung to the principles of John Hay's Open Door Policy. That policy was originally designed to apply only to China, but the geographic layout of the railroads showed that the advance of the Bolsheviks was a definite threat to the Open Door philosophy. For this reason the United States saw the need to stay on in Russia in support of anti-Bolshevik factions.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., paragraph 16

⁵⁶ Ibid., paragraph 22

⁵⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States. (Washington: Government and Printing Office. 1922.) p. 926.
see Appendix B.

Japan was interested in supporting the anti-Bolshevik cause for entirely different reasons than those of the United States. It had long entertained plans of bringing Manchuria under its dominance. The rise of the Bolsheviks was a definite threat to these plans. The Japanese felt that the key to mastery in northeastern China was the Chinese-Eastern Railway. For this reason they began maneuvers to resist Communism and to gain control of the railway. These moves were of course contrary to the procedures of the United States.⁵⁸

Stevens was quick to realize that the railroads could be the focus of a power struggle. For this reason he traveled to Japan to attempt to work out an Allied agreement for railway operation.⁵⁹ Ambassador Morris met him there. The two men got along well together and soon agreed on a plan which they hoped to submit to Japanese Foreign Minister Uchida. These activities were very much beyond the authority which President Wilson had granted to Stevens in 1917, but no reprimand came from Washington. The Root Mission had been back in the United States for several months and there was nobody, other than Stevens, available to negotiate the business at hand.

Although he had no formal authorization to do so, Stevens actually had long been acting in a diplomatic

⁵⁸Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 16.

⁵⁹Ibid., paragraph 17.

capacity. His chairmanship of the American Railway Advisory Commission and his command of the Russian Railway Service Corps had placed him in many positions where he had to deal with representatives of other countries. Stevens usually did an adequate job in these negotiations. His major guidelines in negotiations were the aim to improve rail service and to operate the railroads in an economical manner. He recognized the implied American policy of seldom applying force or threats and accomplished most of his work by using businesslike logic.⁶⁰

By January of 1919 an agreement emerged whereby the allied countries could continue to remain active in Russia. The accord itself represented the turning of affairs over to a committee system. The subject of railway control and management was used as a catalyst to bind the agreement and to form a core around which the various committees could be formed.⁶¹

The initial plan anticipated a series of committees with an order of power descending from an Inter-Allied Railway committee. Changes occurred when the scheme began to operate. The powers created several specialized agencies under the main body.

⁶⁰Stevens, "Memorandum". part 3, paragraph 1.

⁶¹see Appendix C.

The most important of these was the Inter-Allied Technical Board, followed by a Military Transportation Agency.

The Inter-Allied Agreement had been possible at all only because of the concessions that the various sides had been willing to make. These concessions concerned the chairmanships and positions of major influence in the committees.⁶² There were eight powers to be considered, and each had to have a degree of authority granted to it.

The eight powers consisted not only of countries but of special interest factions as well. The powers were the United States, Japan, Britain, France, Italy, China, the Kolchak faction of the anti-Bolshevik forces, and the large number of displaced Czech troops. The bargaining ended with a division of authority that was temporarily satisfying to all. The Chairmanship of the Inter-Allied Committee was permanently given to the Russian faction. The Chairmanships of the Technical Board and the Military Transportation Agency went to the United States and Japan respectively. In all cases the memberships on the various boards were divided as equally as possible.⁶³

The matter of financial arrangements quickly separated the truly interested powers from those that were merely curious.

⁶²John A. White, The Siberian Intervention (Princeton University Press, Princeton: 1950), p. 148.

⁶³Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 23.

Initially the United States contributed \$5,000,000, Japan \$4,500,000 and China \$500,000. The funds were all put up in gold.

The position of the United States turned out to be a bit stronger than that of any of the other parties to the Inter-Allied Agreement. The United States had access to still unused credits that had been granted to the Provisional Government, and Stevens had been a key man throughout the negotiations. The strength of the United States became apparent when it was able to pursue its objectives even though its expeditionary forces were among the smallest in number compared to the troops stationed in Russia by other allied countries.⁶⁴

Steven's prowess as an experienced representative of American industry was noticeable throughout the agreement proceedings. One of the points that was particularly stressed by the State Department was that Stevens be installed as the chairman of the Technical Board. He and the Department both foresaw that that agency would eventually be the real ruling body in determining allied activity in Russia.

