CAPSTONE PAPER

THE ALLEGED MUTINY OF COMPANY I.

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CAPSTONE PAPER

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Preface

I wish to recognize the assistance of my good friend and mentor (Ret) Col. David Parrotte for his advice and support throughout the progression of my labors of obtaining the degree of Masters of Arts in Military History. Sam Garrin, Joe Delleville, Henry Barsanti, and Donald Polvadore for always being there to answer my never-ending questions. In addition, I would like to thank the University of Michigan's members of the Bentley Historical Library, who have labored long hours to provide historians with a surplus of information relating to "Detroit's Own" in their Polar Bear Expedition Collection. Also to my brother, PFC Stephen Simmons, for the late night conversations and debate over military history. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my wife, PV2 Jessica Simmons, who on those late nights urged me to continue to push forward in my studies and never give in to doubt.

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The Alleged Mutiny of Company I.

I. Introduction

As historians read about the events that took place in Russia following the Great War, they find the ugly word "mutiny" associated with Company I, 339th Infantry due to accusations of disobedience within the company. The mutiny is a little known event in the history of a relatively little unknown expedition launched in the closing months of the Great War which 4,000 US troops dispatched to northern Russia on a mission few understood. Further examination leads to the question, why was Company I of the 339th Regiment, composed the bulk of the expedition's strength, accused of mutiny at Archangel, Russia, in the spring of 1919? This thesis investigates the background to the alleged mutiny, mutinies that have occurred prior to the incident with Company I, relations between the American companies and other Allies serving in Archangel, and conditions the soldiers fought under. The examination will focus primarily on the relationship between the American and British forces, and the accounts surrounding the alleged mutiny in order to exonerate Company I of all charges of mutiny.

The 339th Infantry became embroiled in a war in which the soldiers believed they had no purpose fighting. Like most of the American forces sent to Europe during World War I, the soldiers of the 339th Infantry did not receive proper training, equipment, or information concerning their mission from the U.S. Army. The official objective of the 339th Infantry was to guard munitions at Archangel. President Woodrow Wilson had placed the members the expedition under the command of the British to "employ secretive and indirect methods of

intervention."[1] In a sense, the 339th Infantry fought a 'secret war'. Wilson declared that the United States had no right to intervene against great social revolutions that reflected the desire of the populace. The Wilson administration used secretive methods to combat the Bolshevik (Bolo, Bolsheviki, Red, Communist) government, rather than direct intervention. His administration used "diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, and arm embargoes"[2] to oppose governments like the Bolshevik. In turn, Wilson supplied countries he felt best exemplified a desire towards America's interest.[3] Wilson did not want to interfere with the affairs in Russia, openly. Instead he devoted military expeditions on a limited scale to northern Russia and Siberia to help restore the self-government rather than intervening with internal affairs.

In order to maintain good relations with the British government and assist them rebuild the Eastern front, Wilson blindly allowed the Ambassador to Russia, David R. Francis, to make military related decisions. Francis' intensions for the regiments sent to Archangel was a more direct approach to an intervention than Wilson planned. He was not simply content with American soldiers sitting aimlessly in Archangel as a war was waged around them. On 3 September 1918, upon the regiment's arrival in northern Russia, the 339th was placed under the command of British Major General Frederick Poole. Francis wired the U.S. State Department explaining that he was unaware of the soldier's objective in Archangel. Thus, if Gen. Poole needed the aide of American soldiers, Francis provided it.[4] Though Wilson condemned Poole's aggressive methods, he showed no signs of disapproval towards Francis' plans.[5]

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[1] David S. Fogelsong, *America's Secret War Against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 3.
[2] Ibid., 4.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., 212.
[5] Ibid.

The 339th on many occasions took the place of French and British soldiers fighting the Bolsheviks because of the chain of command. As weeks became months, the men of the 339th experienced a drop in morale due to "mission-creep" – the expansion of mission beyond its original objectives – frustration, the freezing cold climate, and confusion in command. Finally, the men of Company I were accused of mutiny for disobeying orders from an officer and NCO on the morning of 30 March 1919 Archangel, Russia.

However, what defines a mutiny? A mutiny can be seen as an insurrection against authority; (in this case military authority) or a resolute revolt against the commands of a superior officer; resistance to rightful authority.[6] Though labeled as a mutiny, this essay will argue that the collective disobedience of the men of Company I, 339th Infantry in 1919 at Archangel, Russia was both understandable due to the extenuating circumstances and easily remedied by Col. Stewart. Given the circumstances, the men of Company I experienced under British command, unclear mission objectives, and the difficult conditions of the Russian weather, the writer feels that it is unfair to tarnish such an impressive military record and continue to label the brave soldiers of Company I as mutineers.

II. Background

As a part of the United States Army's Eighty-fifth Division, the 339th Infantry formed in the summer of 1917. The Eighty-Fifth formed at Camp Custer, Michigan (Camp Custer was located in Battle Creek MI, just east of Kalamazoo, MI). The unit was composed of draftees and recruits from the Great Lakes region of the United States. The Eighty-fifth Division was created almost simultaneously with the opening of Camp Custer on 25 August, 1917 (Appendix A).

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[6] The Oxford Companion to American Military History, rev. ed., comp. John Whiteclay Chambers II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), s. vv. "mutiny."

Known as "Detroit's Own" by many Michiganders (people from the state of Michigan), the 339th saw an overwhelming number of recruits from Detroit and the areas immediately surrounding it (i.e. Dearborn, Hazel Park, Allen Park, Melvindale). Many of the new recruits from Detroit had immigrated or were first-generation Americans who came to the United States from Eastern European countries.[7] In an introduction to the Army, the members of the Eighty-fifth Division in haste received a low-grade education in military procedures and fighting techniques. The recruits, who went to Camp Custer June 1918, received a quick introduction to the United States Army. The men were quickly outfitted with their uniforms and basic equipment after completing a tremendous amount of essential military training in a space of just a few weeks.[8] The training they received was ideal for combat in France, not Russia.

Convinced that they were going to be deployed to France to hold the Western Front, the soldiers of the Eighty-fifth Division embarked for England from New York on 21 July, 1918. Upon arrival in England, the 339th Regiment received training in the English countryside at Camp Stoney Castle 4 - 25 August, 1918, as other attachments of the Eighty-Fifth regiment received their training at other sites throughout England. Part of the training for the 339th was in trench warfare. Trench warfare was a style of defensive/offensive fighting that would be useful to the members of the Eighty-fifth Division that were going to France, not to the 339th Infantry.

On 27 August 1918, members of the 339th Infantry were deployed from England to Murmansk (A city located at the furthermost point in North Russia. It is located on the Kola Bay, and served as a seaport for soldiers to enter Russia), and then redirected to Archangel,

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[7] Robert L. Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc. 2003), 17-19.

[8] *Trench and Camp Newspaper*, Battle Creek Enquirer. Willard Library, Battle Creek, Michigan, July, 1918.

Russia to join Canadian, British, French, and Tsarist Russian forces to assist in the intervention. (Appendix B).[9] All the training the men of the 339th was, in the opinion of Levi Bartels of Company K, 339th Infantry, a waste of "17 days . . . that is all we was there . . . I never had much training... the training they had in camp here, why it did not mean a thing . . . it was altogether different than the people that went to France."[10]

Gen. John J. Pershing chose the 339th Infantry to represent the American allied effort in the Russian Expedition for several vital reasons. First, he chose the 339th Regiment because of the reputation and expertise of their commanding officer, George Evans Stewart. Stewart was a major in the Regular army and he had garnered experience in colder climates while serving in Alaska. In addition, Stewart held the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroics while serving at the Philippines in 1899. Thus in Pershing's opinion, he was an excellent choice to represent America military in the Russian intervention.[11] However, Stewart was not the original commanding officer of the 339th Infantry, 85th Division; he had replaced Col. John Craig at Camp Custer and was brevetted the rank of lieutenant colonel.[12] Second, Pershing selected the 339th Infantry due to their relative location to Russia. The 339th was awaiting orders in England, which made them readily available for the mission to Archangel.[13]

Due to the hasty deployment of the regiment to Russia the regiment's training and preparation was curtailed. The first immediate action was the replacement of their weaponry.

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[9] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*, 19-25.

[10] Levi Bartels, Interview by Glenn Johnson, *Polar Bear History Project*. The Polar Bear Digital Collection, 12 June, 1978.

[11] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*, 20.ii

[12] Ibid., 28.

[13] Ibid., 20.

The regiment handed over their weapons to soldiers bound for France. The regiment had to trade their regular army Springfield or Enfield rifles for the less desired Moisin Nagant 7.62mm Russian rifles before leaving England.[14] The Nagant rifles were originally meant for the Tsarist government as the 339th took hold of the inferior rifles they were issued substandard corkscrew bayonets that did not serve a practical purpose.[15] The exchange of weapons hindered the 339th's capability to wage war effectively, specifically since the rifles shot different types of ammunition, thus making American ammunition useless.[16] Before leaving England, the regiment had to hand over their machine guns to the British. In exchange, the British furnished the American soldiers with the British Lewis and Vickers machine guns. However, this put the 339th at a greater disadvantage. The Vickers required two hands to hold it while firing and was water-cooled, thus requiring the machine gun to be kept warm in the cold weather.[17] Their training at Camp Custer was practically a complete waste in terms of handling weapons.

After the loss of their familiar arms, the 339th received another blow, the regiment had to follow the orders of British officers. Though the 339th was under the command of Stewart, Stewart had to report to British Maj. Gen. Poole due to Francis' pledge to aide the British. The Americans forces did not particularly favor the British command, or the missions the British officers subjected them to. First, under President Woodrow Wilson's *Aide Memoire*, the soldiers of the American forces were to be used only to guard military stockpiles at Archangel and Vladivostok (A port city located in Russia on the Pacific Ocean coast). The stockpiles were to be guarded so that they did not fall into the hands of the Germans or Bolsheviks. Since Wilson

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[14] Ibid., 21.

