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Digging up Old Stories: How the Soviet Myths of Allied Intervention into the Russian North in 1918–1919 are used in the Context of Russia's War in Ukraine. The Case of Mudyug Concentration Camp Museum

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Abstract. The mythology of the foreign interference into the Russian civil war goes to the heart of the memory politics in Putin's Russia today, most recently in connection with the invasion in Ukraine. In a bid to unite the country against perceived threats from the NATO alliance, the Russian leadership engages Soviet narratives going back to the Allied intervention into North Russia in 1918–1920, as a deterrent against association with the West. During Soviet times multiple memorials were created in the North to the victims of intervention in support of this narrative. Central to it was the Mudyug 'concentration camp' museum, established to demonstrate the atrocities of the intervention forces. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union this museum was branded as propaganda and eventually got decommissioned. Yet after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent war with Ukraine, the old intervention narratives saw a comeback. Backed by the state, the local memory activists in Arkhangelsk in North Russia took to restoring the Mudyug camp museum as a forepost of patriotic tourism in the region.

Key words: First World War, Allied military intervention into Russia, Russian civil war, memory activism, memory politics, propaganda, Arkhangelsk.

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„Atrastos“ senos istorijos: sovietmečio mitai apie 1918–1919 m. Vakarų sąjungininkų intervenciją į Rusijos šiaurę karo Ukrainoje kontekste. Mudjugo koncentracijos stovyklos muziejaus atvejis

Santrauka. Mitai apie užsienio šalių kišimąsi į 1918–1920 m. Rusijos pilietinį karą yra Putino Rusijos atminties politikos šerdis. Pastaruoju metu jie ypač plačiai naudojami Rusijos invazijos į Ukrainą kontekste. Siekdamas suvienyti šalį prieš tariamą NATO aljanso grėsmę, Putino režimas kaip atgrasymo nuo ryšių su Vakarais priemonę pasitelkia sovietmečio naratyvus apie 1918–1920 m. sąjungininkų intervenciją į Šiaurės Rusiją. Sovietmečiu Rusijos šiaurėje šios intervencijos aukoms buvo pastatyta daugybė paminklų, kuriais siekta įtvirtinti šį naratyvą. Iš jų svarbiausias – Mudjugo (rus. *Мудьюг*) „koncentracijos stovyklos“ muziejus, įkurtas norint parodyti Vakarų sąjungininkų intervencijos žiaurumą. Žlugus Sovietų Sąjungai Mudjugo muziejus buvo pavadintas propagandos įrankiu ir ilgainiui panaikintas, tačiau 2014 m., Rusijai aneksavus Krymą ir pradėjus karą Ukrainoje, senieji intervencijos naratyvai atgijo. Valstybės remiami vietiniai Šiaurės Rusijos Archangelsko miesto atminties aktyvistai atkūrė Mudjugo koncentracijos stovyklos muziejų ir pavertė jį patriotinio turizmo šiame regione forpostu.
Raktiniai žodžiai: Pirmasis pasaulinis karas, sąjungininkų karinė intervencija į Rusiją, Rusijos pilietinis karas, atminties aktyvizmas, atminties politika, propaganda, Archangelskas.

Introduction

In late September 2020 the sparse woods along the Northern Railway between the stations of Yemtsa and Obozerskaya in Arkhangelsk Region, 800 km north of Moscow, got filled with people in military fatigues, accompanied by the local press and a moderate group of enthusiasts. There, among the tall fir trees and excavated trenches, an amateur paramilitary search group going by the name of Bayonet Decides installed a panoramic display along what they call a Yuryev defence line: a set of wooden barricades, scraps of rusted barbed wire, shell fragments, blueprints of the area and enlarged archival photographs – in the memory of the conflict between the Soviet Russia and the West, which happened more than a century ago at the end of the WWI.

The ceremony, which was filmed by one of the participants of the event,[1] opened with the "echo of war" ritual shout-out: initiated by the head of the Bayonet Decides, it was echoed by a child, dressed in camouflage. Along came solemn speeches leading to the ceremonial unveiling of the newly erected Defenders of the North memorial – two black marble plates bearing the names of the Red Army soldiers from the Yuryev regiment of the 6th Army, who, in October 1918, fought here against what they referred to as 'foreign invaders' – mainly American and British. The ceremony, elaborately scripted, failed to mention one crucial fact: this particular episode was part of the Russian civil war, in which both sides believed they were defending the North against each other.

The unveiling of the new memorial crowned the all-Russia historical conference, which took place in Arkhangelsk to mark 100 years since the official end of the civil war and the foreign intervention into the country. The conference was intended to have an international presence, but this was disrupted by COVID-19 epidemic. Answering the question of why the new memorial was needed, Vladimir Medinsky, aide to the Russian president and head of the Russian Military Historical Society (RMHS), an organisation that sponsored the project, said: "These lessons are very relevant even now, when they (the Western countries) are trying to cordon off Russia in the same way as the Entente[2] powers once tried... And various conflicting domestic forces are turning to the West in the hope of getting help."[3]

The lesson that Mr Medinsky was referring to occurred in connection with the episode known as Allied military intervention into

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1 *Russkiy Sever*, Юрьевский Рубеж ['Yuryevsky Rubezh'], filmed on 11 September, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRZ7CXxwXe4.

2 In the Russian historiography the Allied countries are called "Entente" countries, in reference to association between Great Britain, France and Russia, the nucleus of the Allied Powers in the WWI.

3 *Pomotye TV*, "Сегодня в Архангельске открылась Всероссийская научная конференция" ["An All-Russia Scientific Conference Was Opened in Arkahgelsk Today"], published on 10 September, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0lQoME8b4g.

North Russia in 1918–1920. In March of 1918 Soviet Russia exited WWI, but the German threat in the Barents Sea continued. To offset the threat and defend the military munitions supplied to the Russian Empire in large numbers, the Allied Powers, primarily the United Kingdom, France, United States and Italy decided to intervene in the North.[4]

This was done initially in agreement with the Soviets, and later in alliance with the representatives of the anti-communist forces known as the Whites, whom they considered the successors of Imperial Russia. The foreign military – first the British, followed by the Americans, the French and representatives of other 14 countries – arrived in the arctic port of Murmansk in March 1818. On 2 of August they disembarked at Arkhangelsk, where a day before an anti-Bolshevik coup had been staged and the Supreme Government of the Northern *Oblast* (Region) had been formed. From then on and until the end of October, 1919 Arkhangelsk as well as part of the wider region, fell under full control of the Allied forces.