Stevens obtained the valued chairmanship and ruled with a fiscal iron hand. The chairman kept accurate financial

⁶⁴Ibid.

records. He kept a running account of money paid by the various powers and he billed them according to their use of the roads. Stevens never assumed that the railroads were for free allied use. By adopting this procedure the chairman was able to use the documented deficits as bargaining points when meeting with various allied representatives. Stevens' fiscal tactics went so far as to criticize the American Red Cross for its failure to pay for the costs of evacuating wounded soldiers.⁶⁵

Because of Stevens' businesslike approach to his job, he earned the confidence of the President and the State Department. This trust went to the extent that American payments into the Inter-Allied railway program were made to accounts set up in Stevens' name at the National City Bank and the Riggs National Bank of Washington.⁶⁶ This unusual procedure worked well, for, in spite of the great difficulties that Stevens had in operating the Russian railways under actual wartime conditions, he returned \$917,000 to Secretary of State Hughes in 1922.⁶⁷

By March of 1919 the Inter-Allied Agreement was ready to become effective. Stevens was the first to call a meeting and in so doing was able to gain more authority than was originally intended. He assumed the power of assigning various allied troops to different sections of track for

⁶⁵Foreign Relations, 1919. p. 501.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 267.

⁶⁷John A. White, The Siberian Intervention (Princeton University Press, Princeton: 1950), 252.

guard duty. In doing this he was able to increase or decrease the influence of any one country in any section of territory along the whole Chinese-Eastern Railway and for about 3,500 miles along the Trans-Siberian. Although the Japanese made a strong bid, Stevens assigned the guarding of the mainline of the Chinese-Eastern track to the Chinese. The Japanese unhappily settled for assignments along various branch lines.⁶⁸

The successful days of the Inter-Allied Agreement coincided with the period when the Russian Railway Service Corps was doing its best work and Admiral Kolchak was enjoying his highest popularity. This was to change when he headed west to drive out the Bolsheviks. Though the Admiral had every reason to believe that the allies were a source of great support, it soon became apparent that his victories in the field would have to be his own.⁶⁹

Only the Czechs gave battlefield assistance. Their contribution was feeble because they seldom followed orders. In consequence, the Czechs became trapped in interior Russia for the second time in three years.

The Japanese fought the Bolsheviks but not by facing them on the battlefield. They supported Semenov and his Cossack bands. Semenov, though an anti-Bolshevik, spent more

⁶⁸Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 29.

⁶⁹Ibid., paragraph 28.

energy looting than fighting the enemy.

The nature of the support that Kolchak received contributed greatly to his lack of success. By the end of April, 1919 he had penetrated as far as he could into western Russia but he was still many miles from Moscow. The Communists stopped Kolchak's advance and by June were on the counter-offensive. Kolchak's uncertain support coupled with the fact that much of his army consisted of untrained peasants caused his retreat to the east to become a rout.⁷¹

During the summer of 1919, in the midst of Kolchak's retreat, Stevens realized the futility in attempting to operate the railroads efficiently. The counter-revolutionary forces panicked and did great damage to the railroads by allowing some 120 trains to fall into Bolshevik hands.⁷² The Japanese viewed these reversals as an opportunity to pursue their own objectives, and they immediately confiscated 8,000 railroad cars from the areas under their control.

The Bolsheviks definitely had the advantage by the winter of 1919-1920. Kolchak promoted General Deniken and then abandoned his command. He was later turned over to the Communists and shot.⁷³

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Sidney Harcave, Russia (Lippincott Company, Chicago: 1956), p. 479.

⁷²John A. White, The Siberian Intervention (Princeton University Press, Princeton: 1950). 252.

⁷³Harcave, loc. cit.