[15] University of Michigan –Bentley Historical Library, Charles E. Lewis, "Letter to Capt. D. A. Stroh," 29 Dec. 1932.

[16] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*, 21.

[17] Ibid.

viewed the rebuilding of the Eastern Front as "unrealistic," the Allied commanders supposedly understood that American troops were not to intervene at the front. According to Wilson's intent for the mission the American forces were to aid patriotic White Russians and to help organize an army, and assist pro-Allied Czech Legion (former prisoners of war from Austro-Hungarian Army) who came into contact with Bolsheviks along the Trans-Siberian Railway.[18] According to Professor David S. Fogelsong, the deployment of the A.E.F.N.R (American Expeditionary Force North Russia, also known as ANREF – American North Russian Expeditionary Force) to Russia was obscured. The fear that invention would contradict his liberal ideals or violate the belief of self-government, Wilson kept America's participation in the intervention quiet.[19] Wilson wanted to avoid making the anti-Bolshevik movements of the AEFNR obvious and explicit, however, as stated by Fogelsong, they were implicit from the beginning.[20] The issue is not the lack of Wilson's instructions, but the lack of Stewart's knowledge of his deployment command. Judging Stewart's actions, he never received a copy of Wilson's *Aide Memoire*, thus explaining why he followed Poole's orders.[21]

Congress and representatives of the United States as a whole lacked a clear understanding of America's role in Russia. In the confusion of Wilson's intent for the American forces in Russia, Ambassador to Russia, David R. Francis inquired in August 1918, if war existed between the United States and Bolshevik. To Francis' question, Secretary of State Robert Lansing replied, "The Government of the United States has never recognized the Bolshevik authorities

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[18] *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, rev. ed., comp. John Whiteclay Chambers II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), s. vv. "Russia, U.S. Military Intervention in 1917-20."

[19] Fogelsong, *America's Secret War Against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920*, 188-191.

[20] Ibid., 191.

[21] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*, 28.

and does not consider that its efforts to safeguard supplies at Archangel or to help the Czechs in Siberia have created a state of war."[22] Though Lansing would have preferred a more forthright approach to the Bolshevik issue, President Wilson was adamant upon ignoring the Bolshevik government. Wilson pushed forward with his objective of making Russia safe for democracy.[23] For his lack of leadership in terms of military operations, the soldiers in Archangel blamed Wilson for subjecting them to British command. However, since Stewart was their direct commanding officer, the soldiers to blamed due to his lack producing a clear mission objective. Former member of the Machine Gun Company and author Lt. Harry Costello believed that Stewart gave in to pressure from Gen Poole, as in comparison, their old commander, Colonel Craig, never would have given the 339th over to British command "Col. Craig would not have stood supinely by while his outfit was stolen."[24] Thus making Stewart unpopular in comparison to his predecessor.

Since Stewart obviously lacked a clear understanding of his command, U.S. Ambassador to Russia, David R. Francis ignored Wilson's *Aide Memoire* and the assigned of the 339th Infantry to Gen. Pool. Poole used the soldiers of the regiment for missions along the Dvina River and the Archangel-Moscow Railway.[25] Publically, Francis swore to follow all American policies outlined on the use of American troops in Russia upon the AEFNR's arrival. Privately, Francis planned to allow Maj. Gen. Poole to send American soldiers out to any area in which munitions were stored and to be recovered. This meant engaging the enemy, not guard duty. In

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[22] Fogelsong, *America's Secret War Against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920*, 219.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Harry J. Costello, *Why Did We Go To Russia?* (Detroit: Harry J. Costello, 1920), 60.

[25] *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, rev. ed., comp. John Whiteclay Chambers II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), s. vv. "Russia, U.S. Military Intervention in 1917-20."

a letter to Lansing on 27 August, 1918, Francis openly stated his intensions to persuade American troops to follow the commands of Maj. Gen. Poole in his effort to extinguish the Bolshevik threat. Francis saw the Bolshevik threat as an uprising inspired by Germany. The actions of Ambassador Francis are in directly related to his burning hatred for the Bolsheviks and the threat that he believed they posed to all of the governments of the world.[26]

In general, the relationship between the American, French, and Canadian forces was cordial. However, the relationship between the Americans and British were strained. The British saw the American troops as ill-trained soldiers only good for the purpose of waging trench warfare. In a letter from Brigadier General Edmund Ironside (a member of General Poole's Chief of Staff until 19 November 1918 when he was appointed to the rank of major general and Commander-in- Chief of operations in Archangel until Poole returned), to the War Office on 27 February 1919, Ironside stressed the incompetency of the 339th Infantry by addressing the overwhelming number of self-inflicted wounds.[27] In accord with Ironside's letter, the diary of British Captain Roeber mentions the poor performance of the American units in Russia, rating them " below the Bolsheviks . . . a hopeless mob and windy as hell."[28]

The French and British were not convinced Wilson's idea of self-determination; they failed to recognize the value of the Americans assigned to a limited scope of intervention.[29] The major factor that alienated the Americans from the British was the chain of command. American companies were placed under the command of a French or British officer whose power arbitrated between the unit commanders (i.e. Col. Stewart) and their superiors. According to Lt. Charles E.

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[26] Fogelsong, *America's Secret War Against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920,* 211.
[27] Ibid., 129-30.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 221.

Lewis of Company H, 339th Infantry, putting the American companies under the control of British officers led to what American unit commanders considered an abuse of American troops, or at least that was the opinion of American unit commanders. The British command virtually destroyed any effective communication between the regimental commander and the different units of the regiment. Furthermore, the American troops followed orders given by American officer, who was under the authority of a British officer. British policy dictates that American officers were subordinate to British officers. This led to a temporary promotion for the junior British officers so that they outranked the senior American officer in command.[30]

In addition to the British command, the treatment of the American forces by the British was poor. Hostility and conflict ran through the American ranks towards the British. In addition to losing their rifles, American forces turned over their issued clothes for the subarctic weather to the British. In the minds of men of the 339th, the British treated them as less than human. This long and, eventually, deep rooted hostility was exemplified in an interview of Sgt. Levi Bartels by Glenn Johnson, which was later published in Dennis Gordon, and Hayes Otoupalik's *Quartered in Hell: The Story of the American North Russia Expedition Force 1918-1919,*

> I've always said about the British, if there was a war against them, I'd be there tomorrow to fight them...they treated us like dogs, stay behind and make us do all the fighting . . . We were issued sheepskin coats and sleeping bags, but the British took them away from us after 10 days and handed them out to their own men . . . From then on we had only our overcoats to wear.[31]

In many ways, American soldiers serving in Russia felt an implied inferiority to the Britons. In reality, the Americans were ill-prepared for war in comparison to the British. The

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[30] UMBHL, Charles E. Lewis, "Letter to Capt. D. A. Stroh," 29 Dec. 1932.

[31] Dennis Gordon, and Hayes Otoupalik, *Quartered in Hell: The Story of the American North* Russia *Expedition Force 1918-1919* (Missoula, MT: G.O.S., Inc., 1982), 67.

hostility between the British and Americans after a prolonged period at the front lines, sent spirits to a low in Allied detachments.[32] Tensions ran high at one point during the intervention, as Hugo Salchow of Company G, 339th Infantry, recalls, the British were disliked, not only by the Americans but the by Russians at Archangel as well. In particular, Salchow vividly remembers how the British treated everyone who was not British as inferior. The hostility between the British and Americans got to the point that during the winter of 1919 in Archangel, an American soldier of the 339th Infantry went berserk and shot to death the first British officer that crossed his path. The explanation for the soldier's actions, according to Salchow, was "temporary lunacy".[33]

On 1 March 1919, British General Edmund Ironside noted that the mutinies that occurred took place within the British, French, and Russian ranks. However, as mentioned by Ironside in late February 1919, to his knowledge there were no incidents of mutiny within the American forces. Even before the realities of war could push Company I to the breaking point, cases of mutiny appeared within the Allied camps. The first of the troubles started with the French. Ninety French soldiers were placed under arrest, according to French officers; the battalion was in a state of mutiny. On 1 March, 1919, ninety French soldiers were arrested at Obozerskaya (a city in western Russia, south of Archangel), stripped of their equipment and arms, and confined at Archangel.[34]

The genesis of the mutiny started when the news spread that one battalion of the Thirteenth Yorkshire regiment revolted. The news circulated throughout the Onega,

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[32] Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade: The British Intervention of Russia, 1918*-1920 (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), 129.

[33] Hugo K. Salchow, Interview by Shelden Annis. *Oral History Transcript*. The Polar Bear Digital Collection, Dec. 1971.

[34] Costello, *Why Did We Go To Russia?* (Detroit: Harry J. Costello, 1920), 76.