The change of power was followed by arrests – of Bolsheviks, their sympathisers and those persons whose identity and alliance raised questions. The detainees were first held in the regional prison, but it quickly ran out of capacity, and the allies, in agreement with the provisional White Russian government, decided to establish a POW detention camp on the island of Mudyug in the White Sea, approximately 45 km from Arkhangelsk. This was not the only camp in the area, but probably the most notorious. In Soviet memory politics it became the poster for the alleged atrocities of the intervention forces. Multiple legends surrounded the Mudyug camp during Soviet times, including that of the deplorable living conditions, of harsh and degrading treatment of the detainees, of the intentional starvation and medical neglect. These were based, mainly, on the recollections of prisoners gathered in the early 1920s. Kept in the former Communist Party archive in Arkhan-

[4] Milner Archive, Joint Note No. 31. Joint Note to the Supreme War Council by its Military Representatives. Allied Intervention at Russian Arctic Ports. Great War Papers 1914–1918, Box D.4: 214–215.

gelsk, these accounts were heavily edited in support of the White terror narrative and that of the people's struggle against intervention forces. Multiple memorials were installed across the region in the memory of the victims of intervention. The most notable was the museum of the Revolution of the Northern Region created on the site of the former Mudyug camp. For decades it served as a beacon of patriotic education, receiving organised tours from across the area.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union this museum was branded as propaganda, got decommissioned and went into decay. Yet, since the late 2000s, and certainly after the Russian invasion in Ukraine in 2014, the old narratives of the foreign interference into Russian political affairs saw a comeback. In that context, the memory of the Allied intervention in the North became relevant once more and this created an opportunity for the local mnemonic activists to revive the Mudyug campsite.

This essay explores how the local memory actors, with support of the state, exploit the persisting intervention myths, in particular relating to Mudyug POW camp. It also looks into the new memory formats that are being developed for the benefit of anti-West propaganda, using Allied intervention as a cautionary tale. Finally, it discusses why at this day and age there is the need to literally dig out the old story and memorialise it in such a one-sided way, ignoring the legacy of the civil war in the area, which largely has been unexplored.

The present work is based on private papers examined for the first time, oral history collections, in particular the one gathered by the author as part of the *White North* podcast project;[5] textual analysis of the local publications in Arkhangelsk region – historical and modern; news sources; as well as military reports, correspondence, newspaper archives and materials from the State Archives of Arkhangelsk Region (GAOO) and that of the Russian Federation (GARF); as well as Bodleian library, University of Oxford and Bentley Memorial Library, Bolton TC.

[5] Natalia Deis, "Белый Север. Документальный аудиосериал" ["White North. Documentary Audio Series"], Geyser Media, 2020, https://whitenorthpodcast.com/

Since the private documents and interviews stem from the opposite sides and display emotionally charged accounts, they often embellish the facts, make inconsistent statements and are taken with caution, unless corroborated by other sources. The sparsity of such sources, as well as editorialised accounts make it difficult to present an accurate statement of facts. Still, this paper will highlight the similarities between the propaganda of the early Soviet and late-Putin era in relation to the Allied intervention story by exploring how the old narratives are being used to push forward Russia's current political agenda.

1. The museum

The camp on the Mudyug Island is the only remaining camp in Russia dating back to WWI. Initially set up by the Allied forces in August, 1918 as a POW camp, where detainees were kept for the period of investigation and until their trial or release, in May of 1919 it was transferred to the care of the local Provisional Government, which turned it into a hard labour criminal prison. In September of 1919, after an attempted escape which resulted in the death of 24 prisoners, the camp was permanently closed and the remaining prisons transferred to another facility in the Kola peninsula in Murmansk region, off the coast of Barents Sea.

Mudyug camp site is well preserved up to this day and bears traces of the original detention facility, including the solid wood barracks, a solitary confinement and watchtowers with barbed wire fences. It is not surprising that the Soviet authorities chose to turn it into a museum to demonstrate the 'horrors of intervention,' although the conditions of detention there were arguably better during the 9 months that it was administered by the allies, as compared to when it operated as a local prison.

On 12 August 1928, a monument To the Victims of Intervention was opened on Mudyug Island to commemorate those who died there. With a height of 17.5 metres, it took about 200 thousand pounds of

granite and cement to build it. Around 5 thousand people gathered at the opening of the monument. In 1958 a new 24.5 metres high obelisk monument was erected on a hill in the southern part of the island, made of granite, cast iron and concrete. An inscription at its pedestal says: "To the glorious patriots, tortured by interventionists on Mudjug Island, 1918–1920." The obelisk faces the White sea, crowned by a five-pointed star, with a sickle and hammer on its front side.

In 1934 the Museum of the Revolution of the Northern Region was opened on the island, which in 1938 was merged with the Arkhangelsk Regional Lore Museum and became known as the "Museum of Penal Labor." This museum became a memorial place seeing regular tourist groups throughout the 1950s–1970s. In 1940, it was temporarily closed down due to the placement of an air defence artillery unit on the island, and resumed its function on June 15, 1973.

Due to the arctic weather conditions, the museum operated seasonally from July to September and was exclusively designed for guided tours. On average, between 200 and 400 tours attended the island per season, with a record of 900 tours in 1989. The statistics were based on three tours per organised trip: an information session on the boat, a museum exhibition tour, and a memorial tour. As such, the 900 recorded tours corresponded to 300 organised tour groups. A museum exhibition tour was essentially a one room displaying photographs of the notable prisoners and their biographies, alongside some information about the camp, for the benefit of patriotic education. The memorial tour across the barracks and solitary confinement had displays of quotes from the prisoners' accounts, with descriptive information strategically placed inside, like the scarce menu and the information on the numbers of prisoners hosted at any given time.

In 1982 the memorial underwent some restoration and repair work. After the collapse of the USSR, the museum was labelled as "communist propaganda" and the tours eventually discontinued in 1993. Since then the museum was in a state of conservation, but in reality it was abandoned and went into a decay: the 25-metre obelisk has lost some of its rocks, the reliefs from its stela have fallen off, and the graves of

the executed prisoners have been piled up. In 1998, the Arkhangelsk Regional Committee for Culture excluded the camp site from the registry of historical and cultural monuments, and at the same time the river route to the island was closed. On May 10, 2012 due to downsizing and reorganisation, the Mudyug department was removed from the balance of the Arkhangelsk Regional Lore Museum.