When the defeat of Kolchak was all but complete the Czech forces demanded that they be taken home. Their number had swelled to 75,000 because they were being joined constantly by displaced Poles, Romainians and Letts. The British responded to the Czech demand by agreeing to furnish ship transportation as far as the Mediterranean. This placed considerable pressure on Stevens, who was expected to provide transportation for 75,000 people with nothing but a very crippled railway at his disposal.⁷⁴

Stevens performed his difficult task in a businesslike fashion. He searched the Chinese-Eastern Railway and found twenty-five heavy locomotives and 500 freight cars. The chairman also sent Colonel B.O. Johnson west with \$400,000 to employ railway workers and coal miners. Finally, he arranged for the preparation and shipment of sixty car-loads of bread.⁷⁵

Stevens distributed 75,000 displaced persons among a series of trains but the way east was blocked by the Japanese. Their strategy was to keep the Czechs in Russia as a buffer force between the Communists and themselves. Stevens notified the Czech officer in charge that his people would undoubtedly starve unless they were to fight their way immediately through the Japanese lines. Although

⁷⁴Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 32.

⁷⁵Ibid., paragraph 33.

this ultimatum went far beyond any authorization that he had, it was most effective. When the Czechs began to form up into battle lines the Japanese backed down and let the trains pass.⁷⁶

The evacuation of the Czechs was a great victory for Stevens and for American policy, but credit should be given to the very small number of Americans who worked with Stevens. B.O. Johnson remained with the chairman after the Service Corps left and traveled thousands of miles, often unguarded, carrying out difficult assignments. Charles Smith, the American member of the Inter-Allied Railway Committee, was largely responsible for keeping peace among the Allies. E.C. Stevens, Secretary and Treasurer of the Technical Board, also faithfully assisted his father. These few men were probably the most active Americans involved in the Russian Civil War. This was especially true after April of 1920 when General Graves and the American forces sailed for the United States.

Kolchak's collapse caused many of the Allies, including the United States, to prepare to leave Russia. As these moves got underway another struggle came to a head. This was a three-way contest among China, Japan and the Inter-Allied Committee over control of the Chinese-Eastern Railway. The Japanese had taken over the operation of large sections of the line by shipping in hundreds of Japanese

⁷⁶Ibid., paragraph 34.

railroad workers. They went so far as to rewrite road signs and schedules in Japanese.⁷⁷

Removing the Japanese control over the Chinese-Eastern Railway became the last great task of the Inter-Allied Committees. The first phase of this task involved the clarifying of the fact that, by agreement, the Inter-Allied Railway Committee was in charge of the operation of the Chinese-Eastern and no single country could assume that control.

Both the Chinese and the Japanese contested the 1919 agreement, a possibility that both the United States State Department and Stevens had anticipated. When it occurred, the State Department quickly got approval of a set of amendments to the accord. The non-Asiatic parties to the original arrangement approved the changes. The amendments abolished the Allied Committee and left the Chairman of the Technical Board with almost dictatorial power.⁷⁸

The Japanese, stalled by this turn of events, were by no means willing to give up their control of the Chinese-Eastern Railway. When this became apparent they tried to play one contestant off against the other. By at least considering Chinese demands, the Technical Board made

⁷⁷John A. White, The Siberian Intervention (Princeton University Press, Princeton: 1950). p. 159.

⁷⁸see Appendix D.

Japan feel that a greater force opposed them than actually existed. This ruse was surprisingly effective, since the Chinese Government was very weak.⁷⁹ England and the United States insisted that China had to be dealt with to the point that Japan came to the conference table for the signing of the Shantung treaty in January of 1922.⁸⁰

The work that was to prove most successful in curbing Japanese control over the Chinese-Eastern Railway was that done in connection with the Washington Conference. The results of that negotiation insured the Policy of the Open Door which meant that unilateral control could not exist.⁸¹

While the Allies worked out their differences the power of the Bolsheviks was growing. Stevens himself envisioned that they would eventually gain control of the Chinese-Eastern. His personal sentiments were for Russian control of the line.⁸²

The final clause of the original Inter-Allied Agreement stated that it would lapse with the withdrawal of the last Allied forces from Siberia.⁸³ In accordance with the

⁷⁹Foreign Relations, 1922. pp. 907, 908.

⁸⁰Foreign Relations, 1920. p. 679

⁸¹Foreign Relations, 1922. p. 917.

⁸²Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 37.

⁸³see Appendix E.

Washington Conference results, the Japanese shipped their
forces out of Russia via Vladivostok.⁸⁴ The last ones left
on October 22, 1922.

