

vinces, she would have really gained the war: because in entering the war originally Germany did not expect to make her territorial advance on the western front; she expected to build her empire in the east, to open up a way through the Balkans, and to build her empire on the ruins of the Turkish Empire. Last summer, indeed, it looked as if she were in a fair way to accomplish her purpose. She had a road through the Balkans; Roumania, Serbia, Montenegro were all defeated and overrun; Bulgaria and Turkey were her allies; and with Russia practically at her feet and with her forces in Russia dominating and controlling, it looked as if Germany were going to win the war, no matter what sacrifices might be made in the west.

Mr. POWER: Are we quite sure that Germany is not now in almost the same position with regard to Russia?

Mr. ROWELL: I am not quite sure that she is not. But take the situation as it then existed; if the Allies permitted Germany to retain her position, as it then looked, we would have lost the benefits of the war notwithstanding all the sacrifices we had made, and Germany would have had opened for exploitation not only the provinces on her eastern border containing fifty or sixty million people, but the whole Russian Empire. The state of disorganization which then existed in Russia was just the opportunity for the organizing genius of Germany, and her representatives penetrated the whole country. The Allied Council were unanimous in the view that they could not, if they were to succeed in this war, permit Germany's influence to continue unchecked in the east; that they would have to lend assistance in the way of men to the Czecho-Slovaks in their great fight, and that they would have to endeavour to re-establish the eastern front so as to compel Germany to fight on that front as well as on the West. They felt it incumbent upon them to give assistance to the independent governments which were springing up throughout Russia, in the North, in the South, and in Siberia, and which were combatting German influence and intrigue. All these reasons combined led the Allies to intervene.

Mr. POWER: If I understand the minister aright, the reasons for Allied intervention in Siberia were: first, to relieve the pressure on the western front by building an eastern front; second, to support the Czecho-Slovaks. Does the minister think it would be possible to relieve the pressure

[Mr. Rowell.]

on the western front by asking the Czecho-Slovaks to retreat on the eastern front and take boats from Vladivostok around to the western front? Secondly, does he think that we were relieving the pressure on the Czecho-Slovaks by sending a brigade of British troops some six months after the time of the greatest pressure on the western front? This decision to intervene was, I understand, arrived at sometime in June or July.

Mr. ROWELL: In July.

Mr. POWER: The Canadian troops—and I understand they form a large portion of the British troops in Siberia—did not reach Vladivostok until some time in October when all danger was over, and they were not in anything like sufficient numbers to give real support to the Czecho-Slovaks. The Czecho-Slovaks were not attempting to fight on the eastern front, they were, from what I understand, coming east to take boats to bring them back to the western front, so that I cannot see any real reason for this intervention.

Mr. ROWELL: I am sorry, I evidently have not made myself clear, or my hon. friend did not follow me. I said that the original plan of the Czecho-Slovaks was to come through Siberia to Vladivostok, take boats to France, and there fight on the western front.

Mr. POWER: That would not be organizing the eastern front.

Mr. ROWELL: At that time it was assumed that the Government of Russia was friendly to the Czecho-Slovaks and was friendly to the Allies. It proved that the Russian Government was friendly neither to the Czecho-Slovaks nor to the Allies. They intercepted the passage of the Czecho-Slovaks who could not get out and had to fight for their lives there, and that changed the whole situation.

But when my hon. friend asks me whether I think this or that in regard to matters of strategy, I say frankly that they are for the Supreme War Council and Marshal Foch to decide. I have not, and do not pretend to have, any opinions on military strategy. On the question of where the fight must be fought, where the armies must be placed, and where troops must be sent we must accept the advice of the supreme military advisers.

Mr. VIEN: Did I not understand the minister to say that he was consulted as to