For a number of years Mudyug remained the attraction site for the adventurous travellers eager enough to get here on their own. After the Russian invasion in Crimea in 2014 and the imposition of the foreign sanctions, Russia declared itself a 'fortress under siege' and new narratives were needed in response to the political agenda. Thus, the question of foreign interference into Russia's internal affairs took central place in the anti-West propaganda, bringing the story of allied intervention into the Russian North back to the limelight.

Seizing the opportunity, the local patriotic paramilitary groups in Arkhangelsk such as the search and trophy diggers team Bayonet Decides, NGO "Victory" and publishing house "Pomorskaya Stolitsa," all headed by the same actors, took the opportunity to revive the memory of Allied intervention in the region. In 2020 a new memorial to Defenders of the North was erected in the woods between Yemtsa and Obozerskaya station, supported by the Military History Society. In 2022 Bayonet Decides group announced the receipt of the presidential grant for "Ecology of Memory," a project aimed at restoring the Mudyug camp museum to its former glory, together with building of additional infrastructure for its use.[6] In 2023 reconstruction began at Mudyug Island, with an ambition voiced by the governor of Arkhangelsk region – to make it a new centre of patriotic tourism in the North.[7]

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6 *Pomorye TV*, "Мудьюг – от «Острова смерти» к «Острову возрождения»" ["Mudgyug – from the "death island" to the "island of revival"], published on 31.07.22, https://www.pomorie.ru/2022/07/31/62e4fcc4fdf223ddff68a072.html.

7 Official site of the President of Russia, "Рабочая встреча с губернатором Архангельской области Александром Цыбульским" ["Working meeting with governor of Arkhangelsk Region Alexander Tsibulsky"], published on 10.02.23, http://special.kremlin.ru/catalog/keywords/63/events/70495.

2. The myths

In order to revive the memory of Mudyug camp in the current spin, various patriotic forces in Arkhangelsk region resurfaced the old myths previously dismissed as propaganda. In the Soviet mythology Mudyug site was billed as the 'first concentration camp in Russia,' with emphasis on this idea being unheard of in Russia before it was allegedly introduced by the British. It was also described as a 'death camp' based on a number of former prisoners' accounts.

Myths about Mudyug as a 'death camp,' blooming in vibrant colours in the 1920s–1950s, actually started to emerge as early as 1919. On July 18th, the newspaper "Komunist" published by the Cherepovets *gubispolkom* and *gubkom* (regional committee) of the Russian Communist Party, featured an article by V. Chadaev, where the author wrote that on Mudyug "the British and the Whites of Akrhangelsk got tired of dealing with "the people." They didn't want to waste bullets and decided to end them all at once. Three prison barracks were doused with kerosene and set on fire. 360 highly skilled peasants and workers were burned alive."[8]

The myth of the "360 highly skilled workers and peasants burnt alive" was so outrageous that the communists tried to not mention it ever again. Yet there were other, more viable myths, which were aggressively promulgated – that mass shootings were regularly carried out in Mudyug; that hundreds of prisoners died from freezing, forced starvation and medical neglect; that only Bolsheviks and those who sympathised with them were imprisoned; that once you get sent to Mudyug, there is no way back, and so on. These myths turned out to be very persistent and easily fit the current Russian government memory agenda. The subsequent section will examine some of the evidence in relation to those myths.

[8] V. Chadaev, "Поток и разграбление. Из операций союзников в России" ["Flow and Plunder. From the Allies' operations in Russia"], *Kommunist*, July 19, 1919, No. 125, 1–2.

2.1. The 'first concentration camp' in Russia

It is not surprising that since the British began to set up prisoners of war camps during the Boer War of 1899–1902, they carried this experience over to Russia in a similar way. Those POW camps operated under the 1907 Hague convention, which prescribed the rules for the treatment of prisoners. It was not a 'concentration camp' in the usual sense of the word: the arrested were allowed to move around the site and receive parcels and mail. In his correspondence with the relative of a prisoner, lieutenant Ernest Beaux, a counterintelligence officer, who supervised the camp, wrote: "The living conditions of those arrested on Mudyug Island are incomparably better than the (local) prison regime. Once a week personal items and newspapers are sent to the arrested, which can be delivered to Troitsky, 78 Room 6 daily."[9]

The camp was set up on 27 August, 1918 in response to the need to expand the regional prison and isolate those detainees who could potentially be a bad influence on the others. On 13 August 1918 the Government Commissar of Arkhangelsk Province asked the investigation commission to make a list of people who should be sent to the island for isolation to "exclude their influence on other detainees."[10]

Around the same time, the Soviet government was toying with the idea of opening concentration camps across the country to contain anti-Bolshevik sentiment. The order dated August 8, 1918 by the People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, L.D. Trotsky, stated: "The appointed head of defence on the Moscow–Kazan railway, comrade Kamenshchikov, ordered the establishment of concentration camps in Murom, Arzamas, and Sviyazhsk, where shady agitators, counter-revolutionary officers, saboteurs, parasites, speculators, and others, excluding those who will be executed at the scene

9 Ernest Beaux to Head of the Special Investigation Commission, 12 September, 1918, F3691. Op1, D105, 108, GARF, Moscow.

10 Government Commissar of Arkhangelsk Province to the Investigation Commission, 13 August 1918. F3691. Op1, D105, p. 66, GARF, Moscow.

of the crime or sentenced by the Military Revolutionary Tribunal to other punishments, will be held."[11]

Similarly, the order of Vldimir Lenin to the Penza *gubispolkom* indicates that the new government has turned to constructing a new system of punitive institutions in the form of concentration camps. This order appeared almost simultaneously with Trotsky's order on August 9 of the same year. Lenin, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, demanded to "carry out ruthless mass terror against the kulaks, priests, and White Guards, and to lock up the doubtful ones in a concentration camp outside the city."[12]

In that sense, the idea of setting up concentration camps for the enemies of the Soviet state was already on the Bolshevik's agenda, regardless of the allied efforts in handling prisoners of war.

2.2. The Alleged atrocities

The Soviet historiography and popular belief billed Mudyug as a "death camp" experience, where inmates were kept in overcrowded conditions, half-starved, deprived of medical necessities and were arbitrarily killed.

In his memoirs published in 1922, Vladimir Igantiev, member of the Provisional government of the Northern Oblast, commented on his visit to the Mudyug Island around May of 1919 saying that he found the inmates looking gaunt, suffering from scurvy and typhoid. "My general perception was striking – those were walking dead, waiting for their turn," writes Ignatiev.[13] He counted 78 graves not far from the barracks, which, he says "gives a large percentage

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11 G. M. Ivanov, I. V. Udovenko, "Proto-GULAG. Bolshevik Concentration Camps during the Civil War years", in *Russia during the Civil War, 1917–1922: Essays on History and Historiography* (Russian Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2018), 151–182.

