

Editor's Introduction

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David Rowland Francis presented himself as the “United States Ambassador to Russia under the Czar, the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks.” Actually, he represented his country before four Russian governments: the Imperial, Provisional, Soviet, and Northern ones. During his stay in Russia, Francis changed his residence three times, moving from Petrograd first, to Vologda, and finally to Archangel’sk. He was an eyewitness of the greatest events in the history of Russia: the World War, February Revolution, downfall of the empire, October Revolution, and Civil War. During the two and half years of his residence in Russia, Francis met a lot of prominent people of the time, including Nicholas II, the last emperor of Russia, and Vladimir I. Lenin, the first Soviet leader. Francis’s diplomatic experience was unique and had no parallel in the history of Russian-American relations. That is why his memoirs are of special interest for historians and the general public alike.

The most striking feature of his Russian experience is the fact that Francis was not a diplomat at all. Practically nothing in his previous life might have helped him in his ambassadorial work. He was born in Richmond, Kentucky, in 1850, and moved to St. Louis, Missouri, in 1866 to attend Washington University. After graduation he became a clerk, and soon afterward a partner in a commercial house, thus beginning his successful business career. Francis was also an officer or trustee in many banking and philanthropic institutions while rising to prominence in politics, serving as mayor of St. Louis (1885–89) and the youngest governor of Missouri (1889–93). For a short time, he served as secretary of the interior in Grover Cleveland’s cabinet. He was a devoted Democrat but opposed William J. Bryan’s candidacy in 1896, and he was out of politics for ten years afterwards. Francis married Jane Perry, who belonged to a prominent Missouri family, and they raised six sons.

One of the Francis’s most brilliant achievements was his campaign to organize the 1904 World Exposition in St. Louis. On the one hand, it was a typical story illustrating his unusual business and administrative abilities. On the other, the episode was of special importance in Francis’s biography because it provided him with his only international experience prior to his appointment to a diplomatic post. This wonderful saga began in the summer of 1889—when Francis began pushing for a world’s fair to be held in St. Louis—and lasted for fifteen years. In 1903, Francis

made a tour around principal European capitals to encourage foreign participation. He met King Edward VII of Great Britain, French President Emile Loubet, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, and King Leopold II of Belgium. Francis hastened back to St. Louis from Europe, where, at the Dedication Day ceremony, he welcomed members of the diplomatic corps, including British, French, Italian, and Russian ambassadors. The St. Louis Fair lasted for seven months, during which Francis was said to be “the most photographed man in America.”¹ The fair was the largest international exposition the world had ever seen at that time, and it was a great financial success.² In mid-1906, Francis made another trip to Europe with his companions, where he “was tireless in tracking down monarchs and prime ministers” wherever they might be found.³

At the same time, Francis returned to active political life and came around to supporting Woodrow Wilson in 1912. Francis also strengthened his friendship with Charles R. Crane, a wealthy Chicago businessman and prominent Democratic campaign contributor who was a friend of the new president. Crane had the reputation of being one of the most active and influential promoters of rapprochement with Russia. The so-called Crane circle included, among others, such diverse people as journalists Arthur Ruhl and Stanley Washburn, businessmen Frederick M. Corse and Raymond Robins, and the YMCA leader John R. Mott—to list only those persons whom, as well as Crane himself, Francis would later meet in Petrograd. The most outstanding figure among Crane’s followers was expert in Russian language and institutions Samuel N. Harper.

On the eve of the World War, the post of US ambassador at St. Petersburg was vacant, and relations between the two powers were rather cool. In July 1914, the ambassadorship in Russia was offered to George T. Marye, an international lawyer and active Democratic supporter, but in early 1916, he was forced to resign as a result of his inability to meet Wilson’s expectations. With Crane’s assistance, a new ambassador by the name of Governor Francis was appointed, and Harper was named an unofficial advisor to accompany him to Russia.⁴ As Francis’s biographer wrote, in his mature years, Francis represented “the perfect image of a successful American businessman and civic leader” and was “proud of his contributions to the community, pleased with his accomplishments and with himself.” He was “a brash, opinionated, stubborn, smart, sometimes foolish, straight-talking, quick-acted, inde-

¹ Harper Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano: The Life and Times of David Rowland Francis* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2001), 72–75, 123–125, 131, 144.

² Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 155–183.

³ Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano*, 168.

⁴ Paul A. Goble, “Samuel N. Harper and the Study of Russia,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 14, no. 4 (1973): 613.

pendent-minded, proud, self-made man...was rich and getting richer, busy with his directorships and his civic duties, regularly traveling the country to speak to large audiences and meet with other powerful men, who were his friends.”⁵

Meanwhile, as the editor of his letters noted, “Francis was shrewd and capable in the world he knew, but international diplomacy was not in that world.”⁶ The Russian ambassador in Washington characterized him as a thriving provincial businessman with a good fortune and great self-assurance.⁷ The new American ambassador had little international experience, no theoretical preparation, no practical knowledge, and no diplomatic abilities required for the post. In George F. Kennan’s opinion, “Francis was not what you would call a cosmopolitan person. He was a product of the old West, a ‘provincial’ in the best sense of the term, in whose character there was reflected something of the ‘showboat’ Mississippi: the vigor, the earthiness, the slightly flamboyant elegance, and the uninhibited enjoyment of the good things of life. His values and opinions were, at his age of 67, firmly established, and were not to be essentially shaken even by the experience of residence in a foreign capital in dramatic times.”⁸ He was made a diplomat by chance as a consequence of a “Democratic débauche” in the Foreign Service and the demoralization of the State Department, which followed Woodrow Wilson’s rise to presidency.

Francis sailed for Russia on April 8, 1916, leaving his family at home. He was accompanied by his African American valet, Philip Jordan. Arthur Ruhl, who crossed the Atlantic on the same steamboat, remembered “his man Friday, Phil, a body-servant of the old-fashioned Southern kind, already mourning, after but a week of foreign ways, for the hot biscuits of St. Louis.”⁹ Harper, another one of Francis’s companions, wrote after several days at sea: “I heard enough of them to realize that our new ambassador was a very blunt, outspoken American, who believed in speaking his mind regardless of the rules of diplomacy.”¹⁰

Francis arrived in Petrograd on the morning on April 15 (28)¹¹ and was met at the station by the people of the embassy. The staff of the US embassy in the Russian capital consisted of nine men at the time. The senior diplomat was veteran Herbert

⁵ Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano*, vii, xi, 178.

⁶ Jamie H. Cockfield, ed., *Dollars and Diplomacy: Ambassador David Rowland Francis and the Fall of Tsarism, 1916–1917* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1981), 4.

