

Canadian division in the field, so that Canada would then have five divisions in the field. After canvassing the whole situation thoroughly with General Currie, with the Overseas Minister of Militia, and General Turner, the ministers overseas reached the conclusion that we would not be justified in putting another division in the field, urgently as that division might be needed, and for this principal reason: that if we put five divisions in the field, and our troops were as heavily engaged as the British army had been engaged during the preceding two or three months, we would not have sufficient reinforcements available to make up the wastage. We therefore came to the conclusion that it was wiser policy to retain sufficient reinforcements to make good the wastage, and to keep the four divisions we had in the field up to strength, and therefore the four divisions continued.

Now, when it was decided to send forces to Siberia, the War Office asked the representatives of Canada if we would take part in that expedition. That information was communicated to the Government at Ottawa, and the decision that Canada should take part in that expedition was reached by the Cabinet in session here at Ottawa. That decision was concurred in by the Canadian ministers who were overseas at the time.

Mr. LEMIEUX: Was Sir Robert Borden overseas then?

Mr. ROWELL: Yes.

Mr. POWER: What were the principal reasons which led the Cabinet to concur in this request of the British Government?

Mr. ROWELL: I shall have to outline the situation, because it was the situation that then existed that made necessary, in the first place, Allied intervention, and, secondly, Canada's taking part in it. The Germans at that time were still advancing on the Western front, and the belief on the Allied side then was that we had not sufficient troops then available to beat Germany on the Western front if Germany had an absolutely free hand in the East and was not required to devote any of her attention there. That was one factor in the situation.

Another factor was the position of the Czecho-Slovaks. As my hon. friend is aware, the Czecho-Slovak troops were composed of Austrian soldiers from Bohemia who had either voluntarily surrendered to Russia, or had been captured as prisoners of war, and by reason of their hostility to Austria because of centuries of oppression of their race in Bohemia, were willing to make war against Austria, their

former ruler. They organized into armed forces and they had in Russia, altogether in June or July last approximately 300,000 men. It was originally planned that these Czecho-Slovaks should march through to Vladivostok, there take steamer and form part of the fighting army on the Western front; and Great Britain, I believe, provided at least some steamers to bring this force from Vladivostok to the Western front to take part in the war there. As a matter of fact, they were interrupted in their progress to Vladivostok by the Bolsheviks who broke faith with them, and the principal forces fighting against them were German prisoners and Austrian prisoners of German nationality who had also been captured by Russia, but who were led by German officers nominally of Bolshevik regiments. During three or four months in the late winter and spring of 1918, these Czecho-Slovaks had put up a magnificent fight; they had hurled back these Austrian and German forces, prisoners of war, who were seeking to control the Siberian railway and who were helping to maintain German influence in Russia. When they could not make their way through to Vladivostok, they appealed to the Allies for help to relieve them in their position. They needed re-inforcements, munitions and support. The Allies recognized the Czecho-Slovaks as a nation, as one of the Allies fighting in this war, and here was a magnificent band of men, who had been helping to win the battle for freedom, fighting against great odds in Russia and Siberia, who were appealing for help. All the Allies felt that they could not permit that request to go unanswered; that they could not permit the Czecho-Slovaks to appeal in vain. They were our Allies and were in distress; they needed assistance.

A third reason was this. Under the Brest-Litovsk Treaty the western provinces of Russia had been severed from Russia. Those provinces, with a population of from fifty to sixty million people contained the finest farming land and the great industrial centres of Russia. While they had been severed from Russia by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, they had come under German domination and control. If Germany could have retained the advantages she gained under that treaty she could have given up Alsace-Lorraine; she could have consented to an independent kingdom of Poland; she could have withdrawn her troops from Belgium; she could have restored Serbia; yet, by the dominant position she had in Russia and the area for development and expansion in these pro-