Emtsa/Seleskoye, Dvina and Railroad front (areas outside Archangel, interior of Russia: Appendix C). On 26 February 1919, the Yorkshire battalion was order to march to the front. The men of the Yorkshire battalion refused. Colonel Lavoi, the Yorkshire battalion commander ordered the men out of their barracks to commence formation without arms. The battalion followed his orders. Upon formation, two sergeants approached Lavoi stating that the battalion would not fight anymore. Lavoi arrested the two sergeants and held them for court-martial. The remainder of the battalion endured painstaking exercises to wear down further resistance to authority. When Lavoi gave the order for the Yorkshire battalion to arm with rifles and march to the front, the battalion dutifully did so.[35]

At Obozerskaya on the 1 March 1919, the French took their protest further than the men of the Yorkshire battalion. Ninety French soldiers refused to go the front to fight. Rather than assemble as the Yorkshire battalion did, no individuals stepped forward to take blame. Instead, the French soldiers questioned their purpose for being in Russia and fighting. The ninety refused to fight at the front because as they put it "the war is over in France... Why should we be fighting here in Russia when France has declared no war on Russia or the Bolsheviki?"[36] For their insubordination, the French soldiers were held under guard aboard the ship *Guedon* and sent back to France.[37]

In addition to the French mutiny, the British suffered a second incident in March. A unit of British soldiers had arrived in Kodish from the Murmansk side. The soldiers refused to attack the Boshevik. They believed they were just in their cause and their attitude in refusing to fight. Several days into their protest, the British battalion drew up papers formally protesting the war

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[35] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*, 44-45.
[36] Costello, *Why Did We Go To Russia?*, 76.
[37] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*, 45.

and asked the papers be delivered to Premier Lloyd George. Detailed in the papers were their complaints and grounds for their refusal to fight. Gen. Ironside resolved the issue by lecturing the soldiers and helping them realize the gravity of the situation. The men decided that they were in the wrong in their refusal. The protests of the group of mutinous British soldiers were kept quiet due to the decision reached by both parties: the soldiers and Gen. Ironside.[38]

The unorthodox behavior the British displayed not only caused the death of an officer by the hands of a crazed soldier, but eventually, the members of the 339th Infantry followed the British and French's examples of mutiny. As noted by Capt. Eugene Prince of the American Military Mission on 2 February 1919, the men's morale plummeted after the signing of Armistice on 11 November, 1918, and there was a lack of enthusiasm to fight amongst both officers and soldiers.[39] In early March 1919, the corporals of Company E. held a meeting. The soldiers in attendance were privates, no NCO's or officers. The enlisted men of Company E were on the brink of mutiny. The members of Company E were dissatisfied with their company's commander, British Colonel Card, and conditions they were fighting in. The purpose of the meeting, according to Pvt. Donald Carey of Company E, 339th Infantry, was to discuss actions to be taken against Col. Card and to protest the fighting. During the meeting, the opportunity to stage a mutiny had presented itself, however, as explained by Pvt. Carey, no one would accept responsibility for leading the mutiny. Therefore no mutiny ever came to pass in Company E. The morale of Company E was very low. Pvt. Carey notes that the fighting that took place the following day was less than enthusiastic. The men were ordered to attack in the deep snow and bitter cold of the Arctic winter. In addition, Pvt. Carey ridiculed his British

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[38] Costello, *Why Did We Go To Russia?*, 77.
[39] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*, 88.

commanders in his diary for their foolishness and poor rations.[40] The examination of events in Company E proves that there was more than one possible case of mutiny within the 339th Infantry, but as noted, the mutiny never came to pass.

On 15 March 1919, just fifteen days before the alleged mutiny of Company I, enlisted men from Company B issued a proclamation to cease all fighting in Archangel. Simply put, they were stating that they refused to fight any longer

> And after this date we positively refuse to advance on the Bolo lines including patrols... having duly acquitted ourselves by doing everything that was in our power to win – and what was asked of us, we after 6 months of diligent and uncomplaining sacrifice after serious debate arrive at this conclusion and it is not considered unpatriotic to the U.S. . . . we do solemnly pledge ourselves to uphold the principles herein stated and to cease all activities on and after the above mentioned date.[41]

Four members of Company B drafted the proclamation (two of the four signers were Pvt. Bill Henkelman and Sgt. Silver Parrish). The proclamation was set before the Commanding Officer of the Archangel district, Col. Stewart. Upon reading the proclamation, Stewart sent for Sgt. Parrish, who only four days prior had the honor and distinction of being decorated by the British with the Military Medal. Sgt. Parrish was brought before Col. Stewart, who read him the punishment for inciting a mutiny in accordance with the Articles of War and military justice.[42] According to Section III: Punitive Articles, Subsection C: Disrespect; Insubordination; Mutiny, Article 65: "any person subject to military law, who in collaboration with others, without authorization opposes, forbears, or defies superior military authority, with purposeful and fixed intent to seize or subvert shall be guilty of mutiny." Mutiny was punishable by death,

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[40] Ibid., 55-56.
[41] UMBHL, Sgt Silver Parrish diary.
[42] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*, 87-88.

confinement for life or for a fixed period of time. In addition, "any person subject to military law who attempts to create, stimulate, or join in any mutiny, shall be punished with the same punishment allotted for mutiny."[43]

Despite the gravity of the situation and severity of the warnings, Col. Stewart did not file charges against Sgt. Parrish or the other three men of Company B. Like Sgt. Parrish's petition, Capt. Prince observed that the American solders in Archangel felt that the Articles of War did not apply to them, "Regarding the present operations, the men feel that they are contrary to the policy announced when the A.N.R.E.F was sent to Russia."[44] Upon examination, the actions of Company E, Sgt. Silver Parrish of Company B, and the observations made by Capt. E. Prince indicate that the companies in question were not cowards; their collective morale had reached a point that the punishment for mutinous actions no longer registered. The question is, what would make a distinguished soldier such as Sgt. Parrish to openly question and condemn his responsibilities as a soldier? For American companies of the 339th Infantry, combat situations, chain of command, and the British were to blame.

The soldiers of Company B had been barraged with misfortune escalating since 15 November 1918. The men of Company B, with Company D periodically relieving them, held onto the town of Toulgas from November to March. On 1 March 1919, the forest surrounding the Toulgas echoed with the sound of rifle fire. The Bolsheviks initiated onslaughts of

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[43] United States Congress, Senate. Committee on Military Affairs: Establishment of Military Justice, 66th Cong., 1st sess., 1919.

[44] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*, 88.

ambushes. Over a short period, six American soldiers were killed and four went missing.[45] However, closer examination shows that this was not the whole story.

To truly understand why Company I may have mutinied, it is important to understand what went wrong in its fellow Company B. An alternative source on the subject, Dennis Gordon's *Quartered in Hell: The Story of the American North Russian Expeditionary Force 1918-1919*, shows a completely different scenario than the explanation of Company B's protest in Robert L. Willett's *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*. The four men, one private and three NCOs of Company B, drew up and delivered a petition that listed their complaints on 4 March 1919. If their grievances on the petition were not set right by their officers by 15 March, a mutiny would ensue. On 8 March, the four's planning was broken up by one of the company's sergeants. The four men that drew up the petition were arrested and scheduled to face a court-martial on 13 March. Six officers from Archangel spearheaded the court-martial.[46] The mutinous private was the first to be called in, and after being read the Articles of War and punishment for mutiny, the private immediately tore his shirt from his body screaming "Look at the lice, the dirt, the filth. We are half starved but none of you have lice or go hungry."[47]

Upon witnessing such a powerful argument, the courtroom went dead quiet. The head officer of the court asked the private if he were to promise to use his influence to keep the mutinous animosity down, they would leave Toulgas in less than ten days. The private agreed to their conditions and was excused. The other three mutineers had the same conditions. The four

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[45] Ibid., 87.

[46] Gordon and Otoupalik, *Quartered in Hell: The Story of the American Northern Russian Expeditionary Force 1918-1919*, 216, 223.

[47] Ibid., 223-224.

men of Company B did not discuss the content of the petition with anyone from that point on.[48] In fact, when examining pieces of Sgt. Silver Parrish's diary, it concludes with the petition and a list of soldier's names, ranks, and serial number. Could it be that this mutiny was in the making of becoming a full-scale revolt? Could the events in the previous examination of Company B coincide with this newer examination, and could Stewart have been part of the court-martial committee? Company B demonstrates that though they were in fact guilty of mutiny, the extenuating circumstance they endured exonerated them. The puzzling issue that sets Company B apart from the incidents of Company I is the time frame. How did the minor issues, if in fact they were minor issues, of Company I become a full-out mutinous revolt in the papers, but a legitimate story of mutiny such as that of Company B never left the courtroom? The accounts of Company B and Company E demonstrate the painful hardships that the soldiers serving in the cold Russian winter had to endure for the sake of their country and their duty.

In assessment of the events that took place up until the alleged mutiny of Company I, it is clear that the months of February and March of 1919 were filled with many issues pertaining to morale. As stated by Sgt. Theodore W. Kolbe of the Machine Gun Company, 339th Infantry, to a reporter for the Detroit Press, "the men have repeatedly asked their officers for information to bolster their sinking morale, the only information that had received was a circular sent out by Lord Milner . . . the Allies had sent troops to Archangel because it would not be right to desert Russia in the plight in which the revolution left it."[49] In addition, each Company (including the Yorkshire Battalion and the French) questioned their presence in Russia. If other companies were indeed mutinous before Company I, why is Company I credited with the first American

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Patricia Zacharias, "Detroit's Polar Bears and their confusing war." *The Detroit News*, 22 July 2000, Michigan History, http://apps.detnews.com/apps/history/index.php?id=178 (accessed Mar. 31, 2011).

mutiny of the Allied efforts during the Russian Intervention? Furthermore, given the situation prior to the mutiny, why was the 339th Infantry Company I, accused of mutiny at Archangel, Russia, in the spring of 1919? Was there a mutiny, or was there miscommunication between the soldiers and their officers?