⁷ See V. S. Vasyukov, *Vneshniaia politika Rossii nakanune Fevral'skoi revoliutsii* (Moscow: Mysl', 1989), 182.

⁸ George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), 50.

⁹ Arthur Ruhl, *White Nights and Other Russian Impressions* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 4.

¹⁰ Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano*, 188.

¹¹ See n. 95, p. xxvi.

H. D. Peirce, a special agent of the State Department with the rank of minister plenipotentiary who was appointed in 1915 to assist the ambassador in Russia. He served in Russia for seven years, long before his appointment, and his prolonged experience taught him that the “entire social fabric of Russia, the point of view of the Russian mind and its manner of thought, differ widely from our own, and are not susceptible of estimation upon the same basis of comparison.”¹² Francis did not have enough time to learn this lesson because his collaboration with the experienced adviser was very short. The next in rank was First Secretary of the embassy Fred M. Dearing, Francis’s fellow countryman but his antipode in the realm of diplomacy. Frederick A. Sterling—another Missourian—and John C. White held the posts of second secretary, and John L. Ryan was third secretary.

The staff of attachés to the embassy included a brilliant naval officer, Newton A. McCully, who had been appointed the first permanent US naval attaché with residence in Petrograd and had played a prominent part in Russian-American relations during the World War, 1917 revolutions, and Civil War. By April 1916, McCully had served in Petrograd for a year and a half, was well-acquainted with Russian affairs, and had earned a reputation for being the most experienced and informed member of the embassy staff. A former newspaperman, Henry D. Baker, turned out to be the first US commercial attaché in Russia. He served there from the end of 1914 and was active in promoting closer Russian-American relations in trade and commerce. Military attaché Second Lieutenant E. Francis Riggs had reached the post just recently and was officially presented to the emperor on February 10 (23), 1916. The last addition to the embassy staff was Captain James C. Breckinridge of the Marine Corps. He was assigned to duty as assistant naval attaché at Petrograd on February 16 and arrived there shortly before Francis. All diplomats mentioned above accompanied the ambassador to the official imperial reception, which took place in the Alexandrovsky Palace at Tsarskoe Selo on April 22 (May 5), 1916.¹³

A few months after the reception, almost the whole embassy staff was replaced. In May and June 1916, Attaché Baker and all secretaries were reappointed to other posts. Harper also left Petrograd in August. Dearing—who was very critical of the embassy’s work and elaborated plans “to revamp U.S. Embassy”—entered into conflict with Francis, and in the fall of that year, he left Russia without a new appointment in the Foreign Service. In the course of 1916, Secretaries Norman Armour, Sheldon Whitehouse, and Livingston Phelps joined the staff, followed by First Secretary James G. Bailey in early 1917. Of great help to Francis were the appointments of J. Butler Wright as counselor and William C. Huntington as commercial attaché later in 1916.

¹² Herbert H. D. Peirce, “Russia,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 1901, 465.

¹³ D. R. Francis to Frank L. Polk, May 9, 1916, in *Dollars and Diplomacy*, 20–22. For the official Russian account of the reception, see B. D. Gal’perina and B. P. Milovidov, comps., *Kamerfjurerskiye zhurnaly 1916–1917* (St. Petersburg: D. A. R. K., 2014), 138–39.

The last imperial Russian foreign minister stated that Francis produced “an impression of not a diplomat, but a businessman, as well as all his embassy staff; even their residence was more like a commercial office than an embassy.” In his opinion, only Wright and Huntington looked like real diplomats. “Especially Huntington was able to serve as an example for foreign diplomats.”¹⁴

Counselor Wright arrived at his post on November 4 (17), 1916, and found a staff beset with disorganization and inefficiency. Francis seemed “a rather daft, grandfatherly country gentlemen” with “great sense of nature, good keenness and common sense.” But as ambassador, he had “very little conception of the social amenities as regards the Diplomatic Service.” As the weeks passed, Wright and many of the embassy staff worried that the ambassador’s inexperience might cause him to do something foolhardy and embarrassing. As a result, Wright and his colleagues hovered nervously around him, creating a tense work environment.¹⁵ “Wright performed his duties with great conscientiousness, but found it difficult to strike the right tone in his relation to Francis,” Kennan wrote. “In Wright’s eyes, Francis personified all the characteristic weakness of the political appointee in a diplomatic position. In Francis’ eyes, Wright manifested the worst traits of the career officer.”¹⁶

After the World War erupted, the US embassy in Petrograd was assigned to represent the German and Austro-Hungarian interests in Russia. The main part of this job was to supervise a great number of prisoners of war. To coordinate the POW work, the so-called Second Division of the embassy was created, and a prominent social worker, Edward T. Devine, arrived in March 1916 to head it. The division was assisted by the members of the American Young Men’s Christian Associations, headed by Dr. Archibald C. Harte. Devine’s frictions with Francis over their respective jurisdiction and his reputation of being pro-German led to his recall, and in October, the former secretary of the St. Petersburg embassy, Basil Miles, replaced him as head of the division. “Mr. Basil Miles, the new head of the Second Division of the Relief Branch of the embassy, has taken charge and gives promise of being very satisfactory,” Francis wrote to his wife.¹⁷ Miles was appointed special assistant to the ambassador with the rank of minister plenipotentiary. Soon the Foreign Service “emergency man,” William F. Sands arrived in Petrograd as another special assistant to the ambassador to help Miles in his division. On the whole, in early 1917, at least fifty people made up the US embassy in Petrograd: twenty-eight of the regular staff

¹⁴ N. N. Pokrovsky, *Poslednii v Mariiŋskom dvortse: Vospominaniia ministra inostrannykh del* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2015), 192.

¹⁵ William Allison, *American Diplomats in Russia: Case Studies in Orphan Diplomacy, 1916–1919* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 51–53.

¹⁶ George F. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 43.