12 V.I.Lenin, *Full Collection of Writings*, Vol. 50, pp. 143–144, http://uaio.ru/vil/50.htm

13 V.I.Ignatiev, *Некоторые факты и итоги 4х лет гражданской войны (1917–1921*) [Some facts and outcomes of the civil war (1917–1921)], part I (Moscow, Gosudarstvennoye Izdatelstvo, 1922), 45.

of deaths for 200–300 people."[14] According to Ignatiev, as a result of this visit he demanded that the camp be handed over to the Provisional government, or he would make his account public.

Ignatiev's testimony contradicts the report by Major-General Edmund Ironside, then Commander-in-chief of the Allied forces in Arkhangelsk. On 8 July, 1919 a copy of his official report was circulated in the UK's Parliament by the Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill. He quoted it when he was asked about the conditions existing in the concentration camp for suspected Bolsheviks at Mudyg Island (erroneously stated as Muding).[15] According to the report, "there has never been any overcrowding on the island, and <...> considering the state of things when the medical authorities took over in October, they carried out their work most efficiently. Staff and medical officers of the British Command made constant visits to the island, and all the necessary medicines were provided. <...> All sick were treated in exactly the same way as our own cases in hospital. <...> The daily rations, as of November 1918 included 11 ozs. flour, 7¼ ozs. rice, jam or beans, 7¼ ozs. meat or herrings, 1¾ ozs. bacon or pork, ¾ oz. salt, 1/320 gallons lime juice, ¼ oz. tea, 1 oz. sugar."

According to prisoners' reports, diseases like scurvy were commonplace in other prisons in Arkhangelsk[16] and could not be attributed solely to the situation in Mudyug. There is also no evidence of torture or executions carried out during the time of Mudyug's operations as a POW camp. However, due to the harsh arctic conditions and general lack of food and medication in the region, it is likely that a number of prisoners had not survived the winter. Former Arkhangelsk Lore museum worker Alexey Denisov, while studying the history of Mudyug camp, came to the conclusion that during its existence 450 prisoners passed through it, of whom 93–100 died of

14 V.I.Ignatiev, Ibid.

15 House of Commons Hansard archives. Concentration Camp, Muding Island, Archangel. Debated on Tuesday 8 July, 1919, Volume 117, Cc1595-7.

16 Pavel Rasskazov, *Записки Заключенного* [Notes of a Prisoner], (Akrhangelsk Istpart Publishing, 1928), 91–92.

hunger and disease.[17] However, other, Soviet time authors suggest there were over 1,000 who passed through the camp during its entire existence.[18]

Since the Mudyug camp was turned over to the Provisional government, the POW convention did not apply to it and the conditions there hardened. The camp was closed after the mass escape of the prisoners in September 1919, during which 24 people lost their lives: 11 were killed during the escape attempt and 13 were executed the day after. The remaining prisoners were transferred to Yokanga camp in the abandoned fishing settlement on the Kola Peninsula, which became infamous for the severe treatment of prisoners. Despite the fact that both of these camps – Mudyug and Yokanga – were administered by the White government at the time of escape and execution, the Soviet legends attributed its horrors to the interventionists.

Apart from Ignatiev testimony, the sources of the Mudyug myths come from the collection of written stories of former prisoners, which were recorded in the 1920s. According to Igor Gostev, head of the military history department of Arkhangelsk Lore Museum,"back then, legends were needed in favour of the authorities, and even if a person stayed at Mudyug for a day, he was entitled to a pension. And all these tales were written down, then put together, artistically processed and published by the political publishing houses and thus entered the scientific circulation."[19]

The examination of the recollections of the former prisoners, kept in the Arkhangelsk Regional Communist Party Archives (now part

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17 Sergey Nekrasov, "На Мудьюге начаты работы" ["Works have started on Mudyug"], Vaga-Land (blog), published on July 23, 2022, https://vaga-land.livejournal.com/1445597.html.

18 A. I. Potylitsyn, *Belyi terror na Severe 1918–1920* [White Terror in the North 1918–1920] (Arkhangel'sk, Severnoe kraevoe izd-vo, 1931), pp. 45–53, 63–71; Pavel Rasskazov, *Записки Заключенного* [Notes of a Prisoner], (Akrhangelsk Istpart Publishing, 1928), 12.

19 Igor Gostev, interviewed by Natalia Deis, "Белый Север документальный аудиосериал", эп. 6 «Остров Смерти» [White North podcast, ep.6 'Death Island'], Geyser Media, October 25, 2020. Audio, https://www.whitenorthpodcast.com/s1e6/.

of GAAO), supports this finding. Many documents are written in the same pattern: first come personal impressions, followed by ideologically vetted analysis, which is copied from one testimony to another, and topped by editorial corrections of the censor. For example, when former prisoner Andryukhin writes: "On day fifteen I was allowed into the barracks, but I could not exit the punishment cell because I was blown away by the wind, and had to crawl. That small, but big for me, ration, gave me dysentery." – the censor, using red colour ink, scribes on top of the original text: "<...> *I was too weak to walk*", and deletes the mention that the ration was "*big*" for the prisoner.[20]

2.3. The Island of Death

The myth of the "island of death" was firmly established through the recollections of a Bolshevik prisoner Pavel Rasskazov. A talented journalist, and deputy head of the Commission for the Nationalisation of the Merchant Fleet, he arrived at Mudyug on 27 August 1918 with the first party of detainees. In his memoirs *Notes of a Prisoner* he describes his first day in jail: "We are hungry: not a crumb in our mouths since morning. After long negotiations they give us two dry bread crackers each and roll a dirty, smelly fish barrel into the barrack. They pour raw swamp water into it. We greedily pounce and drink."[21] Thanks to this colourful narrative Pavel Rasskazov's book still remains one of the most popular items at Arkhangelsk regional library. However, it fails to mention the fact that in 1918–1919 the lack of food was everywhere in the region and above all it affected the White army, as well as the civilian population.