III. Main Points of Analysis.

On the morning of 31 March 1919, the War Department received a cablegram from the American Military Attaché at Archangel describing the alleged mutiny of Company I. The contents of the cablegram were later released on 10 April 1919, followed by an authorized report on the mutiny from Murmansk. The official story of the of the mutiny is as follows: On the morning of 30 March 1919, a company of the 339th infantry was ordered out Smolny Barracks to pack their sleds and head directly over to the railroad station. Soon after the order was given, an NCO reported that the men of Company I refused to listen. At one point after the NCO had failed the to get the men packing, an officer took charge. The officer gave a direct order to pack their sleds. With the exception one soldier, Company I started to pack the sleds. The soldier, who took a long delay in following the officer's orders, was directly placed in confinement away from his company. Meanwhile, the officer requested that Col. Stewart come and speak with the men. Upon his arrival, Col. Stewart assembled the men to talk with them to quell any mutinous animosity. The men unenthusiastically agreed to go to the front with the condition that the prisoner was released. In addition, as part of their agreement, they would not go all the way to the front lines but to Obozerskaya. The cablegram states that Company I made the threat that a

general mutiny was to occur if a date for the earliest removal from Russia did not come from Washington.[50]

The previous is just one of the many stories that surrounding the mutiny. The mystery surrounding the legitimacy of the mutiny is the various stories surrounding the incident. In the previous, the men of Company I do not state a reason for mutiny other than early removal of American troops from Archangel. However, in comparison other first-hand accounts, and the story the War Department released do not support each other. Within the following sections a version of the alleged mutiny will examined and then further analyzed in Part IV: Evaluation.

In Archangel, the morning of 30 March, 1919, the men of Company I were ordered to load their sleds and prepare themselves to go and fight on the front lines. The men, united in their position about serving on the frontlines refused to follow the order. Col. Stewart was sent for to deal will the mutinous group at the request of an officer. Stewart demand that the men of Company I all be assembled in the Y.M.C.A. It is at this moment that Willett notes that Stewart showed a great sense of restraint and rare wisdom. Stewart talked to the men for over thirty minutes explaining to them the gravity of their actions.[51] After his talk, Stewart asked the soldiers if they had any questions that he could answer. According to Willett, one question was asked that did not surface in Stewart's official report. The question later appears in his papers and in the personal diaries of the soldiers of Company I. The question the soldier posed to Stewart was "Why are we here in Russia?" Stewart answered the soldier's question by stating "he had never been supplied with an answer as to why they were there, but that the Reds were

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[50] Joel R. Moore, Harry H. Mead, and Lewis E. Jahns, *The History of the American Expedition fighting the Bolsheviki: Campaigning in Northern Russia*, (Detroit, MI: The Polar Bear Publishing Co., 1920), 226.

[51] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920*, 45.

trying to push them into the White Sea, and that they were fighting for their lives."[52] The soldiers were satisfied with the response provided by Stewart, and entrained for Obozerskaya. Two days after the incident, the soldiers of Company I proved their courage as they were attacked at Verst 445 (six miles north of Empsa: Appendix C), establishing two fronts: Onega front and Seleskoye front.[53] However, the stories of the events on 30 March, 1919 conflict with each other.

In his book, *Why Did We Go To Russia?*, Lieutenant Harry Costello of the Machine Gun Company, 339th Infantry recalls the incident in Company I, claiming that it has been blown out of proportion. According to Costello, Company I was to leave Smolny Barrack in Archangel at 9:30 am 30 March 1919 and head to the front. The commanding officer, Captain Horatio G. Winslow, noticed that the sleds were not being loaded. Promptly, Winslow assigned First Sergeant Whitney McGuire to find out what the issue was and take care of it with haste. McGuire went into the men's barracks and ordered that the sleds to be loaded immediately. However, the men of Company I gave McGuire difficulty. At which point, after hearing McGuire's report, Winslow proceeded to the main room (where the majority of the men were) and asked the men what the trouble was. The men responded to Winslow's question by stating "they did not see why they should have to go to the front when the Russian troops were not being sent there . . . they also didn't see why they should be fighting on the front lines while the Russians remained n Archangel."[54]

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[52] Gordon and Otoupalik, *Quartered in Hell: The Story of the American Northern Russian Expeditionary Force 1918-1919*, 177-178.
[53] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920,* 45-46.
[54] Costello, *Why Did We Go To Russia?*, 77-78.

Upon hearing the men's responses, Capt. Winslow went to report the men's actions to Col. Stewart. While Winslow was reporting to Stewart, a senior lieutenant of the company, Lieutenant Albert E. May repeated the McGuire's order to load the sleds. Upon that direct order only one man hesitated to do as he was told, Private Petrowskas and was promptly arrested. Upon Stewart's arrival, the men of Company I were assembled in the Y.M.C.A building where he instructed the soldiers on the importance of obeying orders without question. In addition, Stewart reminded them that it was their duty as soldiers to uphold the reputation of the United States' Army. At the end of his speech Stewart asked the men if there was anyone amongst them that refused to go to the front. The men of Company I did not respond, which indicated that there was no refusal to go to the front. Stewart then praised them on the attitude and opened the floor for any questions. At Stewart's invitation, an enlisted man spoke on behalf of the company asking, "Why do we have to go to the front and fight for the Russians when they won't fight for themselves? We are willing to risk our lives for Americans, but why should we fight for Russians?"[55] The colonel's response to the enlisted man's sensible question was that he himself had no answer as to why they were in Russia, only that they were now fighting for their lives. Stewart stressed to them that if they did not fight the Reds would soon wipe them out.[56] The action Company I engaged in the days following the alleged mutiny verified Stewart's words to be closer to reality than they ever would have expected.

As the men entrained for the front, a platoon sergeant for Company I approached Lieutenant May to convey a minor misunderstanding. The platoon sergeant wanted to make May aware that Private Petrowskas was of Polish descent and spoke very poor English, and that

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[55] Ibid., 79.
[56] Ibid.

he may not have understood the order that was given. At the request of May, two other platoon sergeants confirmed what the initial platoon sergeant had stated. In consideration of the situation, May allowed Petrowskas to join his company and proceed to the front.[57]

In a report from Major H.N. Scales, the former adjutant and Inspector for the North American Forces in Russia, to Colonel W.P. Richardson, the former Commanding General, American Forces in North Russia, on 25 June 1920, Scales retells the incidents that occurred on 30 March 1919. Scales' version of the alleged mutiny of Company I, 339th Infantry is quite different from the previous examinations. The story as mentioned previously starts with the First Sergeant ordering the men to load up their sleds and prepare for the front. However, rather than reporting the incident directly to Col. Stewart, the company captain stormed into the barracks demanding to know who refused to go to the front. It is at this point the captain turns to the trumpeter and asked if he refused to load up his sled and go to the front. The trumpeter's response was to the effect that he would go if everyone else would; however, he would not go if he were the only one to load the sleds. It is at this point the captain hastened to call the Commanding Officer, American Forces in North Russia (Col. Stewart), rather than follow the chain of command and attempt to reach the Commanding Officer of Smolny Barracks. The events that followed the interaction of Col. Stewart and the men of Company I were as they were previously stated. In his report to Richardson, Scales points out that recent developments at home (Detroit) may have been a contributing factor in the mutiny. Allegedly a speech was made by a senator in the United States Senate condemning the intervention and demanding information from the U.S. Government as to why the men of the 339th Infantry were still in Russia. The information of the alleged speech came from newspaper clippings from Detroit, Michigan. The

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[57] Ibid., 80.

clippings outlined the affliction the troops endured from the Bolsheviks after the signing of Armistice.[58]

In addition to Scales' report, he mentions that some of the trouble may have come from the captain himself. Scales thought the captain to be weak man and unfit for the duty as company commander. The captain was believed to be a socialist and closely allied with founding member of the Socialist Party of America Victor Berger. In retrospect, the possibility of the captain being a socialist is probable, or it could be that Scales' judgment was in haste by deeming the captain guilty by association. However, despite the major's findings, the mutiny was written off, as not as serious as it was made out to be.[59]

In his brief examination of the alleged mutiny of Company I in *American Diplomats in Russia: Case Studies in Orphan Diplomacy, 1916-1919*, William Allison offers a completely different version of the events that occurred on 30 March 1919. According to Allison, the mutiny started due to the deep-rooted hatred the American soldiers had for their British commander. The Americans refused to follow a drunken British officer's orders to return to the front line. Up to this point, the American forces had been used by the British to spearhead offensive operations. However, unbeknownst to the American troops, their largest complaint has already been answered, but not announced. On 29 March, General Poole received word that General Wilds P. Richardson would arrive in Archangel to take over command of American

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[58] H.N. Scales, Letter to W.P. Richardson, 25 June 1920.
[59] Ibid.

forces. Richardson would not be subordinate to the British command; Richardson was sent to facilitate the removal of American forces from Archangel and prohibit their misuse.[60]

However, the news would not come until after Company I rebelled against their British commander. According to Poole, Col. Stewart downplayed the whole affair, as Poole saw the crime Company I committed as "unthinkable". An investigation was performed by H.N. Scales in the matter of Company I's mutiny. They were exonerated of all guilt or wrongdoing. The drunken British commander was sent back to England after being court-martialed.[61]

On 17 April 1919, *The Continent* ran an article outlining the circumstances they believed attributed to the mutiny of Company I. The journal points to Bolshevik propaganda as the cause, mentioning that American soldiers of the 339th Infantry allowed themselves to be fooled into believing the propaganda. In addition to the propaganda story, the journal mentions that the soldiers after agreeing with Col. Stewart, only went half way to the front and still refused to engage in combat. Company I were labeled as the "first disgrace in the army of this war."[62] A little over a week later, a second article was published on the alleged mutiny, again pointing to propaganda. On 26 April 1919, *The Literary Digest* ran an article stating that the Soviet Government distributed leaflets signed by Vladimir Lenin addressing the American soldiers. In the alleged propaganda, Lenin appeals to the soldiers of the 339th by addressing them as "fellow workers", and insists that they cease their fighting against their "brothers".[63]

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[60] William Allison, *American Diplomats in Russia: Case Studies in Orphan Diplomacy, 1916-1919* (Westport, Ct: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 121-122.
[61] Ibid.
[62] "The First Army Scandal." *The Continent* 50, no. 16 (1919): 449.
[63] *The Literary Digest* 61, no. 1511-1516 (1919): 136.