¹⁷ D. R. Francis to Jane Francis, October 18 (31), 1916, in *Dollars and Diplomacy*, 55.

and twenty-two in the Second Division, making it the largest diplomatic mission in Russia.¹⁸ The staff of the US consulate general in Petrograd consisted of five people, headed by North Winship, an experienced diplomat.¹⁹

The ambassador is always front and center in his egocentric memoirs; most of the people listed above Francis does not mention in his writings, or mentions only in passing. For example, he writes almost nothing about the Second Division, which completed the majority of the embassy's everyday work. Meanwhile, most of the secretaries and attachés were more informed and experienced in their duties than the ambassador in his. Unfortunately, something of Francis's "awkwardness made itself felt in the ambassador's relations with his career associates," Kennan noted. "He could not help but be aware of their greater familiarity both with diplomatic life in general and with the Petrograd scene in particular. On the other hand, it was difficult for him to seek and accept their opinions without betraying his own ignorance and forfeiting the dignity of his position."²⁰ Another historian stated: "Apart from his ignoring the appearance of things in a capital rife with rumors about spying and espionage, Francis made additional mistakes due to the unfamiliarity of both setting and role. His outlook was shaped by the shibboleths around which he had fashioned careers in business and the Democratic party."²¹

Arriving in Petrograd, Francis found that the state of the embassy building was a problem. The US embassy rented the mansion of Count Michael N. Grabbe on Furshtatskaya street. The ambassador had his office on the second floor, near two small private rooms that Philip Jordan had furnished as his bedroom and sitting room. But this poorly furnished "palace" was considered a "laughing stock among Russians and diplomats alike," Chargé Charles S. Wilson reported.²² Francis was appalled at the rundown condition and inadequate furnishing of the embassy, which was described by an eyewitness as looking more like a warehouse than a residence. "It is a large house and susceptible of being made very attractive, but it is out of repair and has little furniture and no furnishing whatever," the ambassador wrote to his son.²³ To the secretary of state, he reported: "The Embassy building is in very poor condition. I am sleeping in the Embassy and taking breakfast here, which is furnished

¹⁸ Norman E. Saul, *War and Revolution: The United States and Russia, 1914–1921* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 69–70.

¹⁹ See *Ves' Petrograd na 1917: Adresnaia i spravocnaia kniga g. Petrograda. Dvadsat' chetverti god izdaniia* (Petrograd: T-vo A. S. Suvorina "Novoe vremia," 1916), 97.

²⁰ Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 38.

²¹ David Mayers, *The Ambassadors and America's Soviet Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 72.

²² See Saul, *War and Revolution*, 9.

²³ Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano*, 194–95.

by the wife of one of the messengers; my luncheon and dinner I get elsewhere."²⁴ On May 17 (30), Francis cabled Lansing: "Just completed visits to my colleagues whose elegantly founded, well located embassies put me to shame. Am[erican] Embassy inconvenient ill adapted almost absolutely unequipped."²⁵ Francis was obliged to advance his own cash to pay for a dining room suite, kitchen utensils and supplies, curtains, and shades.²⁶ Furthermore, the Francis residence was located "in a fashionable part of the city lying between its center and the Tairide district to the east. Since this latter district included the later Soviet head-quarters at the Smolny Institute, as well as the Parliament building, the American Embassy found itself in the midst of some of the most dramatic and violent happenings of the revolutionary period."²⁷

Francis's personal connections in the Russian capital were rather limited. As Kennan noted:

Francis' taste and habits were the robust and simple ones of the American Middle West at the turn of the century. As such, they bore little affinity to the refined predilections of continental diplomatic society.... [His] preference for an evening's entertainment ran to good cigars, good whisky, and a few crochets around the card table, rather than to large and elegant mixed gatherings. For this reason, as well as by reason of a certain parsimoniousness, he lived for the most part quietly in his Embassy apartment, confining his social life largely to the American colony, taking relatively little part in the social doings of high Petrograd society.²⁸

In April 1916, there were 202 American citizens in the Russian capital.²⁹ Significantly, Francis's first visitor after his arrival was H. Fessenden Meserve, who represented the National City Bank of New York in Russia.³⁰ Samuel McRoberts, a Missourian and vice president of the bank, also arrived in Petrograd on May 2 (15), 1916, for the purpose of consummating a loan of \$50,000,000 to the Russian government.³¹ Francis actively supported McRoberts during his visit to Petrograd

²⁴ D. R. Francis to R. Lansing, May 2, 1916, in *Lansing Papers, 1914–1920*, 2: 312.

²⁵ See Saul, *War and Revolution*, 67.

²⁶ Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano*, 201.

²⁷ Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 36.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 36–38.

²⁹ *Izvestiia Obshchestva sblizheniia mezhdu Rossiei i Amerikoi*, 2 (April 1916): 45.

³⁰ Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano*, 193.

³¹ D. R. Francis to R. Lansing, May 20, 1916, in *Lansing Papers*, 1: 149; D. R. Francis to R. Lansing, July 25, 1916, in *Dollars and Diplomacy*, 37.

and helped negotiate a loan, and at the very end of the year, a branch of the National City Bank was opened in Petrograd. Another respected American businessman in the Russian capital was Marion McAllister Smith of Guaranty Trust Company of New York. But the main figure in the local American business community was the representative of the New York Life Insurance Company, Frederick M. Corse. "The tall, fifty-one-year-old Vermonter was fluent in Russian and considered to be the dean of the American colony in Petrograd. He was Francis's closest male friend."³² It was Corse who initiated the establishment of the American hospital in Petrograd. In December 1916, Francis was personally introduced to each of the wounded soldiers at the hospital.³³ Another group of American residents led by the Meserves and the Smiths had united to sponsor the American Refuge for Refugee Women and Children from the War Zone. Both factions received additional support from the US embassy.

Another circle of the Francis's acquaintances consisted of American wives of Russian noblemen with high social standing: Baroness Frances Ramsay (who was a sister of Sheldon Whitehouse), Countess Lilie Nostitz, Princess Susan Beloselskaya-Belozerskaya, and Princess Julia Cantacuzéne-Speransky, granddaughter of President Grant. Assistant Foreign Minister Vladimir A. Artzimovich, a former consul in San Francisco, was also married to an American. He was America's confidential friend in the ministry but was dismissed in October 1916. There was also the educational and philanthropic *Mayak* (Lighthouse) Society in Petrograd, sponsored by the YMCA and headed by General Secretary Franklin A. Gaylord. Pastor George A. Simons ran the affairs of the American Methodist Episcopal Chapel in Petrograd. In 1915, a branch of the Russian-American Chamber of Commerce and the Society for Promoting Mutual Friendly Relations between Russia and America were established in Petrograd. The society was headed by the former Russian Ambassador to Washington Roman R. Rosen. In June 1916, the society council gave a dinner in honor of the new US ambassador.³⁴ Nevertheless, Francis was slow to make friends among the Russians. "I gave a Fourth of July reception yesterday," he wrote to his wife. "The guests were mainly, if not altogether, Americans, as Russians do not understand the Fourth of July, and furthermore I have made comparatively few social acquaintances among the Russians."³⁵

³² Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano*, 207.

³³ Lyubov Ginzburg, "Rediscovering the 'Living Human Documents' of a Goodwill Initiative: Letters from Russian Soldiers Cared for at the City Hospital of the American Colony in Petrograd, 1914–1918," in *New Perspectives on Russian-American Relations*, ed. William Benton Whisenhunt and Norman E. Saul (New York: Routledge, 2016), 129–31, 135.