The prisoners were accommodated in wooden barracks, one of which, 20 metres long and 12 metres wide, has been preserved to this day. This barrack was built in 1915 for the purposes of hosting the Rus-

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20 A. Andryukhin, "Воспоминания о мудьюгской каторге" ["Recollections of the Mudyug lard labour camp"], F4950, GAAO

21 Pavel Rasskazov, *Записки Заключенного* [Notes of a Prisoner], (Akrhangelsk Istpart Publishing, 1928), 60.

sian artillery.[22] It was made of solid wood, had double glazing and warm stoves, so the conditions were winter proof and could not have been worse than the conditions the White Russian soldiers were stationed in. Inside the barrack there are bunk beds with super narrow berths, hardly suited for an adult man. The origin of those berths has not been confirmed, as during WWII the barracks were once again transformed for the needs of the coastal defence artillery, so the age of the bunk beds is unclear. Yet they have consistently been presented to the public as an example of prisoner abuse during the time of the intervention.[23]

Rasskazov's memoir is considered the main testimony of the events and is taken for granted. However, new documents recently discovered in France in the private family archive of the former counterintelligence officer Ernest Beaux give reason to doubt it.

Ernest Beaux was a Moscow born French perfumer, the creator of iconic Chanel No. 5 scent, which he said he had discovered while serving in the army in the depth of the Russian North.[24] He arrived in Arkhangelsk in August, 1918 as a counterintelligence officer in charge of supervising the prisoners' of war camps, including the one in Mudyug.

In an interview to the *White North podcast,*[25] an oral history investigation of the events by the author of this paper, his granddaughter Natalie Beaux says: "My grandfather brought explanations and testimonies of people, which confirmed that his task was to collect as much information about the detainees as possible and pass it to the court in Arkhangelsk. And then it was up to the court to decide whether a person was guilty or innocent. As far as I understand, he

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22 P. Bykov, *Военные действия на Северном русском морском театре в империалистическую войну 1914–1918 гг.* [Military action in the Russian navy theatre during Imperial War of 1914–1918] (VMA RKKF, Leningrad, 1939), 29.

23 "На острове Мудьюг восстанавливают историю времен интервенции на русском Севере" ["History of Intervention is being restored in the Russian North"], *Dvina News*, published 24 august, 2023, https://dvinanews.ru/news/detail/8006

24 Karl Schlögel, *The Scent of Empires: Chanel No. 5 and Red Moscow* (Polity Press, 2021).

25 Natalie Beaux, interviewed by Natalia Deis, "Белый Север документальный аудиосериал", эп. 6 «Остров Смерти» [White North podcast, ep. 6 'Death Island'], Geyser Media, October 25, 2020. Audio, https://www.whitenorthpodcast.com/s1e6/.

gave them notebooks and they could write whatever they wanted. That was his method – he got information not by torture, but by persuasion. He asked them to explain what they had done during the Civil War." Judging by Beaux' notes, his job was quite tricky – he had to distinguish the people's character and intentions and gather enough evidence, before submitting it to court. This often meant that people had to stay in detention for many months, yet the evidence of due process contradicts the notion of the use of terror as a prisoner interrogation method and of arbitrary executions without trial.

This is extremely important, previously unknown, evidence. There has been speculation and anecdotal evidence that the Whites did not have time to remove the prisoners' papers and they fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks. But then their traces are lost. They were likely destroyed in order to create a myth of ruthless White terror. However, it turns out that Ernest Beaux did manage to save some documentary evidence. The family have not been willing to allow the actual papers for examination at this time. Yet, according to the granddaughter's testimony, Beaux brought with him copies of two people's files and, in particular, the detainee's journal. "He wrote that he had been visited by Beaux. From all appearances, Beaux was inquiring about his well-being and health. The arrestee had a kidney problem. Beaux offered to transfer him to the hospital ward, but he refused because he could have been worse off there, he could have caught something else. Of course he had no sympathy for Beaux, but he didn't talk about any violence or atrocities," says Nathalie.[26]

The examination of the fate of the prisoner in question confirms this account. The prisoner's name was Ivan Ivanovich Khrisanfov.[27] He was born in Kharkov Province. He was made an officer for his services during WWI. At some point Khrisanfov found himself in a situation where, in order to survive, he was forced to wear the uniform of a fallen Red Army soldier, and so fell under investigation. As a result of the trial, Ivan Khrisanfov was released from punishment.

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26 Nathalie Beaux, Ibid.

27 Khrisanfov, Ivan Ivanovich, biographical note, https://ria1914.info/index.php/Хрисанфов_иван_иванович

Bolshevik Pavel Rasskazov, on the contrary, was convicted. His case, deposited in the Arkhangelsk Communist Party archive, states that in July 1919, Rasskazov was sentenced to hard labour for participation in nationalisation of the merchant fleet.[28]

The testimonies of Khrisanfov and Rasskazov directly contradict each other. But it must be remembered that the first was an officer, accidentally caught in the millstones of the Civil War, and the second was a convinced revolutionary, so the truth must be somewhere in the middle.

At the same time, there are very significant inaccuracies in Rasskazov's book, which puts doubt over his entire account. For example, the surviving records in the Arkhangelsk regional prison admissions registry show that from August 1918 to November 1919, 9 thousand 760 arrestees passed through the prison, many of them were transferred there more than once.[29] That is by no means 28 thousand people[30] as Rasskazov claims in his book. The reason for such a mistake could be that Rasskazov wrote his memoirs while he was a prisoner in France and had no access to verifiable information, but it did not prevent him from disseminating the arbitrary figures.

3. Civil war memorialisation

The Soviet doctrine, which has survived to this day,[31] presented the civil war in the region as a consequence of the intervention; and the

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28 Ордер об арестовании и приговор белогвардейского суда П. Рассказову и другим Советским партийцам [Arrest warrant and White guard court sentence to P. Rasskazov and other Soviet party members]. GAAO, F8660, OP3, No 741.

29 A. Poteplitsyn, *Белый террор на Севере в 1918–1920 гг.* [White Terror in the North in 1918–1920] (Arkhangelsk, 1931), pp. 21–22.

30 Pavel Rasskazov, *Записки Заключенного* [Notes of a Prisoner], (Akrhangelsk Istpart Publishing, 1928), p. 12.

31 "Вмешательство иностранных государств во внутреннюю политику России: исторический аспект." Материалы к круглому столу фракции КПРФ. Государственная Дума Российской Федерации. ["Foreign interference into the Russian internal affairs: historical aspects." Round table materials of the Communist Party of RF at the Russian State Duma]. (Russian State Duma, 2018).