It is worth noting that the War Department did an examination on the subject of propaganda, and whether or not it did affect the soldiers of Company I. The War Department found that propaganda had been distributed throughout the company. Amazingly, the questions the soldiers put to Col. Stewart matched those on the Bolshevik propaganda leaflets. The War Department also issued a statement claiming that any reports differing from theirs in the newspapers were secured from outside sources and were published without the explicit permission of the War Department.[64]

IV. Evaluation.

The official story that was released by the War Department had many holes to it. The official version the War Department released lacks the questions the soldiers had asked the events in the aftermath that exonerated the soldiers. Second, the War Department's version states that a general mutiny would ensue if the soldiers were not given the soonest window to leave Russia. What the War Department also fails to mention is that a plan to withdraw the American forces in Russia had already been under way. On 16 March 1919, Brigadier General Wilds P. Richardson, U.S. Army, was ordered to proceed to North Russia to assume command of the American Forces.[65] On 29 March 1919, General Poole of the British Forces had learned of Richardson's arrival and intentions for American troops. To Poole's understanding, Richardson was not subordinate to the British, rather he was would facilitate the withdrawal of American forces from North Russia.[66]

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[64] Moore, Mead, and Jahns, *The History of the American Expedition fighting the Bolsheviki: Campaigning in Northern Russia*, 226.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Allison, *American Diplomats in Russia: Case Studies in Orphan Diplomacy, 1916-1919*, 122.

Why did the American soldiers have no information about Richardson's arrival and purpose? If Richardson's arrival were known, why did Stewart not tell the soldiers? It could be stated that if the soldiers of Company I were made aware of the withdrawal, the built up frustration due to the lack of understanding of their mission and deeply rooted desire to go home would not have boiled over into a possible mutiny, and clear misunderstanding.

The War Department was the first credible source to publish an account of the affair. In reality, they made a bad situation worse due to their inconsistent use of with the facts and manner in which it was reported. In April 1920, the *Army and Navy Journal* finally shed light to the markedly exaggerated report from the War Department by stating that the incident was immensely exaggerated. While vastly disappointed that any insubordination occurred, Col. Stewart applauded the general conduct of the 339th Infantry. In a report, General Richardson stated that the soldiers served under very demanding conditions, and that more serious incidents appeared among troops of the Allies on duty in North Russia in comparison to the incident with the 339th. Richardson further states that Colonel Stewart handled the discrepancies in the conduct of Company I, 339th Infantry with diplomacy and good judgment.[67]

The mutiny would not be the first or only exaggerated report. In February 1919, prior to the alleged mutiny, Col. Stewart had to cable the War Department to reject and set straight reports pertaining to the mistreatment of soldiers. According to Stewart, the soldiers were taken care of by their commanders. Stewart requested that the War Department send information pertaining to the soldiers' well-being be sent to the press, especially in Detroit and Chicago. However, the real question is, were the reports exaggerated? If the reports were exaggerated by

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[67] Moore, Mead, and Jahns, *The History of the American Expedition fighting the Bolsheviki: Campaigning in Northern Russia*, 225.

correspondents and British censors, what truly happened in Company B and Company I? According to Capt. Joel Moore, Lieutenants Harry H. Mead, and Lewis E. Jahns, the exaggeration of Company I's mutiny came from the British War Department as a means of propaganda. The British used the story of Company I's mutiny as a means to rally fellow Englishmen to support the British Forces who have been left unsupported by mutinous "Yanks".[68] In reality, the 339th Infantry continued to fight until they were ordered to withdrawal from Archangel.[69] As a country, the United States may have left the British to wage war against the Bolsheviks, but Company I never abandoned their posts or mutinied, thus saying that the Americans never supported the British is an untrue statement.

According to Major H.N. Scales, the British were able to publish and use the story by the means of American correspondents in Archangel. Scales' report indicates that at the time of the alleged mutiny American correspondents were looking for newspaper worthy stories to publish. However, the correspondents had one major obstacle to bypass to have the story published, the British censor. The British censor, up until the incident with Company I, had stopped all information about the British and French mutinies as mentioned in II. Background. The nature of the French and British mutinies was by far worse than the exaggerated reports of an "alleged" mutiny of Company I. The British and French each had three to four cases of mutiny, however, not a single word got past the British censor. The reluctance to stop the false information from bypassing the British censor reinforces the theory that the British used the unfortunate, though minor, incident as recruiting propaganda to support their cause against Communism.[70]

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920,* 138-49.
[70] Scales, Letter to W.P. Richardson, 25 June 1920.

The Briton's objectives stemmed from the deep-rooted animosity Secretary of State for War and Air, Winston Churchill, held towards Bolshevik Russia. Churchill viewed the Russians as traitors and dangerous revolutionaries. After the signing of peace between Russia and Germany at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, the Russians left the Allies alone to face the Germans. As noted by historian Clifford Kinvig, Churchill had "expressed his violent opposition to Russia's new rulers in the most vivid and extravagant language."[71] Churchill was the largest advocate behind the intervention to bring the new Russian government down. In his excitement, Churchill was thrilled by the concept of forming a coalition to end Bolshevism. In an extreme case, Churchill had mentioned that the German army needed to be built up and prepared in order fight the spread of the Bolshevism.[72] The British saw the ideology behind Bolshevism as a menace to the British Empire. The radical social and economic policies the Bolsheviks enacted threatened anti-imperialistic countries and upset the social order of Europe.[73] In short, the British objective was purely political in order to protect themselves from an ideology they viewed as a menace.

In the second case, Col. Stewart explained that he was never given an answer as to why they were in Russia. His answer stands out as the single most important piece of evidence to why the alleged mutiny occurred. The truth of the matter is that Stewart had not been supplied with an answer, but he had posed the same question to higher authorities with no answer.[74] It is plausible that the men of Company I sincerely believed Stewart's response. It is noted that Stewart illustrated a tremendous amount of restraint and good judgment towards the soldiers during the meeting at the Y.M.C.A. He was able to empathize with the frustration the soldiers

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[71] Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade*, xiii.
[72] Ibid., 10.
[73] Ibid., 9.
[74] "That "American Mutiny" In Russia" *The Literary Digest* 62, no. 1517-1522 (1919): 40.

were feeling. In all consideration, Stewart was in the same situation the soldiers were in. He wanted answers just as bad as they did. In his wisdom, he realized that confusion, frustration, and fatigue had affected the soldiers' morale, and provided the best answer he possibly could. If Stewart truly believed the men were in a state of mutiny, he would have had them arrested and imprisoned as the French had done on 1 March. In reality, he was correct when he stated that they were fighting for their lives, if they would not take the fight to the Bolsheviks, the Bolsheviks would bring the fight to them. The diary of Corporal Cleo M. Colburn of Company I, 339th Infantry indicates that there was an issue with the soldiers on 30 March 1919. He mentions that troubles arose when the troops were ordered to the front. However, after the mention of Stewart's lecture, Colburn's diary shows that no one refused Stewart's order and all of the soldiers of Company I made a trip to the front.[75]

The irony to Stewart's words became apparent when en route to the front 1 April, 1919, Company I was attacked by an overwhelming number of Bolshevik soldiers at Verst 445. Colburn and his fellow members of Company I were engaged in a steady exchange of gunfire for over 1 ½ hours straight. The battle Corp. Colburn describes so vividly included fierce and constant fighting with many close calls and is considered one of the most dramatic engagements of the intervention. The significance of the battle is that it brought widely separated Allied forces together and opened communications between the Onega front and Seletskoye front.[76] The tragedy of the event is that not one word of regiment's bravery that day was published over the story of the alleged mutiny that occurred only hours prior to their heroic battle. As stated by Sgt. Whitney McGuire about the events of that day, "they kicked like hell, but they went and

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[75] UMBHL. Corp. Cleo M. Colburn Diary.
[76] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920,* 46-47.

never did a better job of fighting than they did that same day . . . Never was a more unjust charge laid against brave men . . . it is safe to say no company of American soldiers in this war has shown more consistent bravery in face of the enemy."[77]

Lieutenant Harry Costello's work *Why Did We Go to Russia?* though possibly biased in nature, is a vital source to obtain information about the alleged mutiny. Costello dedicated an entire chapter describing the mutiny, *The Truth about the Mutiny*, in which a very thorough examination is conducted. The first piece of evidence that confirmed that the men of Company I did not disobey a direct order from an officer was the conversation that took place between First Sergeant Whitney McGuire and the soldiers. First, McGuire gave the men a preliminary order to load the sled. McGuire never mentioned anything about going to the front, after the men refused to load the sleds, Captain Horatio G. Winslow was notified of the disobedience. The key action takes place when Winslow asked the soldiers what the issue was, he never ordered them to load the sleds. Thus a direct order was never given from an officer at that point. Rather than give the order to load the sleds, Winslow bypassed the chain of command. Instead of phoning the Commanding Officer of Smolny Barracks Winslow phoned Col. Stewart.[78] The question at this point is why did Winslow skip the chain of command? Further research indicates that if Winslow had followed the chain of command, the situation could have become much worse. Commander of the Second Battalion Major Charles Young was in charge of the Smolny Barrack in Archangel. According to Willett, Young was a strict man who followed regulations as they were written. Before his transfer to the Second Battalion, Young was in charge of the Third Battalion, which included Companies I, K, L, and M of the 339th Infantry, the men did not like him.[79]

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[77] Zacharias, "Detroit's Polar Bears and their confusing war."
[78] Costello, *Why Did We Go To Russia?*, 75-79.
[79] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920,* 30-32.

