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David S. Foglesong. ***America's Secret War Against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920.*** Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995. x + 386 pp. $45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8078-2228-9.

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David Foglesong, who teaches at Rutgers University, has written a most interesting book on U.S. intervention in the Russian revolution and civil war. It is a splendidly researched study, the result of prodigious labours in various American archives with some smattering of papers from Russian archives in Moscow. The book challenges the longstanding views of George F. Kennan (***Soviet-American Relations***, 2 vols. [1956-58] and ***Russia and the West...*** [1962]), who held that U.S. intervention was motivated by the desire to re-establish an "Eastern Front" in Russia against the Central Powers and to assist the Russian people to establish democratic government. Many scholars have challenged Kennan's views, indeed Kennan himself, if I understand aright, would also wish to modify them. In any case, those who have questioned his position have not had much impact on orthodox historiography, based on Kennan's early explanations of U.S. policy toward Soviet Russia. These "revisionists" include Lloyd C. Gardner, N. Gordon Levin, and William Appleman Williams, among others.

Foglesong's book makes an important contribution to setting the story right. The author holds that American intervention in Russia had both anti-German and anti-Bolshevik objectives, though the latter became predominant (p. 104). He portrays Woodrow Wilson as an ambivalent, confused president, whose public high principles required him to evade and deceive American public opinion about U.S. clandestine military and economic operations against the Soviet government. His deceit was motivated by a desire not to lose the support of progressive public opinion and by a corresponding desire to let France, Great Britain, and Japan take the public blame for aggressive action against Soviet Russia. The United States could then portray itself as Russia's friend, defender of Russian democracy, and of course reap the political and economic benefits.

Foglesong sees antecedents to U.S. policy toward Soviet Russia in Wilson's pre-presidential ideas on statecraft and in his attitudes toward the civil war in Mexico before 1917. On statecraft, according to presidential advisor Edward House, Wilson "thought lying was justified in some in-

stances, particularly where it involved the honor of a woman" or "where it related to matters of public policy" (p. 2). Wilson had a "penchant for secrecy" that became obsessive after the Bolshevik revolution (pp. 2-3). Mexico became the training ground for various forms of overt and covert action, which were later employed to overthrow the Bolsheviks.

American animosity toward Bolshevism was in part based, according to Foglesong, on fear of immigrants, anti-Semitism, and racism. Jews, immigrants, and militant American blacks were associated with swarthy, cutthroat Bolsheviks, knives clenched in their teeth, according to the popular image in 1919. Bolshevism was both an internal and external threat. Puritan values also influenced American antipathy to the "Scarlet Empire" (pp. 34-46).

American government hostility to the Bolshevik seizure of power was immediate and visceral. Secretary of State Robert Lansing and the State Department in general were profoundly hostile to Soviet Russia. There had been a "rebellion in Petrograd," American funds to the Russian government were immediately cut off, and the maritime blockade of Germany extended to Soviet Russia. When in January-April 1918 the British and French governments briefly considered the pragmatic idea of helping the Bolsheviks to fight the Germans, the anti-Bolsheviks in Washington were disquieted. Lansing and Wilson were adamantly opposed. The Bolsheviks were "dangerous--more so than Germany," said Lansing (Feb. 1918); they "threatened us with revolution" (p. 66). But Wilson felt the need to disguise this anti-red hostility because it "would disillusion left-leaning Americans and Europeans." Hide our hand, House advised Wilson, "to limit the possibility for damage to America's idealistic image" (pp. 65, 94). American anti-Communists chafed and bucked under such clandestinity.

The American government undertook a series of covert actions against Soviet Russia, secretly giving money to its enemies. These were the "patriotic," democratic Russians, the "better elements," the "intelligent and property-owning classes" of Russian society, which the American government could help to "restore order." According to Foglesong, Lansing had longed for a military dictatorship since August 1917, when tsarist General L. G. Kornilov attempted to establish one. Since the 1890s Lansing had "sought to prevent a populist rabble from grabbing power in the United States" (pp. 88, 112, 151). One can easily imagine Lansing's physical revulsion before the tobacco- and sweat-smelling Bolsheviks, the impertinent, profane, but brave ***tovarishchi***, who threatened to turn Russia and the world into a cauldron seething with Socialist revolution.