³⁴ *Izvestiia Obshchestva sblizheniia mezhdou Rossiei i Amerikoi*, 3 (September 1916): 34.

³⁵ D. R. Francis to Jane Francis, July 5, 1916, in *Dollars and Diplomacy*, 31.

Francis's circle of knowledgeable acquaintances, his place in Russian high society, and his influence in governmental lobby were far smaller than that of the British or French ambassadors. Francis "had found himself overshadowed, in his relation to Russian court circles, by his French and British colleagues, who were more experienced, better connected, more at home in the world of dynamic diplomacy and aristocratic social forms."³⁶ The most influential foreign representative in Petrograd was obviously the British Ambassador Sir George W. Buchanan. The stuffy and proper Englishman sharply contrasted with casual Francis.³⁷ Next in influence was the French Ambassador Maurice Paléologue, whose meeting with the US ambassador went very poorly because Francis's efforts to avoid giving the slightest hint of partiality in the war irked the French ambassador.³⁸ "Francis seems to have found no easy approach to his diplomatic colleagues," Kennan noted. "They, for their part, tended either to ignore him or to view him with amusement and condescension. His rare diplomatic dinners...failed to accord with the standards of diplomatic elegance then prevailing in the Russian capital."³⁹ Francis "was alternately ignored and patronized by his British and French colleagues. He seldom entertained and led an unsociable life in the dilapidated embassy."⁴⁰ Both Buchanan and Paléologue rarely mentioned Francis in their memoirs, and so Russian officials did.

The whole term of Francis's stay in Russia may be divided into five periods: the last months of the imperial Russia (April 1916–February 1917), revolutionary turmoil under the Provisional Government (February–October 1917), dawn of the Bolshevik era in Petrograd (October 1917–February 1918), stop-off in Soviet Vologda (March–July 1918), and the final sojourn in Arkhangel'sk occupied by the Allied forces (August–November 1918). Actually, Francis saw five different Russias from his windows: he was made to act in five different historical situations and presents five different images of Russia in his book. That is why his *Russia from the American Embassy* appears to a reader so multifaceted, varied, and even contradictory.

"The mission upon which I have started is a very difficult one," Francis wrote after his appointment.⁴¹ But he was not able to realize then how difficult it would prove! His main assignment in Russia was to negotiate a new commercial treaty instead of the old 1832 treaty abrogated by the US government in 1911. Surprisingly for the instigators of the abrogation, this sanction did not affect Russian policy at

³⁶ Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 16.

³⁷ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 71.

³⁸ Benson Lee Grayson, *Russian-American Relations in World War I* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1979), 79.

³⁹ Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 38.

⁴⁰ Mayers, *The Ambassadors and America's Soviet Policy*, 74.

⁴¹ D. R. Francis to C. S. Hamlin, April 20, 1916, in *Dollars and Diplomacy*, 14.

all. The abrogation had accomplished nothing. Meanwhile, Russian-American relations were “frigid” and the abrogation only added to existing difficulties.⁴² Woodrow Wilson himself actively supported the abrogation in his search for votes on the eve of the 1912 election, but in becoming president, he was forced to try to restore normal commercial relations with Russia. Ambassador Marye could not accomplish the task. “[We] need diplomatic and commercial representation in Russia of a standard of excellence which can eradicate a growing suspicion of our sordidness.... [We] need the proper official representation also because at the end of the war we must strive to make a commercial treaty with Russia,” the military correspondent Richard W. Child wrote in 1916.⁴³

Interested primarily in negotiating a new commercial treaty, Francis accepted the post under the mistaken belief that he could accomplish this end without difficulty. But from the very beginning, he was shockingly disappointed by Russian refusal even to discuss the matter. Instead, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei D. Sazonov several times reminded Francis that “the treaty had been denounced by America and not by Russia.”⁴⁴ With the treaty his primary interest, Francis was to find his stay in Russia marked by frustration, bitterness, and failure.⁴⁵ Actually, the main job of the US embassy in Russia during the World War was the care of German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war. Ambassador Marye complained that “operation of the embassy was swamped by the influx of unexpectedly high numbers of POWs; 80 percent of its work was devoted to this issue.”⁴⁶ The POW work was greater than all other business of the embassy combined, Francis reported in July 1916.⁴⁷ “At the end of 1916, the American embassy and consulates in Russia were undertaken to care for more than two million military and civilian prisoners in concentration camps scattered throughout European Russia and Siberia,” Countess Nostitz wrote.⁴⁸ The need to fulfill these enormous obligations become an unpleasant surprise for Francis, who had little interest in the job. “He would have preferred to ignore the military-prisoner

⁴² Clifford L. Egan, “Pressure Groups, the Department of State, and the Abrogation of the Russian-American Treaty of 1832,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 115, no. 4 (1971): 334.

⁴³ Richard Washburn Child, *Potential Russia* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1916), 199–201.

⁴⁴ D. R. Francis to R. Lansing, May 7 and June 16, 1916, in *Dollars and Diplomacy*, 18, 28–29.

⁴⁵ Grayson, *Russian-American Relations in World War I*, 74.

⁴⁶ Mayers, *The Ambassadors and America's Soviet Policy*, 69.

⁴⁷ See Saul, *War and Revolution*, 45.

⁴⁸ Countess Nostitz, *The Countess from Iowa* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1936), 172.

issue and was dismayed by the scope of problems in what he called the ‘uncongenial task’ of representing German and Austrian interests.”⁴⁹

Francis had a one-sided view of the internal situation in late imperial Russia, which was influenced by his acquaintances in liberal Russian circles. As Harper noted, the ambassador quickly had “interested himself in the work and views of the people’s organizations, whose leaders were soon to head the revolution of March, 1917.”⁵⁰ The prospect of revolution was first mentioned by him as early as August 1916, when Francis reported to the secretary of state: “I do not think there will be a revolution immediately after the close of the war, [but] if the Court Party does not adopt a more liberal policy by extending more privileges to the people and their representatives in the Duma, a revolution will take place before the lapse of even a few years.”⁵¹ In December 1916, Francis wrote: “It is more than interesting to be in the position which I occupy at this time. This is the most critical period of the world’s history in my opinion, and Petrograd is occupying a very prominent place in the theater of affairs—in fact it is second to none.”⁵² Francis anticipated some events of importance in Russian history but was sure that “there is no danger of a revolution before the end of the war.”⁵³ His own position began to strengthen due to the breaking off of diplomatic relations between the US and Germany on February 3, 1917. “The Russians are very much pleased with the stand we have taken and are already beginning to treat us as Allies,” Francis reported.⁵⁴ A bit later the ambassador repeated to Wilson that he did “not anticipate any revolution...in the immediate future.”⁵⁵

On February 23 (March 8) 1917, the revolution in Petrograd did erupt. According to Countess Nostitz, when its outcome had become clear, Francis said to her: “It doesn’t surprise me. But all the same I consider my colleagues of some of the other Embassies have made a great mistake in backing up the opposition movement against the Imperial Family. I told them so at our last conference. I said—‘Gentlemen, in the Middle States, from where I come, we don’t swap horses while crossing a stream.’”⁵⁶ After the emperor’s abdication, he recognized that “this is undoubtedly a revolution,

⁴⁹ Mayers, *The Ambassadors and America’s Soviet Policy*, 73.