Red Army as the liberators of the North from the treacherous invaders. The Allied intervention in the North ended by October 1919. Citizens of Great Britain and the United States actively protested against the presence of troops in distant Russia, forcing their governments to withdraw the troops. The Northern Oblast lasted for another six months under the rule of the Provisional government amid civil war, and passed peacefully into the hands of the Bolsheviks when the Whites left the city in February 1920. Yet in the Soviet and now Russian publications in the memory of the intervention, especially since the Crimea invasion of 2014, it was the Red Army that "threw the interventionists out," victoriously. This notion is aggressively pushed through various media – national and regional, through the voices ranging from the local memory activists to the governor of Arkhangelsk, to regular citizens drawn to attend celebratory events.

The reason why it is so easy for the interested parties to twist the facts is the sparsity of sources and the absence of public inquiry over the crimes of the soviet state committed at the dawn of its existence. The sources for historic memory studies relating to the civil war inside Russia are limited. The archives of the period have either been lost or, once again, sealed following a brief period of historical review between the fall of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the Putin era, when the archives were accessible for researchers. The secondary sources have been and continue to be ideologically framed. The witnesses of the events, especially those who suffered for supporting the so-called autonomous Northern Oblast, did not talk about the past out loud, even to their families, for the fear of repercussions.

The attitude to the civil war in the area was formed during the Soviet times which tried hard to impose the concept of the Reds fighting off the Whites as they were traitors, who sold their motherland to the interventionists. As pointed out by historian Ludmila Novikova, "Very actively this myth of intervention – that the Reds defended the country from the interventionists – was supported by the local Bolsheviks. It was very convenient for them to say that a huge army of interventionists came and they could not offer any resistance. It was

less painful than talking about the mistakes of Soviet power, about the unpopularity of Bolshevik policies, about the unwillingness of the population to mobilise for the Red Army, and so on. It was such a very convenient myth."[32]

Thus, the memorials to the victims of intervention all across the North represent only the White terror narratives. The streets of Arkhangelsk still bear the names of the Red army commanders who instituted widespread Red terror across the region in retaliation for the anti-Bolshevik uprising and for collaboration with the Allied forces. The victims of the intervention are commemorated yearly at a memorial service in the very centre of Arkhangelsk – a granite obelisk rising over the embankment, facing the river. Last restored in 2021, it features the names of the 24 Bolsheviks and activists who were executed during the White terror and whose bodies were exhumed from the mass grave on the city's outskirts. Yet the attempts to officially commemorate the victims who fought on the other side of the civil war have been futile.

In contrast to the state-affiliated actors, a private memorial to the victims of the Red terror was erected by a religious volunteer group at the former Kholmogory convent, which served as the first Bolshevik prison camp in the North. Kholmogory is a rural locality in the delta of the Northern Dvina river, about 65 km away from the regional centre, Arkhangelsk. The first northern trading hub, it used to be a seat of the mediaeval convent and a once magnificent Transfiguration cathedral, the biggest in the region. The grand cathedral has survived until today, albeit looking like a faint shadow of what it used to be. In 1920 Kholmogory monastery was nationalised and turned into a hard labour camp, the first Soviet camp in the North.

Kholmogory camp was part of the violence campaign unleashed on the Arkhangelsk region in retribution for the 18 months of anti-bolshevik resistance. The Red Army entered the city of Arkhan-

[32] Ludmila Novikova, "Патриотическая риторика в годы гражданской войны" ["Patriotic rhetoric during civil war"], *Postnauka*, published 12 January, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BqlROXbBHo.

gelsk on 20 February, 1920. Five days later the Special department of the 6th Army arrived in Arkhangelsk ordering every officer, military personnel and civilian who served for the Northern government, to register. Failure to register was punishable by execution, but compliance led to the same outcome.

A special commission was formed under leadership of Mikhail Kedrov, devoted Bolshevik and head of the Special division of *Cheka*, the Soviet Secret police. His task was to "clean the North from the Whites and British-American agents." In the first weeks, Arkhangelsk was overtaken by such violence, that "the city moaned day and night" and by the end of the Summer became "the town of the dead."[33] According to Ludmila Novikova, the exact number of victims of the purge is unknown, since no lists were kept, but according to the most conservative estimates, it could have been tens of thousands of people.[34]

The regional prison could not fit all who were detained, and Mikhail Kedrov decided to set up specialised labour camps across the region to ease the burden. The big northern monasteries, Kholmogorsky, Pertominsky and Solovetsky, were turned into concentration camps in the first months after the closing of the Northern Front.

Officially those were "hard labour" camps, but there was no work to do and people were left to their own abode, to die or be executed. On April 5, 1921 Zinovy Katsnelson, chairman of the Arkhangelsk regional *Cheka*, reported: "<...> As I know, the Kholmogory camp was organised by Kedrov, I repeat Kedrov, secretly (and) exclusively for the mass liquidation of white officers... There were no prisoners there and they were brought there only for liquidation and were not distributed anywhere."[35]

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33 Sergey Melgunov, *Красный террор в России [Red terror in Russia]*, (Brandy: New York, 1919), 60.

34 Ludmila Novikova, "Russia's Red Revolutionary and White Terror, 1917–1921: A Provincial Perspective," *Europe-Asia Studie*s (2013), Vol. 65, No 9, November, 2013, 1755–1770.

35 Yury Doikov, *Красный террор в Советской арктике 1920–1923* [Red terror in the Soviet arctic 1920–1923], (Arkhangelsk, 2011), 110.

There are almost no memories of the Kholmogory camp, apart from the fragments of information in the émigré newspapers of the time, isolated comments leaked into the reports of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and a handful of third person testimonies based on the accounts of the eyewitnesses. On November 28, 1920 the chairman of the Arkhangelsk provincial police T. Smirnov reported to the Presidium of the *Cheka* about the execution in Kholmogory of more than a thousand of 1,300 captured officers from Kuban. In March–April of 1921 by order of Felix Dzerzhinsky, head of the Soviet *Cheka,* 422 white generals and officers were shot in Kholmogory. Arkhangelsk researcher Yuri Doykov found execution lists in the former regional Communist Party Archive, containing the names, ranks, positions and other personal information of 2,028 killed people.[36] This list is not exhaustive.

After the Russian Orthodox Church regained the ownership of the former Kholmogory convent and its remaining buildings in the late 1990s, religious volunteers initiated restoration of the grounds. During this process they unearthed unsettling discoveries. “Every time we do landscaping we find heaps of human remains. First we collected them in sacks, then there were so many of them that we decided that a memorial is needed,” says Elena Pavlova, a parisher.[37] A public fundraiser was launched, and in 2010 a memorial was constructed – a massive marble cross, bearing an inscription: “In memory of the victims of the forced labour camp in Kholmogory in 1920–21, whose remains lay underneath…” This is the only memorial to the victims of the Red terror in the North, erection of which was only possible because of the private character of the estate.