American policy was undertaken, however, under the cover of anti-German action, even though Wilson and the War Department reckoned that the re-establishment of a Russian "Eastern Front" was impossible. Not only the American, but the French and British governments also recognized that the anti-Bolshevik movements in Russia were motivated by the desire to down the reds rather than to fight the Germans (p. 95). Indeed the "patriotic" elements threatened to turn for help to Germany, if the Anglo-French aided the Bolsheviks against the German army. Some patriots! Those who argued for a pragmatic course toward Soviet Russia were naive "cranks," according to Lansing. Some cranks!

As for Russian democrats, the only ones who really qualified and enjoyed popular support were Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), holding out in Siberia. But American officials on the spot did not like them. If they were not "extremists," they were bunglers, honest and well-meaning but "without power and unfitted to cope with [the] situation" (p. 152). What was needed was a "strong man" like the Cossack hetman, G. M. Semenov, who was expected, with 2,500 men, to run the Bolsheviks out of Siberia and to represent the strongest active force in Siberia against Germany. Se-

menov could not run the Bolsheviks out of Irkutsk and was thousands of kilometres from the nearest German soldier. It was no matter. American officials overlooked Semenov's murderous freebooting; he was merely "tolerably severe," according to one American observer (pp. 153-54). When Semenov did not rise to expectations, Americans turned to what the young John Foster Dulles described as the "White Hope of Russia," Admiral A. V. Kolchak (p. 181).

The SRs, even if democrats, were too Socialist, indeed "so radically socialistic" that they were "practically" Bolsheviks (p. 178). Local American officials were delighted when tsarist officers arrested the leading SRs and established a dictatorship with the "white hope" Kolchak at its head (November 1918). At last! according to American consuls, "order was finally being restored" (p. 179). Young Dulles put it bluntly in May 1919: I don't "really care a damn about ... Democratic conditions [in Siberia]" (p. 181). The same winnowing process occurred in northern Russia, where the democrats--still too socialistic and a fatuous, useless lot--were marginalized or removed from power. In the north, however, American officials objected to Anglo-French "insensitivity." Lansing had the effrontery to tell the British ambassador in Washington (summer 1918) that French and British participation in the Siberian intervention was suspect because they were associated with anti-Bolsheviks. State Department officials might even have objected to their chief's temerity, since the other allies made ideal "whipping boys" to incur public odium for the dirty work to be done in Russia (pp. 94, 167-68).

Few senior American officials were troubled by the apparent variance between American government words and action. The U.S. chief of staff, Peyton C. March, and the secretary of war, Newton D. Baker, could not see the military value of intervention. "All responsible military opinion" knows the war will be won or lost on the Western Front, March commented, and no one believes that the Allies will "ever be able to reconstitute Russia into a military machine". Since it was therefore illogical to intervene in Russia against Germany, there had to be "other considerations," thought Baker and March, to justify the despatch of troops (p. 204). And so there were.

Foglesong says "other considerations" included the American desire to oblige the French and British, "who were frantically seeking ways to keep German forces in the east" (p. 204), but the French and British knew as well as anyone that Russian "patriotic" elements wanted to fight Bolsheviks, not Germans. The point is that for all the Allies, this objective was quite good enough. Foglesong says intervention was anti-German and anti-Bolshevik at the outset, but even before the end of the World War, the primary objective was anti-Bolshevik. It is the only logical explanation. The French and British governments had been through the debate in the late winter and early spring of 1918. The ideologues, who saw the nascent Red Army as an instrument of "social revolution," won out easily over realists, who thought the Allies should help the Red Army fight the Germans (since "patriotic" elements could not and would not do so). According to Foglesong, there was little debate on this issue in Washington; and anyway, Wilson and Lansing would have nipped it in the bud had there been any need.

After the end of the war in November 1918 further hostile action against Soviet Russia became harder to sell in public, though in private, there was no difficulty. "[I]f these damned bolsheviks are permitted to remain in control of the country," said U.S. ambassador David Francis, "it will not only be lost to its devoted people but bolshevik rule will undermine all governments and be a menace to society itself" (pp. 211, 226). *Les Boches vaincus voila les bolchos!*, wisecracked one French observer. The winter-spring of 1918-19 was the time of the great red fear, when it looked like the Red Army, growing dramatically in men and power, might advance into war-weary,

dissident Europe. But as Foglesong points out, quoting a State Department official, the U.S. government had "a major public relations problem" (p. 227). Making war against the Bolsheviks meant "making trouble" for the government at home.