⁵⁰ See Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano*, 204.

⁵¹ D. R. Francis to R. Lansing, August 14, 1916, in *Lansing Papers*, 2: 319.

⁵² D. R. Francis to P. B. Fourke, December 10 (23), 1916, in *Dollars and Diplomacy*, 71–72.

⁵³ D. R. Francis to C. Thompson, January 4 (17), 1917, in *Dollars and Diplomacy*, 78.

⁵⁴ D. R. Francis to R. Lansing, January 29 (February 11), 1917, in *Lansing Papers*, 2: 321–322.

⁵⁵ See David S. Foglesong, “A Missouri Democrat in Revolutionary Russia: Ambassador David R. Francis and the American Confrontation with Russian Radicalism, 1917,” *Gateway Heritage* 12, no. 3 (1992): 26.

⁵⁶ Countess Nostitz, *The Countess from Iowa*, 195.

but it is the best managed revolution that has ever taken place for its magnitude.”⁵⁷ A downfall of a thousand-year empire meant the dawn of the new era in Russia and in the history of Russian-American relations, as well as in Francis's diplomatic career.

The US ambassador turned out to be the first foreign diplomat to pose the question of recognition of the Russian Provisional Government. Three days after the emperor's abdication, Francis telegraphed to Washington his reasons for speedy recognition, trying to convince Lansing that it was “the most amazing revolution,” which was “the practical realization of that principle of government which we have championed and advocated, I mean government by consent of the governed.”⁵⁸ In his mind, the Russian Revolution was the equivalent of the American one almost a century and a half before.⁵⁹ His decision was influenced also by the new Russian foreign minister, Pavel N. Milyukov, who found in Francis “a credulous interlocutor.”⁶⁰ Milyukov himself recalled: “The Ambassador from the United States, the dear Francis (who was in no way a diplomat), clearly wanted America to be the first to recognize the Russian revolution, and I willingly entered a little conspiracy with him.”⁶¹ As George Buchanan noted ironically, “The United States Ambassador was the first to recognize the Provisional Government officially on March 22, an achievement of which he was always proud.”⁶²

But Francis was not able to follow the rapid and chaotic sweep of events that led Russia from one crisis to another. His view of the unfolding events was limited and based in illusion. Francis confessed that such “assumptions concerning the Russian situation” which “were least likely to be fulfilled,” namely, “that Russian political life would advance at once toward a stable parliamentary system and that Russia would continue to wage war.”⁶³ As Foglesong wrote: “In the euphoria that followed the tsar's abdication, Francis and other U.S. officials neglected the deeper social and economic origins of the revolution, underestimated the strength of the Soviet, and exaggerated the power of the Provisional Government. An inflated notion of the influence and authority of the Duma leaders distorted Francis' perspective and alleviated his con-

⁵⁷ D. R. Francis to R. Lansing, March 2 (15), 1917, in *Dollars and Diplomacy*, 91.

⁵⁸ Francis telegram to Lansing, March 18, 1917, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917*, 1207.

⁵⁹ Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano*, 227, 239.

⁶⁰ G. N. Mikhailovskii, *Žapiski: Iz istorii rossiiskogo vneshnepoliticheskogo vedomstva, 1914–1920* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1993), 1, 280.

⁶¹ Paul Miliukov, *Political Memoirs, 1905–1907* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 439.

⁶² George Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memoirs* (London: Cassel, 1923), 2: 91.

⁶³ Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 16.

cern about the unpredictability of the workers and soldiers.... [He] never grasped the degree to which political authority had become fragmented or understood the army's demoralization."⁶⁴ Besides, "Francis labored under the haziest knowledge of the ideological divisions within the Marxist and non-Marxist socialist parties."⁶⁵ Francis "was sufficiently aware of the plight of the Russian people to welcome jubilantly the overthrow of the Tsar and the coming to power of the Provisional Government," the former Consul DeWitt C. Poole said. With "the members of the Provisional Government Francis had a bridge of understanding, and with them in power over a period of years Francis might have gone down as a pretty successful ambassador." Those pro-Allied liberals, Poole continued, "were well inside the understanding and liking of Francis or any other rather narrowly American American."⁶⁶

On March 25 (April 7), 1917, news of the US entering the war against Germany reached Petrograd. This created a new situation in Russian-American relations and made the US ambassador a popular figure in the Russian capital. "That revolution and our entering the war, so nearly contemporaneous as they were, mark a new era in the history of society," Francis reported. "Our form of government is their model; our taking part in the contest has infused into them a confident spirit and imbued them with a firm determination."⁶⁷ As Francis stated a bit later, "In my judgment the American Embassy is respected to a greater extent and has more influence with the Provisional Government and with the people generally than any other mission in Russia."⁶⁸ Owing to his position as envoy of Russia's new powerful ally, Francis indeed enjoyed a rather elusive prestige in Petrograd. But his ambassadorial position was compromised and diminished by the flux of special US missions with no clearly defined responsibilities, which were arriving one after another on the Petrograd scene during the summer of 1917.

The first of them were the Railway (Stevens) Commission and the so-called Root Mission. Francis readily supported the former and even tried to direct its activities, but was reluctant as to the advisability of the latter, which was sent by the Wilson administration regardless of the ambassador's opinion. From the very beginning, the issue of confusion of authorities arose. As Root remarked, "It is plain that we can't have three bodies dealing with the Russian Government at the same time—the regular Embassy, the President's Mission & the R. R. Commission."⁶⁹ But Wilson

⁶⁴ Foglesong, "A Missouri Democrat in Revolutionary Russia," 28.

⁶⁵ Mayers, *The Ambassadors and America's Soviet Policy*, 77–78.

⁶⁶ See Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 17; Foglesong, "A Missouri Democrat in Revolutionary Russia," 28.

⁶⁷ Francis telegram, April 21, 1917, in *FRUS, 1917, Supplement 2, The World War*, vol. 1, 36.