Upon his arrival in Archangel, Young was given the responsibility to oversee court-martials, a pleasure that he appreciated very much.[80] With the possibility of a mutiny on his hands, Winslow could not afford to take a chance by calling Young for help. Considering that Young loved court-martial, and his record as a battalion commander indicates that he was familiar with the soldiers of Company I since their time at Camp Custer.[81]

Examinations from Allison, Costello, Moore, and Willett all portray Stewart as a sympathetic man. Winslow more than likely was aware of the events that had unfolded two weeks earlier in Company B, phoned Stewart as a preventive step to contain a mutiny before it got to the point of no return, such as the mutinies displayed by the French 1 March and Yorkshire Battalion 26 February 1919.

According to accounts by Costello, Moore, Mead, and Jahns, the only direct order given was by Lieutenant Albert E. May. The accounts indicate that May gave a direct order to load the sleds, at which point every man in the company, with the exception of one, followed. Lieutenant May, according to Moore, Mead, and Jahns, was the most even-tempered officer in the company, it was not like him to place the first soldier who showed an indication of minor noncompliance under arrest.[82] There are two points of examination. Why did the private refuse to follow May's orders, and why was May uneasy and very unlike himself the morning of 30 March?

First, Private Petrowskas was a man of Polish descent, and entirely new to life in Detroit, Michigan. The private's English was below average, according to one of Company I's platoon

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[80] Ibid., 120-21.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Moore, Mead, and Jahns, *The History of the American Expedition fighting the Bolsheviki: Campaigning in Northern Russia*, 229.

sergeants. In reality, the young private may not have understood the orders given by May, or could have been confused by the events quickly unfolding before him. Listening to the platoon sergeant's case, May asked two other platoon sergeants about Private Petrowskas and his ability to comprehend English. In light of the circumstances, May reconsidered the arrest and punishment of Petrowskas and allowed him to join his platoon as they entrained for the front. In retrospect, May did arrest Petrowskas for the slightest sign of hesitancy and a misunderstanding was possible.[83] However, one question does spark controversy, only in Costello's work is the Polish-speaking private named. Upon further research of the men listed in the *Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collection* provided by the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library, the name Petrowskas does not appear. In fact, the closest spelling, rank, and company of an individual in the 339th is Oscar Petraska, however, he died of disease 10 September 1918. There is no individual with the name Petrowskas in Company I, or the 85th Division that was sent to Russia according to the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library database. Further research indicates that no name is given up to the press, rather the young man's Slavic origin is used to explain the misunderstanding between the NCO and private.[84] Considering the private's actions, if they actually took place, the question that remains is what made May so uneasy that morning?

The behavior the soldiers exhibited while they operated under harsh living conditions (physically and mentally), played a chief role with the errors in communication between the private and NCO. First to put it mildly, the soldiers were not in the right frame of mind. Company I had been continually sent to the front doing guard duty under heavy fire by the

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[83] Costello, *Why Did We Go To Russia?*, 79.

[84] "339th Say Mutiny Charge is False." *The New York Times*, 1 July 1919, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F50D15F... (accessed Apr. 1, 2011).

Bolsheviks and in subzero temperatures from October 1918 – 10 March 1919. The soldiers of Company I were supposed to be relieved by a company of French soldiers. However, to the misfortune of Company I, the French soldiers turned out to be truly mutinous.[85] In retrospect, Company I would have no break from the front due to the French mutiny. It should be noted here that the story of the French mutiny did not make it past the British censors.[86] The French mutiny caused the 339th Company I to pull constant shifts at the front with no sleep, poor rations, and no covering to keep warm from the subarctic weather.[87]

In addition to the extended duty at the front, Company I was struck with further disaster when a fire spread throughout the camp and burned the company out of the barracks. As a result, the company was split into two separate parts led by a First Sergeant and Commanding Officer, which led to a series of miscommunications and inconvenience. To further bring the morale down, there were whispers of trouble going around the camp. According to Moore, a sergeant described that morning's atmosphere filled with "half-truths and rumors and expressions of feeling that were in the air."[88] As mentioned previously, Moore saw a cause of uneasiness within the company as a result of group psychology. The soldiers of Company I were gauging the reaction of the captain and first sergeant based off the rumor that trouble had taken place in the other barracks. The captain himself was nervous, if a mutiny were to happen, or even the conspiracy to prompt a mutiny were to occur, the captain would have to report it as a mutiny, which happened. If the captain did not report the possibility of a mutiny, he would be guilty of

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[85] "That "American Mutiny" In Russia" *The Literary Digest* 62, no. 1517-1522 (1919): 40.
[86] Scales, Letter to W.P. Richardson, 25 June 1920.
[87] UMBHL. PFC. George Albers papers.
[88] Moore, Mead, and Jahns, *The History of the American Expedition fighting the Bolsheviki: Campaigning in Northern Russia*, 228.

mutiny according to Section III: Punitive Articles, Subsection C: Disrespect; Insubordination; Mutiny, Article 66: Failure to suppress a mutiny. According to Article 66:

> Any officer or soldier who, being present at any mutiny, does not use his utmost endeavor to suppress the same or, knowing or having reason to believe that a mutiny is to take place, does not without delay give information thereof to his commanding officer shall be punishable with death or confinement for life or for a fixed period.[89]

In further examination, Moore contends that the human nature took the better part of the men's judgment, that they waited and watched for what the captain would do to the few men of Company I who chose to express themselves that morning. Furthermore, the frustration and constant pressure of the life in sub-arctic Archangel had finally worn into the men's patience. The men were fed up with being the ones responsible for holding the front while the British, French, and Russian stayed behind. The manner in which the men spoke to their captain that morning must have been in such a serious tone that the captain believed he had a severe situation on the verge of an outbreak of mutiny.[90]

The investigation by Major Scales is viewed as the final report in the inspection. In Scales' report there is no mention of a Private Petrowskas, or an arrest of any soldier from Company I. Rather, the investigation shows a captain phoning the commanding officer in haste, and bypassing the commanding officer of Smolny Barracks, which is confirmed by other accounts. However, in the case of Private Petrowskas, the only mention of a man hesitating to load the sleds after the captain poses the question to him is the trumpeter. Still at that point, no arrests were made. In other accounts, there is no mention of the captain's character, unlike

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[89] United States Congress, Senate. Committee on Military Affairs: Establishment of Military Justice, 66th Cong., 1st sess., 1919.

[90] Moore, Mead, and Jahns, *The History of the American Expedition fighting the Bolsheviki: Campaigning in Northern Russia*, 228.

Lieutenant May and First Sergeant McGuire. Rather, Scales is unimpressed with the captain after the testimonies are given. The only captain mentioned in the other accounts of the alleged mutiny is Captain Horatio G. Winslow, if there were another captain there, there is no mention of his presence. As Scales mentions, the captain on duty is believed to be socialist due to his association with Victor Berger. However, the key point of Scales' investigation is in his reference to the home front propaganda and news clippings. [91]

In his investigation, Scales had discovered that mail had reached the 339th Infantry a day or two before the alleged mutiny. The mail contained clippings from local papers from around Detroit, Michigan with speeches made by a U.S. Senator demanding information as to why the soldiers were being kept in Russia. Further research shows that the U.S. Senator was Hiram Johnson of California. In early March 1919, Senator Johnson asked the questions, "Why did we enter Russia . . . What is our policy towards Russia?"[92] In early March, Johnson affirmed his membership to the opposition as he joined with thirty-seven republican senators who rejected a treaty in its current state. As a member of the opposition, Johnson stated his feelings towards U.S. soldiers, as well as the American policy towards intervention in Russia on the senate floor:

> We have engaged in a miserable misadventure stultifying out professions, and setting at naught our promises. We have punished no guilty; we have brought misery and starvation and death to the innocent. We have garnered none of the fruits of the victory of war, but suffer the odium and infamy of undeclared warfare. We have sacrificed out own blood to no purpose, and into American homes have brought sorrow anguish and suffering.[93]

A great majority of senators in Washington D.C. were against the intervention without the official declaration of war. Wisconsin senator, Irvine L. Lenroot, a major proponent of the

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[91] Scales, Letter to W.P. Richardson, 25 June 1920.

[92] Michael A. Weatherson, and Hal W. Bochin, *Hiram Johnson: Political Revivalist* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1995), 86.

[93] Ibid.

anti-intervention movement in the Senate, wrote a letter to the family of Malcolm K. Whyte of the 310th Engineers (stationed in Archangel with the 339th Infantry) condemning the intervention. In his letter, the senator expressed his sympathy for their son's hardship in Russia. In addition, Lenroot held President Wilson at fault for getting America involved in an intervention without the authority of Congress, which in Lenroot's judgment was a violation of the U.S. Constitution. Furthermore, Lenroot continued to express his lack of confidence in the President's judgment due to the insufficient amount of information the Senate has been provided with concerning the intervention.[94]

In short, the men's emotions took over as they read the clippings posted from home, and eventually the men gave into doubt wondering why they are Russia and for what purpose did they remain there. Given the evidence provided by Scales, as well as accounts by Moore and Costello, the alleged mutiny, as written by Scales, was nothing more than a misunderstanding between the soldiers and their officer. Furthermore, Scales' investigation of the mutiny of Company I reinforces that fact that it was nothing as serious as it had been reported by the War Department and could not have been quelled more professionally than how Col. Stewart took control of the situation.[95]

The examination of the alleged mutiny of Company I by William Allison offered an extended look at the attitude the soldiers of the 339th Infantry had towards British officers, and a perspective of the mutiny to analyze. As mentioned previously in Part III, the men of Company I were fed up with their commanding officer. Allison's account is unlike any of the others that have been examined. None of the other accounts mention a British commander giving an order

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[94] UMBHL, Irvine L. Lenroot, Letter to W.F. Whyte, 29 May 1919

[95] Scales, Letter to W.P. Richardson, 25 June 1920.

to the front, nor do they mention a drunk British commander. The question is what is the likelihood of this story being true, is it feasible that a drunk British commander was in charge of Company I for a period of time? On 6 January 1919, Corporal Fred Kooyers of Company E, 339th Infantry indicated that the men had been taken out to the Kodish front to drive the Bolshevik in the area out. In his diary, Kooyers indicates that the commanding major, Major Donoghue was "rummed" up, meaning the British officer was clearly drunk and taking men out on maneuvers.[96] It is probable that there was a British officer that often ordered the men around while alcoholically impaired. However, what does not seem probable is the likelihood of the story. It makes perfect sense, especially when reminded of the information that does not get by British censors, that a story such as a drunken British officer court-martialed due to misconduct would not make it past the British Censors. The part that does not make sense are the stories by the Americans in Company I. The soldiers would have no reason to cover up the truth of a drunken officer, especially if it further strengthened their case. Allison's source of information is a letter from General Poole to Lieutenant C.H. Phillips on 31 March 1919.[97] Which begs to question, if the case of the drunken soldier were untrue, why would Poole write his lieutenant a false case to confirm that it was a drunken officer? In reality, General Poole was about to lose command of the American Forces in Archangel to General Wilds P. Richardson. Could it be that the story of the drunken British officer was fabricated? If so, any of the blame for the abuse of the American troops by the British would fall on the drunken British officer, rather than British officers in general. In retrospect, it is convenient that the only mutiny of the American forces in Russia to be reported is due to a drunk British officer, rather than the dissatisfaction of the soldiers with their command.

