

WILSON TO KEEP FORCE IN SIBERIA

Tells Senate American Troops Must Stay to Guard the Railway.

AGREEMENT WITH JAPAN

Under It Troops Can Be With- drawn Only When American Railroad Experts Are.

WASHINGTON, July 25.—President Wilson informed the Senate today in response to a resolution by Senator Johnson, Republican, of California, that the presence of American troops in Siberia was a "vital element" in the restoration and maintenance of traffic on the Siberian Railroad, and that under the agreement with Japan they could be withdrawn only when the American railway experts operating the road were withdrawn.

The President said that Siberia could be protected from a further period of chaos and anarchy only by keeping the railroad open, and that lacking the prime essentials of life the people there were looking to the United States and the Allies for economic assistance. This already was being extended and additional supplies were to be sent forward.

Roving bands having no connection with any organized Government in Russia were menacing the railroad, and consequently its protection by the military was necessary.

Major Gen. Graves, commanding the expedition of 8,000 men, had been specifically directed not to interfere in Russian affairs, the President said, but to support wherever necessary John H. Stevens, the American railway engineer, who was carrying out the work of rehabilitating the Siberian Railroad under the direction of the Interallied Committee.

Text of the President's Message.

The President's message to the Senate reads:

"For the information of the Senate, and in response to the resolution adopted June 23, 1919, requesting the President to inform the Senate, if not incompatible with the public interest, of the reasons for sending United States soldiers to Siberia, the duties that are to be performed by these soldiers, how long they are to remain, and generally to advise the Senate of the policy of the United States Government in respect to Siberia and the maintenance of United States soldiers there, I have the honor to say that the decision to send American troops to Siberia was announced to the press on August 5, 1918, in a statement from the Acting Secretary of State, of which a copy is inclosed.

"This measure was taken in conjunction with Japan and in concert of purpose with the other allied powers, first of all to save the Czechoslovak armies which were threatened with destruction by hostile armies apparently organized by, and often largely composed of, enemy prisoners of war. The second purpose in view was to steady any efforts of the Russians at self-defense, or the establishment of law and order in which they might be willing to accept assistance.

"Two regiments of infantry, with auxiliary troops—about 8,000 effectives—comprising a total of approximately 10,000 men were sent under the command of Major Gen. William S. Graves. The troops began to arrive at Vladivostok in September, 1918.

"Considerably larger forces were dispatched by Japan at about the same time, and much smaller forces by others of the allied powers. The net result was the successful reunion of the separated Czechoslovak armies, and the substantial elimination in Eastern Siberia of the active efforts of enemy prisoners of war. A period of relative quiet then ensued.

"In February, 1919, as a conclusion of negotiations begun early in the Sum-

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mer of 1918, the United States accepted a plan proposed by Japan for the supervision of the Siberian railways by an international committee, under which committee John F. Stevens would assume the operation of the Russian Railway Service Corps. In this connection it is to be recalled that John F. Stevens, in response to a request of the Provisional Government of Russia, went to Russia in the Spring of 1917. A few months later he was made official adviser to the Minister of Ways of Communication at Petrograd under the Provisional Government.

Railway Corps Organized.

"At the request of the Provisional Government, and with the support of John F. Stevens, there was organized the so-called Russian Railway Service Corps, composed of American engineers. As originally organized the personnel of this corps constituted fourteen skeleton division units as known in this country, the idea being that these skeleton units would serve as practical advisers and assistants on fourteen different sections of the Siberian railway, and assist the Russians by their knowledge of long haul problems as known in this country, and which are the rule and not the exception in Siberia.

"Owing to the Bolshevik uprising, and the general chaotic conditions, neither Mr. Stevens nor the Russian Railway Service Corps was able to begin to work in Siberia until March, 1918. They have been able to operate effectively only since the railway plan was adopted in February, 1919.

"The most recent report from Mr. Stevens shows that on part of the Chinese Eastern and Trans-Baikal Railway he is now running six trains a day each way, while a little while ago they were only able to run that many trains per week.

"In accepting the railway plan, it was provided that some protection should be given by the allied forces. Mr. Stevens stated frankly that he would not undertake the arduous task before him unless he could rely upon support from American troops in an emergency. Accordingly, as provided in the railway plan, and with the approval of the Interallied Committee, the military commanders in Siberia have established troops where it is necessary to maintain order at different parts of the line.

"The American forces under General Graves are understood to be protecting parts of the line near Vladivostok and also on the section around Verchne Udinsk. There is also understood to be a small body of American troops at Harbin. The exact location from time to time of American troops is, however, subject to change by the direction of General Graves.

"The instructions to General Graves direct him not to interfere in Russian affairs, but to support Mr. Stevens wherever necessary. The Siberian Railroad is not only the main artery for transportation in Siberia, but it is the only open access to European Russia today. The population of Siberia, whose resources have been almost exhausted by the long years of war and the chaotic conditions which have existed there, can be protected from a further period of chaos and anarchy only by the restoration and maintenance of traffic along the Siberian Railway.

"Partisan bands under leaders having

no settled connection with any organized government and bands under leaders whose allegiance to any settled authority is apparently temporary and transitory are constantly menacing the operation of the railway, and the safety of its permanent structure.

People Look to Allies for Aid.

"The situation of the people of Siberia, meantime, is that they have no shoes or warm clothing; they are pleading for agricultural machinery, and for many of the simpler articles of commerce upon which their own domestic economy depends, and which are necessary to fruitful and productive industry among them. Having contributed their quota to the Russian armies which fought the Central Empires for three and a half years, they now look to the Allies and the United States for economic assistance.

"The population of Western Siberia and the forces of Admiral Kolchak are entirely dependent upon these railways.

"The Russian authorities in this country have succeeded in shipping large quantities of Russian supplies to Siberia and the Secretary of War is now contracting with the great co-operative societies which operate throughout European and Asiatic Russia to ship further supplies to meet the needs of the civilian population. The Kolchak Government is also endeavoring to arrange for the purchase of medical and other Red Cross supplies from the War Department, and the American Red Cross is itself attempting the forms of relief for which it is organized.

"All elements of the population in Siberia look to the United States for assistance. This assistance cannot be given to the population of Siberia, and ultimately to Russia, if the purpose entertained for two years to restore railway traffic is abandoned. The presence of American troops is a vital element in this effort. The services of Mr. Stevens depend upon it, and, a point of serious moment, the plan proposed by Japan expressly provides that Mr. Stevens and all foreign railway experts shall be withdrawn when the troops are withdrawn.

"From these observations it will be seen that the purpose of the continuance of American troops in Siberia is that we, with the concurrence of the great allied powers, may keep open a necessary artery of trade, and extend to the vast population of Siberia the economic aid essential to it in peace time, but indispensable under the conditions which have followed the prolonged and exhausting participation by Russia in the war against the Central Powers.

"This participation was obviously of incalculable value to the allied cause, and in a very particular way commends the exhausted people who suffered from it to such assistance as we can render to bring about their industrial and economic rehabilitation.

"Very respectfully yours,
(Signed) "WOODROW WILSON."