When the Japanese had departed it remained for Stevens to
close down the operation of the Technical Board. He held the
last meeting on November 1, 1922. When the final business was
completed the former Chairman sailed for the United States,
leaving his son behind to compile the records.⁸⁶

Stevens personally considered it a great accomplishment⁸⁷
to have kept the Chinese-Eastern Railway out of Japanese hands.
He did his work in an efficient, economical manner with few
directions from above and in the face of overwhelming opposi-
tion on the scene. He acted in an exemplary manner in serving
his country's military and diplomatic interests.

⁸⁴
see Appendix C

⁸⁵
Foreign Relations, 1922. p. 925.

⁸⁶
Stevens, "Memorandum". part 2, paragraph 22.

⁸⁷
Ibid.

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Foreign Relations of the United States. Government Printing Office Publication, Washington, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922.

This publication is part of a running account of diplomatic correspondence of United States officials. Until recently only six pages of material relating to the United States intervention into the operation of Russian railways have been available to the public. More will probably emerge in the future, but as the collection now stands it is adequate to cover most general questions.

Foreign Relations of the United States, Lansing Papers, United States Government Printing Office Publication, Washington, 1919.

This set is a part of the larger Foreign Relations publication. It consists of the correspondence that passed through the office of Robert Lansing, who was Secretary of State during part of the Wilson administration. The collection was made in connection with Lansing's attempt to bring the whole question of United States intervention in Russia before the Congress in 1919. This attempt failed.

New York Times, May 11, 1917 and July 15, 1917.

This daily newspaper covered the activities connected with World War I in a thorough manner. The Times is available on microfilm at the library of Wisconsin State University at La Crosse.

Stevens. Memorandum

The Stevens Memorandum is a three-part, loosely organized document written by John F. Stevens late in 1923 or early in 1924. It recounts Stevens' adventures in Russia between the years of 1917 and 1922. In form, the Memorandum changes from being very specific in some areas to very general in others. The Memorandum is generally lacking in the use of specific dates and specific names. Its main value is that it appears to be the only available document which deals with all phases of the United States intervention into the operation of the Russian railways.

SECONDARY WORKS:

Graves, William Sidney. American's Siberian Adventure 1918-1920. New York: Smith Press, 1941. 247 pp.

William Graves was the commanding general of the American forces that were sent to Russia following World War I. His book is valuable in that it gives the military view of the intervention. It also is the source of articles comprising the first Inter-Allied Agreement of 1919.

Harcave, Sidney. Russia. Chicago: Lippincott Company, 1956. 667 pp.

This book is a survey of Russian history. It does not go deeply into the allied intervention but does provide the general frame of reference regarding the Russian revolution and the allied part therein. It also presents information connected with the presence of the Czechs in Russia during the revolution.

Morse, Joseph Laffan. The Universal Standard Encyclopedias Vols. 21 and 25. New York: Unicorn Publishers, 1956.

These volumes are by no means a critical evaluation of the operation of Russia's railroads during World War I and the revolution but they do supply geographic prospective as to the layout of the Trans-Siberian and Chinese-Eastern Railways as well as a breakdown summary of the results of the Washington Conference.

White, John A. The Siberian Intervention. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950. 311 pp.

The Siberian Intervention is one of the few books found to devote even minimum attention to the question of the Russian railroads during the allied intervention. White devotes nine pages to the topic and provides an insight into the attitudes of President Wilson, Elihu Root and Robert Lansing regarding Stevens' purpose in Russia.

The National Cyclopedias of American Biography. Vol. 19. New York: White Company, 1923. 465 pp.

This Cyclopedias is a collection of general biographies of Americans who became noteworthy during the period following World War I. It was used in gaining a general knowledge of John Stevens life.

ARTICLES:

"Sculpting the Steel Blazer", Literary Digest. (Funk and Wagnalls Company: New York, 1926), Vol. 79, pp. 36-38.

This article is a general news piece written at the time of the unvailing of a statue of John F. Stevens along the right of way of the Great Northern Railroad. The article briefly recounts many of the activities in Stevens' life, emphasizing his accomplishments in the construction of the railroad and his work in the building of the Panama Canal.

Stevens, John F. "Is a Second Canal Necessary", Foreign Affairs. (Foreign Affairs Press: New York, 1930). Vol. 8, pp. 417-429.