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36 Yury Doikov, Ibid.

37 Elena Pavlova, interviewed by Natalia Deis, “Белый Север документальный аудиосериал”, эп. 6 «Остров Смерти» [White North podcast, ep.6 ‘Death Island’], Geyser Media, October 25, 2020. Audio, https://www.whitenorthpodcast.com/s1e6/.

4. New memory formats

Foreign meddling in internal Russian affairs – real and imagined – is one of the most pressing issues on the current Kremlin information agenda. In support of that, old myths reinforced by fresh interpretations have proven very useful in reminding the local population of the foreign threat.

The Russian government's enhanced attention to the North is not accidental – the first Russian seaport, Arkhangelsk was historically connected with foreign countries because of its proximity to the naval trading routes. The local population, descendants of the Pomors, an ethnographic group living on the White Sea coasts, have always had a reputation for fierce autonomy and self-reliance, and are very fond of its roots. Yet the memory of the Northern Oblast, which existed for eighteen months between August 1918 and February 1919 with the help of Allied forces, is not part of the local identity. It was wiped out from the public domain and is only kept in the families directly affected by the civil war.

After a brief period of historical review in the 1990s, which brought to light the crimes of the Soviet regime, including that of the early days of the young socialist state, the official course has circled back to the search of national identity in unity against the external forces.

When opening a historical conference in Arkhangelsk in September 2020, marking the formal end of the civil war, Mr Medinsky, head of the RMHS and most recently, the author of the new school books in history, pledged his support to the local initiatives which continue to bring up the memory of the intervention, rather than that of the civil war. "Here it is important for us to get rid of everything that hinders our aspirations for the future, including the division in minds associated with the events of the Civil War. Arguments about who was more right – the Reds or the Whites – do not benefit us, but only contribute to further social polarisation. Regardless of the pro-

jects and ideas defended by different political forces, Russia should be the main focus."[38]

Following this call, the local memory activist groups brought forward their ideas for new memory formats in the region. In 2020–2023 the volunteer associations such as Bayonet Decides received an array of grants from the state budget, including from RMHS for the erection of the Defenders of the North memorial and most notably, the presidential grant for the "Ecology of Memory" project, aimed at restoring the Mudyug camp museum.

Voicing his excitement at the new perspectives, Alexey Sukhanovsky, co-head of Baynet Decides, said: "Today it is clear, that it will become part of the military-historical "Victory park," which will include memorial of the concentration camp in Mudyug island and a full scale artistic diorama of Arkhangelsk as the city of the military glory of Russia. We create new memory formats, which means – we create our future."[39]

One of such new memory projects that the Bayonet Decides proposes is a Diorama of Victory – a large-scale display of 37 metres long, 21 metres wide and 9–13 metres high. Igor Slobodyanuk, a co-leader of the search group Bayonet Decides and head of the autonomous noncommercial organisation "Victory" pledged to engage local businesses, construction and engineering organisations to support the project.

One of the aims of the memory actors in Arkhangelsk is to restore the Mudyug camp museum to its former Soviet-time glory to attract tourists from across the country. This idea is supported by the regional governor, Alexander Tsibulsky. "If we talk about further perspec-

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38 *Pravda Severa*, "Конференция, посвященная истории Гражданской войны и интервенции на Русском Севере, открылась в Архангельске" ["Conference dedicated to the history of the civil war and intervention in the Russian North, opened in Arkhangelsk"], published on 10 September, 2020, https://pravdasevera.ru/2020/09/10/60b0a0ebb43ef52e7c6801db.html.

39 Vadim Rykusov, "В Архангельске обсуждают идею создания музея интервенции и гражданской войны" ["An idea of creating a museum of intervention and civil war is being discussed in Arkhangelsk"], *Region29*, published on 25 August, 2016, https://region29.ru/2016/08/25/57be74902817ca600100834d.html.

tive, we are considering creating a full-fledged tourist infrastructure on this historic territory: a visitor centre for tourists, tourist trails, recreational areas, and a network of mini-museums. It is extremely important to restore regular passenger ship communication with the island and equip a pier, which we also plan to do next year," said governor Alexander Tsibulsky welcoming the Russian president Vladimir Putin in Arkhangelsk in February, 2023.[40]

According to the governor's press service,[41] four passenger vessels are being built at this time, one of which will operate along the route to the Mudyug Island. The work on recreating the memorial complex of the intervention period is already underway, and starting from 2023 a volunteer movement has been organised to restore the museum space on the island. The works, supported by the Presidential Cultural Initiatives Fund and the Presidential Grants Fund, made it possible to clean up the territory around the museum, the monument and barracks. There are newly constructed walking paths for the tourists, made of wood. The camp's perimeter is partially restored. An observation tower was erected based on the preserved drawings and photographs. The site is being used for memorial ceremonies, marking the end of the intervention in the Arkhangelsk region. In the best of the Soviet propaganda traditions, these ceremonies are conducted on February, 20 in line with the date of the Red Army's "capturing" Akrhangelsk back from the intervention forces, despite the established fact that the Allies had left the area six months prior to that.

5. National Idea

The concept of historical memory and memory politics as a means of conjuring narrative about certain historic events is a subject of ever

40 *Vedomosti*, "На острове Мудьюг в Архангельской области воссоздадут лагерный музей и откроют визит-центр" ["Mudyug Island in Arkhangelsk region will have camp museum and a visit centre"], published on 26 May, 2023, https://spb.vedomosti.ru/society/news/2023/05/26/977188-ostrove-mudyug-arhangelskoi

41 Ibid.

increasing importance in the study of societies. How history is written and passed on determines how the nation defines itself and how it acts in relation to others.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the new Russian leaders struggled to come up with a unified national idea that would make sense of the country's historical continuity. "Back in the late 1980s and the early period following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, it was common to trace Russia's national trauma to the Communist terror. The remedy to Soviet society's ills was to be found in the exposure of dark truths about the Communist regime, and Russia was inundated with evidence of Communist crimes,"[42] writes Masha Lipman in her piece "*Putin's nation-building project offers reconciliation without truth*" in Open Democracy. She notes, however, that truth failed to bring reconciliation. This led to ideological conflicts, separatist movements and the two Chechen wars. "Disclosures about Communist crimes increasingly left people indifferent or resentful. And since very early in his presidency, Putin has resorted to another remedy – that of obfuscation and oblivion, a reconciliation without truth," concludes Lipman.