⁶⁸ D. R. Francis to R. Lansing, April 25 (May 8), 1917, in *Lansing Papers*, 2: 332–334.

⁶⁹ E. Root to R. Lansing, May 6, 1917, in *Lansing Papers*, 2: 329.

refused to define the authorities clearly. As a result, Stevens sometimes interfered in diplomatic matters, Root discussed railroad questions, and Francis tried to do everything, maneuvering between two chiefs of missions and different branches of the Russian government. The Root Mission departed Petrograd on June 26 (July 9), leaving behind the US Military Mission, which turned out to be one more quasi-political body representing special army interests. It was headed by Brigadier General William V. Judson.

Probably the most exotic was the American Red Cross Mission—which, to the ambassador's embarrassment, soon arrived in Petrograd. The mission was promoted by Montana copper magnate William B. Thompson, who tried to use it as an instrument of America's support for Russia's continued participation in the war. Neither the ambassador nor the other official representatives on the scene felt that there was a need for such a mission.⁷⁰ The result was a deplorable misunderstanding between the ARCM and the US embassy.⁷¹

One more US agency was created by the Committee on Public Information under the title the American Press Bureau at Petrograd. The CPI was represented by journalist Arthur Bullard, and the committee's associate chairman, Edgar Sisson, who considered himself to be "Special Representative of President Wilson in Russia"—"thus the making of trouble and confusion were implanted firmly in the situation by official Washington before Sisson even arrived in Russia."⁷²

After the arrival of the CPI emissaries, the situation with US official representation in Petrograd was confused to the highest degree. Petrograd was "host to high-level U.S. commissions, delegations, and missions that collectively eclipsed the embassy's significance."⁷³ Francis and "a number of other high-ranking State Department officials already at their posts in Russia did not look favorably on the prospective pre-emption of their responsibilities by the special commissions. The ambassador and his staff viewed the personnel of the various commissions as Johnnies-come-lately and as too inexperienced to understand either the political complications of the Revolution or the Russian military's failures on the Eastern Front."⁷⁴ Bullard described the situation in the following words: "No one of the ambassadors was of strong enough character to dominate and control his own flock. Grouped, about each embassy, there were military missions, secret services, publicity agents, commercial attachés, all busily

⁷⁰ Neil V. Salzman, *Reform and Revolution: The Life and Times of Raymond Robins* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1991), 177.

⁷¹ Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 61.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 50–51.

⁷³ Mayers, *The Ambassadors and America's Soviet Policy*, 86.

⁷⁴ Neil V. Salzman, ed., *Russia in War and Revolution: General William V. Judson's Accounts from Petrograd, 1917–1918* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1998), 30.

engaged in trying to serve their country, but with no one to co-ordinate their actions. They were continually getting in each other's way." And, he added, "Our own representatives—embassy, military mission, Red Cross, and consulates—were just as bitterly divided."⁷⁵

At the same time, the ambassador's "neglect of discerning reports" by his more competent and informed subordinates "meant that Francis denied himself real familiarity with the Russian situation."⁷⁶ In mid-September, J. Butler Wright noted in his diary that amid rumors "that the 'Bolshevik' sentiment is growing in strength throughout the country everyone, with only the exception of D. R. F., believes that a clash—and a serious one—is bound to occur soon." The counselor was amused by the "glowing reports" of D. R. F., which were not distinguished by brilliant insights or farsighted prescriptions.⁷⁷ On the morning of October 26 (November 8), 1917, Francis once more woke up in a completely new country. "Situation here undetermined but this Bolshevik government can not survive and I think will collapse within few days," Francis telegraphed to Washington on the fourth day of the October Revolution.⁷⁸ "[The] 'governor,' as Harper and other advisers called Francis—and in character he remained the ex-governor of Missouri, the Show-Me state—was confident that the Bolsheviks would not take power, and then, that they would fall," Albert Rhys Williams explains.⁷⁹ With such a view, the ambassador "seemed to have no policy at all except to insist that the Bolsheviks could not last."⁸⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Robins, who replaced Thompson as the head of the ARCM, and General Judson were in favor of some limited contacts with the Bolshevik government from the very beginning, considering them a matter of necessity. But Francis officially informed Judson on November 7 (20) that "it was my policy to do nothing or permit no act to be performed by anyone connected with the Embassy or under my control that could be construed as a direct or indirect recognition of what is generally known as the 'Bolshevik' government."⁸¹ The start of the Soviet-German peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk created a new situation. Judson insisted on contact with the Soviet leadership in order to influence conditions of the

⁷⁵ Arthur Bullard, *The Russian Pendulum* (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 111–13. This title is also available as a reprint. See *The Russian Pendulum: Autocracy—Democracy—Bolshevism*, ed. David W. McFadden (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2019).

⁷⁶ Mayers, *The Ambassadors and America's Soviet Policy*, 86.

⁷⁷ Foglesong, "A Missouri Democrat in Revolutionary Russia," 37–40.

⁷⁸ Francis telegram, November 11, 1917, in *FRUS, 1918, Russia*, vol. 3, 207.

⁷⁹ Albert Rhys Williams, *Journey into Revolution: Petrograd, 1917–1918* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 82.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 196–97.

⁸¹ Salzman, *Russia in War and Revolution*, 136.

armistice, and Francis grew inclined to his opinion, but on November 23 (December 6), Lansing forbade "all direct communication with the Bolsheviks." Under pressure from opposite sides, disoriented Francis either acted in contradiction or preferred not to act at all.

All the significant American representatives in Petrograd jointly agreed to recommend opening informal channels of communication with the Bolshevik government in order to coordinate actions against Germany. The American community was united on one other issue as well: the necessity of replacing the ambassador with someone more reliable and with better judgment.⁸² After Francis's conviction was proven wrong by the Bolshevik seizure of power, the sense that the elderly ambassador was tired, confused, and out of touch with Russian reality contributed to a movement by other US envoys in Russia to have him recalled.⁸³ Sisson, the prime instigator of the recall movement, reported on November 21 (December 4): "Found Ambassador without policy except anger at Bolsheviks, unamenable to arguments or entreaties of his official advisers, military and civil." In his opinion, "no fruitful work can be done here by any division of our Government so long as Francis remains in charge of Embassy." The ambassador "impress[es] every one as a sick man absolutely unfitted to the strain physical and mental of his great post," Sisson added.⁸⁴ The next day, Judson wrote in his diary that Francis "seems to me completely exhausted and overwrought by the strain he has recently been under."⁸⁵ Two days later, Huntington reported to Harper that Francis was increasingly tired, despondent, and in ill health.⁸⁶ Bullard shared the common opinion in his letter to Edward House: "Francis is a sick man entirely overwhelmed by the situation, [and] he has created hopelessly hostile relations with people where it is his obvious duty to seek cooperation."⁸⁷ The recommendations for Francis's removal were supported by Basil Miles and William F. Sands, who had already returned to Washington and tried to push the decision through the State Department.⁸⁸

Sir George Buchanan left Petrograd on December 25, 1917 (January 7, 1918), and Francis, being the next in seniority, replaced him as the doyen of the diplomatic corps. His debut in this capacity took place a week later when Francis led the entire corps in its unanimous protest against the arrest of the Romanian minister,

⁸² David W. McFadden, *Alternative Paths: Soviets and Americans, 1917–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 91–92.