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[96] UMBHL. PFC. George Albers papers, Diary of Fred Kooyers, 1918-1919.
[97] Allison, *American Diplomats in Russia: Case Studies in Orphan Diplomacy, 1916-1919*, 122.

The case of propaganda came two-fold. The soldiers were receiving clippings from home indicating the debate over the "Russian Question", as to whether or not soldiers should remain in Russia. Not meant to act as propaganda, the letters and newspaper clippings did plant the seed of doubt in the mind of young soldiers with no specified objective other than "survive". In the case of the Bolsheviks trying to persuade American soldiers to cease-fire and return home, the Bolsheviks used a variety of media. One piece of propaganda comes from the collection of Private Walter I. McKenzie, Company E. The propaganda is in the form of a political cartoon mocking the American soldiers and indicating that the French were relieved of their post for a small price as the American soldiers were left to guard the front in Russia with no aide (Appendix D).[98]

Propaganda came to the soldiers not only in the form of leaflets and political cartoons, but the spoken words of Bolshevik soldiers carrying a white flag. An article that ran in the *Boston Sunday Post* on 6 July, 1919 indicated that the Bolshevik soldiers would come speak to the Americans under a white flag of peace. The Bolsheviks asked the Americans why they remained to fight in Russia long after the other soldiers have in Europe have stopped fighting on 11 November 1918. In addition, the Bolsheviks asked why the Americans continued to fight long after their French allies had abandoned them.[99] The Bolsheviks made it apparent that they did not want to fight the Americans. The diary of Platoon Sergeant Gordon W. Smith of Company D, 339th Infantry, the Bolsheviks on 28 September 1918, came across the bridge at Baldinskaya to speak diplomatically to the American soldiers about their cause and feelings of the war. In their lecture, the Bolsheviks stressed that they had no desire to fight the

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[98] UMBHL, Walter I. McKenzie papers.
[99] "The Truth About the Yank's 'Mutiny'." *Boston Sunday Post*, 6 July 1919.

Americans.[100] The knowledge the Bolsheviks expressed in their encounters with the American soldiers illustrated that they were aware of the low morale spreading throughout the American units. Though propaganda may not have started the initial mutiny, the newspaper clippings, lectures by the Bolsheviks, and news from the home front, all made propaganda a relevant factor in fueling the alleged mutiny.

V. Conclusion.

The 339th Infantry, Company I had been through hell and back again on many occasions. They, like many of the other companies of the 339th Infantry, had been constantly placed at the frontlines to fight an enemy the United States had not declared a war on. They fought for survival. The fact stand out that Company I was not the first to mutiny. The British, French, and Russians all had issues with their battalions long before the troubles in Company I started. Second, the evidence points to an NCO (Sgt. Whitney McGuire) giving the preliminary order to load the sleds. The sergeant never gave an order to go to the front lines. Instead, when Lieutenant May gave the order to load the sleds, every soldier loaded as asked. Third, the British were using Americans on the frontlines more often than their own men due to the low number of British recruits and mutinies by the French, British, and Russian. With the realization that the Americans did not have to follow the British command, the British published the story of the mutiny as a tool to persuade young Englishmen to enlist and join the British ranks in Russia.

The events of the alleged mutiny happened as such: after long pulling long shifts at the front, Company I was tired and frustrated by the cold harsh weather, British command, and lack of information. Over the course of March, the men grew restless from the build-up of

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[100] UMBHL, Plat. Sergeant Gordon W. Smith diary.

propaganda the Bolsheviks had been distributing, and the newspaper clippings of the battles in the U.S. Senate questioning why America was fighting in Russia when war had not been declared. The men heard the same line of questioning from the Bolsheviks, which led them to question their presence in Russia. On the morning of 30 March 1919, Sgt. Whitney McGuire ordered the men to load the sled, the men assumed they were headed to the front to continue the job the French and Russians refused to do: guard the front and hold back the Bolsheviks. Rather than a whole company rally against McGuire, a few dissatisfied soldiers posed their questions to McGuire. McGuire, aware of the incidents that took place in early March (Company B. and Company E.), notified his commanding officer, fully aware of the punishment of the failure to report such incidents.

Captain Horatio G. Winslow was also aware of the consequences of the failure to report a mutiny, reported straight to Colonel Stewart. Winslow bypassed the chain of command, the commanding officer of Smolny Barracks (Maj. Charles Young), because he knew Stewart could handle the situation without having to punish the soldiers (as exhibited by the meeting Stewart had with Sgt. Silver Parrish). Concurrently, as Winslow was on the phone with Stewart, Lieutenant May decided to reason with the men, thus giving the only direct order: load the sled. The men did as May ordered, all except one: a Polish private that lacked a clear understanding of the English language. The private was confused by the order May had given due to the commotion from the men's questioning, McGuire's orders, and Winslow's inquiries. May, not having time to deal with the young private's handicap, placed him under arrest for not following orders.

Stewart arrived, as the men were assembled in the Y.M.C.A, to go over the seriousness of mutiny charges. Upon Stewart's invitation, the men had questioned him as to why they were still

in Russia and what was their objective. Stewart did not know the answer to the soldiers' question. Rather, he empathized with them and reminded them that they were at war. If the men were not going to guard the front from the Bolsheviks, the Bolsheviks would advance on the Allied forces and destroy them. With a renewed sense of honor and clarity, the soldiers entrained for the front. The private who was placed under arrest for his hesitation was released due to his language handicap and the May's realization that he may have been too swift to make a judgment. The private joined the men at the trains on the way to the front.

At the front lines, the men of Company I proved themselves to be honorable soldiers. Though outnumbered they never gave into the waves of Bolshevik soldiers that came at them. They won one of the most important engagements of the intervention.

In conclusion, the men of Company I, 339th Infantry, Eighty-fifth Division did not mutiny. They hesitated to follow a preliminary order given by an NCO, but when an officer repeated the order the men did as they were told. The event was blown out of proportion by correspondents looking for an interesting story to send to the states. The issue got out of hand when the British used the heavily exaggerated story the correspondents wrote as recruiting propaganda to compensate for the loss of control over U.S. soldiers upon General Richardson's arrival. Furthermore, the British are to blame for the dishonorable branding of a brave unit of men who risked their lives, as others did not. Company I was not guilty of mutiny, nor should any textbook today refer to them as such given the extenuating circumstances. Rather, the record of the false charges should be wiped clean, leaving Company I's record the way it was: brilliant, honorable, and patriotic.

Chronology

25 August, 1917...... The Eighty-fifth Division of the U.S. Army is formed at Camp Custer

June 1918...... Draft brings new wave of recruits, many from Detroit. Forming the 339th Infantry "Detroit's Own".

14 July, 1918...... 85th Division entrained for Camp Mills, Long Island, NY.

15 July, 1918...... 85th Division arrives at Camp Mills.

17 August, 1918...... President Wilson authorizes American forces to be deployed in the Northern Russian Expedition.

21 July, 1918...... 339th Infantry left Camp Mills to embark for England.

3-4 August, 1918..... 339th Disembarked in Liverpool, England.

27 August, 1918...... 339th Infantry, First Battalion 310th Engineers, 337th Field Hospital, and 337th Ambulance Company embark for Archangel, Russia: Identified as American Expeditionary Force North Russia (AEFNR).

5 September, 1918..... AEFNR arrives in Archangel, Russia.

11 November 1918...... Armistice signed in France ending the Great War.

11 December,1918...... White Russian mutiny.

27 December 1918...... White Russians mutiny killing two British officers. Four hundred- five hundred White Russians at Shkotova desert 339th Companies D and E.

12 February, 1919...... Cossack's under Kalmykof mutiny.

26 February, 1919...... Yorkshire Battalion mutiny, two sergeants arrested.

March, 1919...... 339th Infantry Company E has a meeting in which a mutiny is suggested. No one wanted to take responsibly for the mutiny, the cause is abandoned.

1 March, 1919...... French mutiny at Obozerskaya. Over ninety arrested and sent back to France.

4 March, 1919...... 339th Infantry Company B writes petition to the intervention, threatening mutiny.

8 March, 1919..... 339th Infantry Company B's plans are broken up, four men are confined until court-martial can be assembled.

13 March, 1919...... 339th Infantry Company B's court-martial is held. Charges are dropped for all four men due to extenuating circumstances.