Stevens made use of this article to answer the question as to whether or not the United States should build another canal in Central America. In answering this question Stevens clearly indicated his ability in the engineering field. He based most of his comments on his computations and experiences while working on the Panama Canal. His conclusion was that it would financially unsound to build a second canal.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

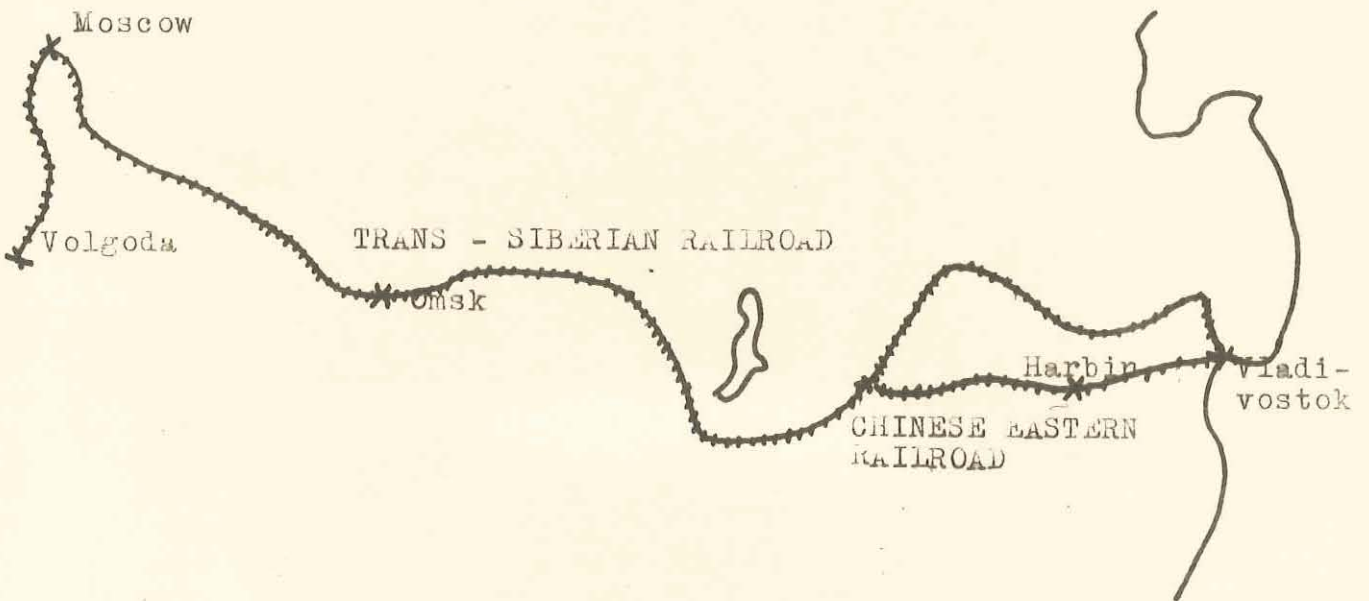
Paragraph Four of

MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF RUSSIA FROM THE UNITED STATES RAILWAY ADVISORY COMMISSION.....Petrograd, 4 July, 1917

The great imperative immediate necessity which confronts the railways of Russia to enable them not only to maintain its armies at the front, but also to support in comfort its civil population, who equally with its soldiers are fighting the great battle for freedom, is great increase in the number of locomotives and freight cars. On this point the Commission are entirely in accord with the railway officials and with the Russian people. To the end that this absolutely necessary want shall be supplied as quickly as can be done, this Commission has cabled the Administration at Washington advising the immediate construction of 2500 locomotives and 40,000 freight cars to be added to the equipment of the Russian railways. This means, of course, an extension of credit by the United States to Russia of some 750,000,000 of roubles [sic]. This matter has no commercial aspect for the Commission has pledged what to it is dearer than family or life itself, the good faith and honor of its country. ⁸⁷

APPENDIX B

MAP OF THE TRANS-SIBERIAN AND CHINESE-EASTERN RAILROADS



APPENDIX C

THE INTER-ALLIED RAILROAD AGREEMENT OF 1919

1. The general supervision of the railways in the zone in which the Allied forces are now operating shall be exercised by a special Inter-Allied Committee which shall consist of representatives from each Allied power, having military forces in Siberia, including Russia, and the chairman of which shall be a Russian.