⁸³ Foglesong, "A Missouri Democrat in Revolutionary Russia," 38.

⁸⁴ Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 125–26.

⁸⁵ Salzman, *Russia in War and Revolution*, 165.

⁸⁶ See Saul, *War and Revolution*, 201.

⁸⁷ See McFadden, *Alternative Paths*, 92.

⁸⁸ Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 385–86.

Count Diamandy, and all his staff by the Bolsheviks.⁸⁹ Lenin responded by pointing to the extremely dangerous situation in which Russian troops found themselves on the Romanian Front. Nevertheless, the Romanians were released the following day and then deported from Russia. Significantly, the unpublished version of Francis's memoirs differs in this particular case from the published one.⁹⁰ In the course of further events, Francis was becoming increasingly isolated—from Washington, the Soviet government, and his own staff.⁹¹ On February 7, 1918, Harper concluded that a new ambassador was needed because “men of wide vision and men of action are required at this most critical post.”⁹² At the same time, Robins was bound to appear in Petrograd as “the real American Ambassador” and, thus, to diminish Francis's prestige and his potential usefulness in the formal ambassadorial position.⁹³

By the end of January, the wife of the naval attaché at Petrograd has come to the conclusion that there was “no place for Americans! There is nothing that they can accomplish.”⁹⁴ That same day, the Soviet delegation at Brest-Litovsk interrupted peace negotiations to give a pretext for the German offensive, which began on February 18, 1918, and created danger for Petrograd.⁹⁵ Two days later, at a conference of Allied representatives, the decision was made to abandon the Russian capital. While the Soviet government was preparing to escape to Moscow, the Americans chose Vologda, a railroad junction 300 miles east of Petrograd. There, Francis might decide to continue his way further east to Vladivostok or to go to Arkhangel'sk in northern Russia. On February 24 and 27, the American colony (consisting of more

⁸⁹ See *FRUS, 1918, Russia*, vol. 1, 477–78; Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 330–42. For other accounts of these events, see Louis de Robien, *The Diary of a Diplomat in Russia, 1917–1918* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 190–94 (French); Flavius Solomon and Andrei Cușco, “How Much Ideology can Diplomacy Endure? The Early Phase of Soviet-Romanian Relations, November 1917–February 1918,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 63, no. 3 (2015): 400–407 (Romanian); I.A. Zalkind, “NKID v semnadsatom godu,” *Utro Strany Sovetov* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1988), 204 (Soviet).

⁹⁰ See Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 338.

⁹¹ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 222–24.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 229.

⁹³ Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 395–96.

⁹⁴ Pauline S. Crosley, *Intimate Letters from Petrograd* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), 273. This title is also available as a reprint. See *Intimate Letters from Petrograd*, ed. Lee A. Farrow (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2019).

⁹⁵ The change of calendars occurred in between. Until February 1918, Russia clung to the Julian (or Old Style) calendar, which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian (New Style) calendar used in Western Europe and the United States. So February 1, OS, turned into February 14, NS.

than sixty people) had left Petrograd.⁹⁶ It included the embassy staff, officers of the military mission, people of the Red Cross and YMCA, personnel of the New York City Bank, and some other Americans. Most of the other diplomatic missions followed the Americans or joined them later. Thus, Vologda turned to be the “diplomatic capital of Russia,” as Francis termed the city. The theater critic Oliver M. Saylor wrote:

I went out from Petrograd to Vologda to see Mr. Francis early in March 1918, ten days after all the embassies had fled from the panic-stricken capital. The day I arrived in Vologda, the Ambassador gave out to the Russian press the following statement, which was copied throughout Russia: ... “America still counts itself an ally of the Russian people and we shall be ready to help, no matter what Government organizes a vigorous resistance to the German invasion.” ... Here again, with all its genuine sympathy, was the same misunderstanding of the social revolution as a mere political quarrel. Here again was the delusion in which most people outside Russia resisted—the delusion that Russia could fight once more if she wished to.⁹⁷

News of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, concluded on March 3, 1918, quickly reached Vologda. Francis began to “inveigh against Brest-Litovsk,” hoping to destroy it, especially after the Murmansk experiment where the Allies cooperated with the local Soviets in joint efforts to organize an anti-German Front. On April 5, Francis telegraphed to Lansing: “Transportation conditions deplorable and require improvement, which we can best render having demonstrated our ability thereof by bettering Soviet government service.” The ambassador even suggested “to place American Railway Commission in charge of Soviet government.... Furthermore, in event of Allied intervention from east or west or both, railroad efficiency is essential,” he continued. Francis recommended to ignore “mistakes of Soviet government and outrages practiced” in order to “induce Soviet government to ask Allied assistance, so that when Allies enter Russia, will not with Soviet government’s refusal, but Soviet government’s welcome.”⁹⁸ By May 2, Francis had decided that the “time for Allied intervention has arrived” because the Russian people were ready to welcome it.⁹⁹ On June 4, after the Czecho-Slovak revolt, he made a trip to Petrograd to try to establish contact with anti-Bolshevik forces in the former capital on the assumption that soon,

⁹⁶ Saul, *War and Revolution*, 234–35.

⁹⁷ Oliver M. Saylor, “Russia Looks to America,” *North American Review* 209, no. 759 (1919): 191–93.

⁹⁸ Francis telegram, April 5, 1918, in *FRUS, 1918, Russia*, vol. 3, 228.