30 March, 1919...... Alleged mutiny of 339th Infantry Company I.

25 April, 1919...... Third North Russian Rifle Regiment mutinies, murdering their officers and giving up Toulgas.

15 May, 1919...... Fighting ends for 339th Infantry.

22 June, 1919...... First American units of AEFNR sent home.

15 July, 1919...... 339th Infantry arrives to a parade in Detroit, Michigan, held in their honor.

18 July, 1919...... 339th Infantry is discharged and deactivated (until World War II, Italian Front).

7 July, 1919...... Salvo Battalion Allied Legion mutiny. Four Russian and five British Officers murdered in their sleep.

July-August, 1919...... Mutinies on large scale in the White Russian Army.[101]

* In 1929 veterans of the 85th Division, nicknamed the "Polar Bear Expedition" traveled to U.S.S.R to exhume the bodies of their fallen comrades and send them back to America in honor. They had found and identified over eighty-six remains. In 1934 the Soviet government had shipped the remains of twelve additional soldiers from the expedition.[102]

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[101] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920,* 44-48, 53, 87-89, 125-27, 142-43, 183-84; Costello, *Why Did We Go To Russia?* (Detroit: Harry J. Costello, 1920), 76; Gordon, *Quartered in Hell: The Story of the American Northern Russian Expeditionary Force 1918-1919,* 216, 223; UMBHL. PFC. George Albers papers, Diary of Fred Kooyers, 1918-1919; UMBHL, Plat. Sergeant Gordon W. Smith diary.

[102] Willett, *Russian Sideshow: America's Undeclared War 1918-1920,* 147.

Appendix A.[103]

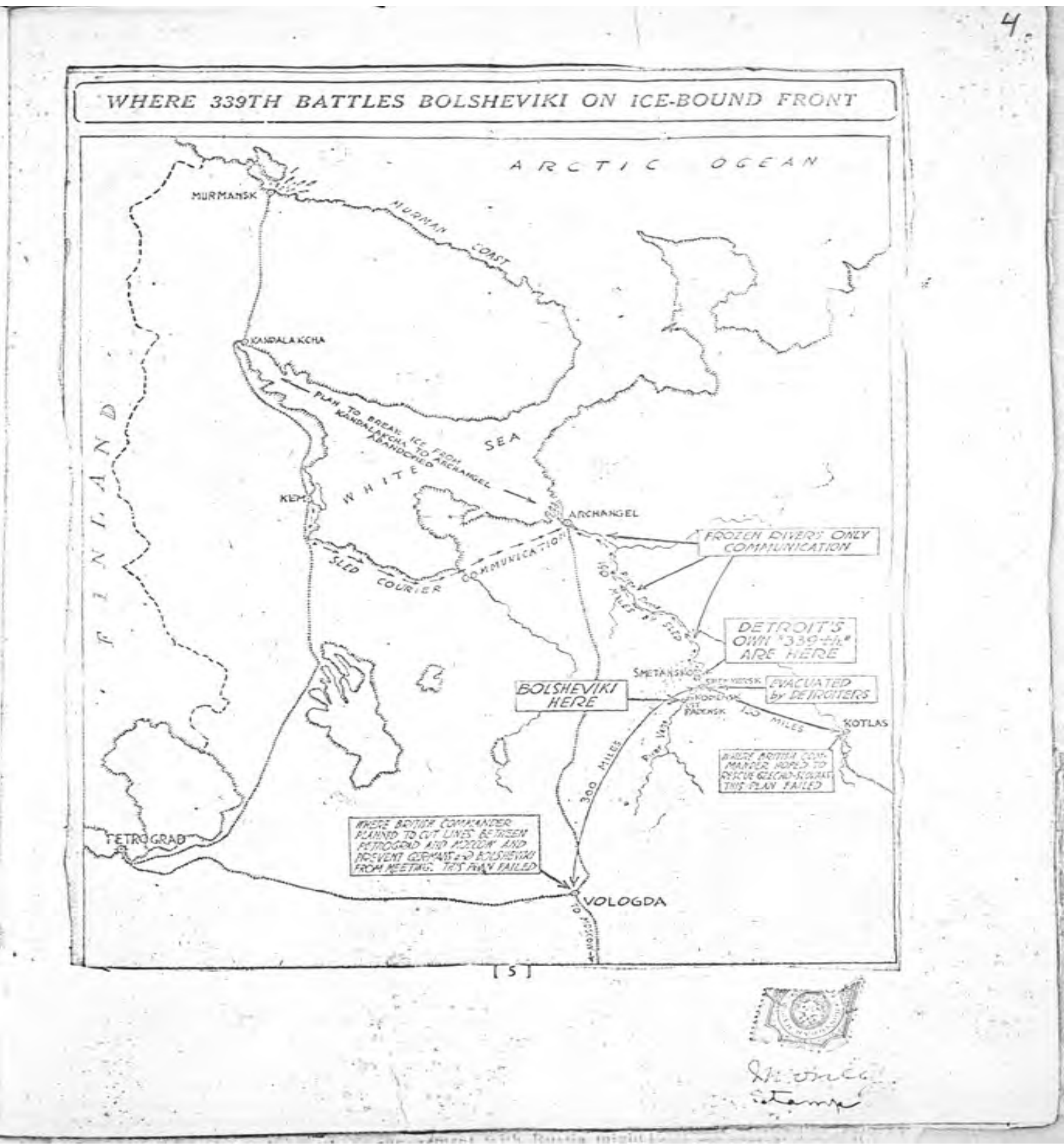
Inspection

Ready for a Long Hike

Mess Shack

[103] UMBHL, Levi Bartels papers.

Appendix B.[104]



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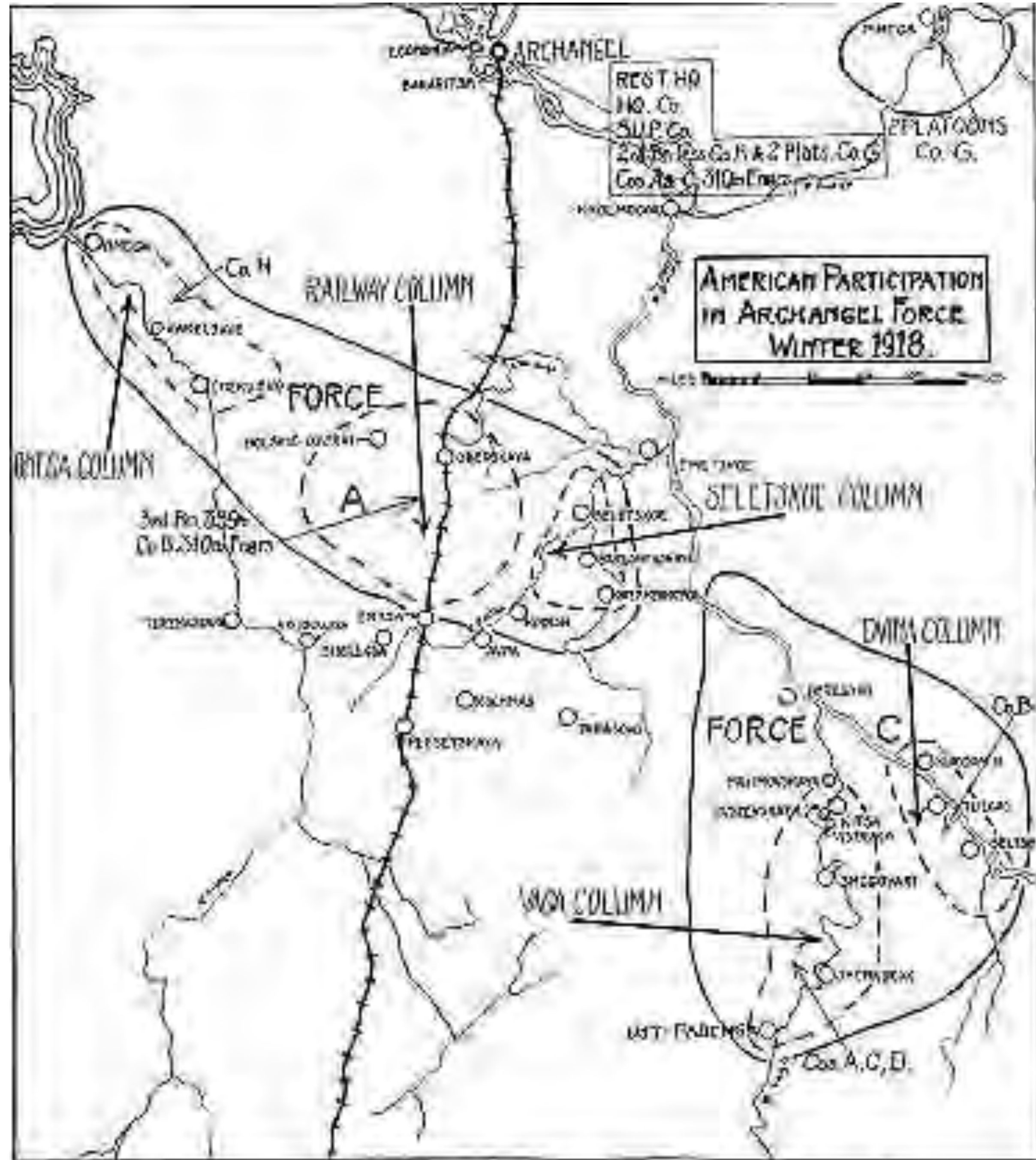
104 UMBHL, Hugh D. McPhail papers.

Appendix C[105]



Distribution of American Troops of the North Russian Expedition
During Winter of 1918

[105] UMBHL, Polar Bear Digital Collection, http://polarbears.si.umich.edu/ (Accessed 15 April, 2011).

Appendix D.[106]

[106] UMBHL, Walter I. McKenzie papers.

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