The following boards shall be created, to be placed under the control of the Inter-Allied Committee;

(a) A Technical Board consisting of railway experts of the nations having military forces in Siberia, for the purpose of administering the technical and economic management of all railways in the said zone.

(b) An Allied Transportation Board for the purpose of coordinating military transportation under instructions of the proper military authorities.

2. The protection of the railways shall be placed under the Allied military forces. At the head of each railway shall remain a Russian manager or director with the powers conferred by the existing Russian law.

3. The Technical Board shall elect a president, to whom shall be entrusted the technical operation of railways. In matters of such technical operation the president may issue instructions to the Russian officials mention in the preceding clause.

He may appoint assistants and inspectors in the service of the board, chosen from among the nationals of powers having military forces in Siberia, to be attached to the central office of the board, and define their duties. He may assign, if necessary, corps of railway experts to more important stations. In his assigning railway experts to any of the stations, interests of the respective Allied powers in charge of such stations shall be taken into due consideration. He shall distribute work among the clerical staff of the board, whom he may appoint at his discretion.

4. The clerical staff of the Inter-Allied Committee shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Committee, who shall have the right of distributing work among such employees as well as of dismissing them.

5. The present arrangement shall cease to be operative upon the withdrawal of foreign military forces from Siberia, and all the foreign railway experts appointed under the arrangement shall then be recalled forthwith.

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JANURARY 1921 AMENDMENTS TO THE INTER-ALLIED RAILROAD
AGREEMENT OF JANUARY 1919

The general supervision of the Chinese Eastern Railway shall be under the joint control of the United States, England, France, Japan and China, such supervision to be vested exclusively in a Board which shall be known as the Technical Board and which shall consist of representatives of the United States, England, France, Japan, Russia and China. It is understood that the Board shall consist of railway experts of the nations above mentioned and that the technical and economic administration of the affairs of the railway shall be under the sole control of the Board.

(a) Such powers as the present Technical Board possesses shall be preserved and continued under the new arrangement and the Board hereby created shall in addition have full control over the receipts and disbursements of the company's revenues.

(b) The Board shall also fix all tariffs and control all question relating to personnel both of officers and employees, including the power of engaging or dismissing them. The Board may also, in its discretion, employ a Russian as General Manager, but with the understanding that he shall be under the authority of the Technical Board.

(c) The President of the Technical Board shall be it responsible head and shall be entrusted with the administration of the duties of the Board as above set forth, and in the exercise of such duties he shall not be subject to control by a majority vote or otherwise by the members of the Board

A BREAKDOWN OF THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE AGREEMENT

(1) A treaty between the United States, the British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan with respect to the limitation of naval armament. This so-called five-power Naval Treaty established a 5-5-3 ratio for the capital ships of the United States, Great Britain, and Japan, and maintained the status quo in respect to American, British, and Japanese fortifications in the Pacific.

(2) A treaty between the same powers in relation to the use of submarines and poisonous gases in warfare.

(3) A treaty between the United States, the British Empire, France, and Japan relating to their insular possessions and dominions in the Pacific Ocean. This is known as the Four Power Treaty and was bound up with the naval pact. It also maintained the status quo in respect to insular possessions in the Pacific.

(4) A treaty between the United States, Belgium, the British Empire, China, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and Portugal relating to policies in matters concerning China. It guaranteed Chinese independence and maintained the "open door" policy.

(5) A treaty between the same powers relating to the Chinese customs tariff.

In addition, twelve resolutions were adopted relating to such matters as proposals for the amendment of the laws of war; extraterritoriality in China; reduction of Chinese military forces; the Chinese Eastern Railway; and radio stations and foreign postal agencies in China.

except in matters on which he may seek their advice. As far as may be possible full responsibility shall be vested in the President of the Board who shall actively administer its affairs. His tenure of office shall be subject to the decision of a majority of the Technical Board with the approval of the Governments who are parties to this agreement.

(d) The Technical Board shall have authority to abrogate or to modify in any way in which it may deem advisable the so-called "Russian Laws" governing the technical details of the operation and maintenance of the railway.

(e) No political activity whatever shall be countenanced in the administration of the affairs of the railway by the Board. Its duties and obligations shall be confined strictly to the administration, operation and financial control of the railway.