U.S. senator Hiram Johnson of California was one of those ready to make trouble against U.S. intervention, challenging Wilson to explain why American "boys" were getting shot in Russia. What's going on? Johnson mocked Wilson's hypocrisy. So did the Bolsheviks, who could see it more clearly. Wilson was "the head of the American multi-millionaires," according to V. I. Lenin, "and servant of the capitalist sharks" (p. 223). He might have added (maybe he did) that the American president was like a prostitute, who regrets the loss of his virtue, but continues to ply his trade. It was Wilson's nagging worry about "the susceptibility of the people of Europe to the poison of Bolshevism" (p. 226), which made him approve the despatch of arms, food, and three-ton trucks to the "patriotic," "democratic" Russians (1919). "The Devil made him do it," to paraphrase an American comedian. And, as most Americans knew, the Devil was red. Other Americans, Francis for example, thought Bolshevism could creep into America itself (p. 226). One thing at least can be said for Wilson: unlike later American presidents in other places, he was smart enough to refuse to send more troops to Russia (p. 225). He would find other less risky, more covert ways to overthrow the Soviet.

Wilson did approve (more reluctantly, it is true, than other American officials) the use of German troops to fight the Bolsheviks in 1919 (pp. 255, 258). This action was logical, of course, if one accepted Lansing's reckoning (in October 1918 and earlier) that Bolshevism was the greater danger (p. 255). Food was also a weapon in 1919, as Foglesong points out. The Allied blockade would starve Soviet Russia, but food sent to anti-Bolshevik-held areas would demonstrate the virtues of capitalism. The strategy appears to have been a precursor of the Marshall Plan, but it tested the limits of American laws as Wilson's officials "search[ed] for loopholes and clever ways to procure funds for anti-Bolshevik causes" (p. 239). In a brave gesture, Wilson rose from his sick bed, having been near death a few days before (October 1919), to sign an order to provide food supplies to Petrograd should it fall to "patriotic" Russian forces under tsarist general N. N. Iudenich (p. 267). The president's courage went for naught since the Red Army soon defeated Iudenich's forces. Perhaps, it was just as well; some of Iudenich's commanders "launched pogroms and white terrors" (p. 269), not normally considered democratic conduct. In view of all these American actions, Foglesong concludes that anti-Bolshevism had become in 1919 the driving force behind U.S. policy in Russia (pp. 270-71).

The last chapter of the book, which is almost an add-on, concerns Soviet government efforts to stop the Allied intervention by negotiation and concessions. Foglesong sees these early peace efforts as a means of buying time for Soviet Russia to gain strength and later as means to achieve "coexistence" with the West to trade and rebuild (pp. 283, 286).

Foglesong has written a thought-provoking book. In a perverse way, it is hilarious, focusing as it does on the chasm between President Wilson's stated democratic principles and the American government's covert actions--which Wilson approved--to overthrow the Bolsheviks. Almost as risible are the rhetorical contortions and deceit used by the president and his officials to conceal and justify U.S. policy. Of course, it would not have been hilarious from the perspective of the Russian ***menu peuple*** who suffered from the Allied blockade and the Allied-supported civil war. Perhaps, contemporary historians' tallies of "body counts" should include these also, at least sharing the score with the Bolsheviks.

Foglesong indirectly raises another question. Why do most Western historians start the Cold

War after 1945, rather than after 1917? Foglesong's book includes the familiar characteristics and shibboleths of what I would call the "later Cold War": the Red Scare, the fear of the spread of Socialist revolution, "containment" or the ***cordon sanitaire***, as the French called it, American domestic repression against suspected Communists, covert and indirect action against Communist movements or governments, Soviet "coexistence"--and Foglesong even notices Allen and John Foster Dulles, cutting their teeth in covert action against the Bolsheviks (p. 296). There also appear to be the primitive antecedents of the later Marshall Plan and of U.S. government subterfuge to avoid going to Congress for appropriations to support anti-Communist causes. The confusion about the beginning of the Cold War may be attributable to the tremendous influence of Kennan's ideas on American and western historiography. And perhaps some historians have paid insufficient attention to the interwar years, or perhaps they have too great a stake in the usual explanations of the beginnings of the Cold War. In any event, one hopes that Foglesong's book will cause some further reflection on this and related questions.

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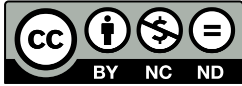 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.