In a bid to rebuild national discourse, when coming to power in 2000, Russian president Vladimir Putin offered new pillars of identity to the nation: Christianity, victory in the Great Patriotic War and unity against external enemies.

Christianity became helpful when establishing historic continuity between Imperial Russia and that of today. The new memory formats combine the use of the post-Soviet symbols such as the Russian flag, with the religious attribution. Despite the Bolsheviks' aggression towards religious institutions had been widely acknowledged, each remembrance ceremony conducted in the memory of the Red Army soldiers now includes participation from the Church.

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42 Maria Lipman, "Putin's Nation-building Project offers Reconciliation without Truth," *Open Democracy,* published 12 April, 2017, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/putins-nation-building-project-reconciliation-without-truth/.

The victory in the Great Patriotic War (which is WWII in the rest of the participating countries) has been the central element of Russian memory politics and a powerful tool in glorifying the country's past. However, its legacy may have turned insufficient to unite against perceived threats from the former WWII allies. A unity against external enemies is needed to overcome the threat to the country's failing greatness. This unity came to exclude those who "rock the boat" by bringing up the questions of the painful and potentially divisive past. "For the Kremlin, the memory of the civil war offers a usable story to warn against foreign interference: the reliance of today's liberals on the West to advance their cause parallels with the White's search of support of European powers," write Marlene Laruelle, Margarita Karnysheva in *Memory Politics and the Russian Civil War*.[43]

Following the annexation of the Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and the imposition of international sanctions on Russia, a new pillar of national idea started to emerge – that of the victimhood. In this context, the foreign interference in the Russian civil war found itself at the heart of the memory politics, engaging the propaganda rhetoric almost identical to the one used over a century ago, now multiplied tenfold against the myths created in the Soviet times. The Russian opposition activists' appeal to the West for advancing their causes is presented as a clear parallel to the Whites' search for support in the course of the 1918–1922 Allied intervention, especially in the North, where protest potential is high.

While the truth of the intervention, which led to the carnage that wiped out a good part of the local population of Arkhangelsk, chartered the onset of the first Soviet labour camps and laid groundwork for the Cold War, had been swept under the carpet in the countries of the military alliance post WWI, in Russia it was intentionally distorted to foster the anti-West attitude, becoming an agent to binding the nation together, in the absence of a better alternative.

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[43] Marlene Laruelle and Margarita Karnysheva, *Memory Politics and the Russian Civil War. Reds versus Whites* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 116.

In the past few years, the old myths surrounding intervention have gained a second lease on life and additional interpretations. For example, in August 2017 a translation of the diaries of Clarence Scheu, an American private in the 339th Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Army, was selectively published on the pages of the online journal Rodina.[44] The author of the translation, Alexei Sukhanovsky, titled the article "*Private Scheu's epiphany.*" Following public criticism including by the author of this essay[45], the name of Sukhanovksy's article was later changed to "*The Notes of American Interventionist, who Fought with Bolsheviks in the Russian North.*" However, multiple reprints still reference the original name of this piece as it was indexed in the catalogue of the Russian National Library.[46]

A few quotes from this material sound very colourful: "*September 20: we're squeezed from above like a louse with a fingernail.*" And further, "*September 25: the aborigens seem hostile to me.*"

In analysing the English-language text of the document, the original of which is available on the Bentley History Library website,[47] it turns out that Private Scheu does not use such vocabulary. His descriptions are laconic and dry. Instead of the pejorative "*aborigens*," he uses the neutral "*natives.*" Instead of "*jammed like a louse with a nail*," Scheu writes: "*We are at a disadvantage, we have been cornered.*" One can, of course, assume that the author of the translation embellishes reality out of inexperience, but certain statements are absent from the original altogether, they are made up entirely.

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44 Alexey Sukhanovsky, "Прозрение рядового Шоя" ["Private Scheu's Epiphany"]. *Rodina*, published 31 July, 2017, accessed 05 May, 2021, https://rg.ru/2017/07/31/rodina-shoy.html.

45 Natalia Golysheva Deis, "Концлагерь интервентов на острове в Белом море: мифы, пропаганда и правда" ["Allied concentration camp on the island in the White Sea: myths, propaganda and truth"]. Published by BBC Russian on 23 May, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-57173619

46 Rusian National Library Catalogue. Прозрение Рядового Шоя [Private Scheu's Epiphany]. Rodina Magazine, No. 8, August, 2017. Moscow, p. 24–33, https://unis.shpl.ru/Pages/Search/BookInfo.aspx?Id=1312547

47 Scheu, Clarence G. Diary, typescript from the Clarence G. Scheu diary with transcript, 1918–1919 [Folder 1, Item 2], Polar Bear Expedition Digital Materials, Bentley Historical Library, Michigan.

"*October 13: having returned from the mission I clearly realised what a bottomless ass hole we are stuck in, frankly speaking, caught up in this burned-out village by sheer miracle*," writes the translator further on behalf of the author. And in the same section: "*may they* (the Bolsheviks) *die*!" This, apparently, is supposed to illustrate the "epiphany" of the American. But there are simply no such words in Private Scheu's journal. It is, as it is now called, a fake – a continuation of the same war, only now that of the disinformation.

Conclusion

The events surrounding Allied intervention and especially its role in orchestrating the anti-bolshevik uprisings, including the one in the North in August of 1918, shaped the history of relationships between Russia and foreign countries up to this day. The legacy of the intervention, particularly in the Russian North, still lingers and the rhetoric used by the Russian government over 100 years ago closely resembles that of today, blaming Western interference for everything that goes wrong in and out of Russia, especially since the invasion in Ukraine in 2022.

The number of white spots in this episode of history continues to cause controversy and contributes to unscrupulous interpretations. By sponsoring the local memory activists in Arkhangelsk in North West Russia, the Kremlin encourages the reuse of Soviet propaganda, in addition to creation of new memorials, aimed at cementing the anti-West sentiment.

Currently, Russia remains isolated from the international community due to its aggressive military actions in Ukraine. The issue of civil war is only discussed in terms of foreign interference, ignoring the need to address the rehabilitation of victims from both sides – the Reds and the Whites. This attitude suggests Russia's self-identification with the Soviet state, which had perpetrated violence against its own citizens, rather than with the pre-revolutionary Russian Empire. Addressing the crimes committed during the early Soviet era would raise questions about the legitimacy of the state, which is a frighten-

ing and divisive prospect. As a result, efforts to revive the old myths through various state and nonstate actors have become the primary way to unite the nation against external threats during the current Russian war with Ukraine.

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