⁹⁹ Francis telegram, May 2, 1918, in *FRUS, 1918, Russia*, vol. 1, 519–21.

the Bolshevik power would collapse.¹⁰⁰ In his opinion, the Czecho-Slovak case might justify the intervention of the Allied powers in Russia.¹⁰¹ “Russian people [are] confidently expecting Allied intervention and will welcome it,” Francis stated. “Russian people are expecting America to lead in intervention,” he continued. “At the same time these people require leadership and look to us therefore.”¹⁰²

During his stay in Vologda and later in Arkhangel’sk, Francis associated with many people who were prominent not only in local affairs, but in all-Russian politics as well. On July 4, 1918, he reported: “I gave a Fourth of July reception to-day. ... [The] feeling in Vologda is very friendly towards the Embassy as it is realized that we have added much to the reputation of the city.”¹⁰³ But this idyll disappeared two days later when Left Socialist Revolutionaries assassinated Count Mirbach, Germany’s envoy to Russia, and an anti-Bolshevik uprising erupted in Moscow, followed by a mutiny in Yaroslavl’. In response, the Extraordinary Revolutionary Staff was created in Vologda. It assumed all powers in the city and stationed a military guard at the door of the embassy. The Soviet government tried to force diplomats to move to Moscow. Instead they decided to escape to Arkhangel’sk, where the Allied intervention was anticipated.

On July 24, 1918, Francis, at the head of the entire diplomatic corps, left Vologda and reached Arkhangel’sk after the Allied forces occupied the city. Arkhangel’sk turned out to be the second diplomatic capital of Russia alongside Moscow. From Arkhangel’sk, Francis “called for large, aggressive military campaigns to reorganize Russian resistance to Germany and eradicate the menace of Bolshevism.”¹⁰⁴ Mayers wrote: “There Francis became enmeshed in the affairs of Nicholas Chaikovsky and the anti-Bolsheviks of the area, whose career involved coup, countercoup, and kidnappings.”¹⁰⁵ He practiced direct and sometimes crucial personal intervention in local politics, acting more like a governor of Missouri than an ambassador. Francis even pressed (or “advised very categorically,” in his own words) the appointments of officials in the Northern Government. But by the fall of that year, he had depleted his own resources of energy and health. The timely arrival of Rear Admiral McCully, who was appointed commander of the American Naval forces in north Russia, saved him. Placed aboard the USS *Olympia* on a stretcher, Francis left Arkhangel’sk for England on November 7, 1918. It was the first anniversary of the October Revolution

¹⁰⁰ McFadden, *Alternative Paths*, 136.

¹⁰¹ Francis telegram, June 11, 1918, in *FRUS, 1918, Russia*, vol. 1, 561.

¹⁰² Francis telegram, June 22, 1918, in *FRUS, 1918, Russia*, vol. 2, 220–23.

¹⁰³ Francis telegram, July 4, 1918, in *FRUS, 1918, Russia*, vol. 1, 568.

¹⁰⁴ David S. Foglesong, *America’s Secret War against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 295.

¹⁰⁵ Mayers, *The Ambassadors and America’s Soviet Policy*, 83.

and four days before the Armistice, signed on November 11, 1918, which ended the World War.

Francis spent the remaining eight years of his life trying to convince the American public that he was right, as he did in his testimony before the Overman Committee and in his memoirs.¹⁰⁶ He published his *Russia from the American Embassy* soon after his official resignation in 1920. But the ambassador's book "proved to be more a defense of his actions in Russia than a historical memoir."¹⁰⁷ Kennan noted, "His political role was not a great one, but his simple, outspoken, American pragmatism provided a revealing contrast to the intensely theoretical controversies that raged around him, and one comes away from the reading of his memoirs with the feeling that America could have been in some ways much worse served, if in other ways better."¹⁰⁸ Russian historian Iurii Got'e stated in his review of Francis's memoirs that documents cited by the author constitute the most valuable part of the book. But "Russia, Russian people, and Russian interrelations were not very comprehensible mystery for him." Francis, in his opinion, was "a foreigner with, perhaps, the most alien psychology to us." The American ambassador was "not able to comprehend neither Russia itself, nor what is going on here." Therefore his memoirs are "not an impartial account of events which took place in Russia in 1916–18, but their reflection in the mind of businessman who to his own surprise become their eyewitness," concluded the reviewer.¹⁰⁹

David R. Francis died in 1927. Historians differ in their opinions of his legacy. Francis was the "most fascinating, controversial, and, perhaps, misunderstood American in Russia during the revolutionary years," William Allison noted.¹¹⁰ Consequently, Allison continues, to evaluate "Ambassador Francis is not an easy task. Historians have called him incompetent, misplaced, and more recently, astute and dedicated. His character has generally been praised. His skill as a diplomat, however, has often been criticized."¹¹¹ Kennan wrote: "If, as was the case, he was poorly prepared in many ways for this unusual task, one cannot deny him a certain admiration for the spirit in which he accepted and performed it."¹¹² But even Kennan's carefully balanced study has "not erased the negative portrait of David R. Francis as a nice old fellow who had no experience in diplomacy and was over his head representing

¹⁰⁶ Allison, *American Diplomats in Russia*, 44–46.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁰⁸ Kennan, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*, 50–51.

¹⁰⁹ Iurii Got'e, "Vospominaniia posla Frensisa o Rossii," *Amaly* 3 (1923): 292–93.

¹¹⁰ Allison, *American Diplomats in Russia*, 13.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹¹² Kennan, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*, 50.

the United States in revolutionary Russia.”¹¹³ According to Jamie H. Cockfield, the “problem with his work came in his inability to comprehend and interpret events.”¹¹⁴ David Mayers stated categorically: “Mediocre U.S. diplomacy in St. Petersburg, broken by the accidental appearance of able envoys, culminated in the careers of Marye and Francis.”¹¹⁵ Only David S. Foglesong strays from these opinions with his conclusion that “a careful review of the available evidence suggests the need to revise the common image of Ambassador Francis as a doddering, diplomatic dilettante.”¹¹⁶

As Kennan wrote many years ago, “It was easy for the members of the American community and the diplomatic corps to ridicule Francis and to deprecate his ability. An injustice had been done to him, an undeserved one, in sending him to such a post at such a time. Only the greatest unfamiliarity with the requirements of normal diplomatic life could have explained a belief that Francis at his age and with his experience and temperament, would have been well equipped to meet those requirements.”¹¹⁷ This conclusion paved the way for considering the Francis problem as a part of the much broader Wilson problem. It was President Wilson who “thought that all people, whether they be Mexican peons or Russian peasants, whites or orientals, were capable of being trained in the habits of democracy.”¹¹⁸ Lloyd C. Gardner noted, “In both Mexico and Russia, finally, Wilson had started out fighting counter-revolution, and ended struggling to contain and control the very forces he had unknowingly encouraged by condemning reactionary special interests and imperialism.”¹¹⁹ Christopher Lasch explained, “In wartime Russia, Wilsonians sought initially to buttress the pro-Allied liberal-nationalist regime of the March Revolution, in order to save the moral and material strength of a liberalized Russia for the anti-German coalition. Then too, even after failing to prevent the triumph of Russian Bolshevism, the Wilson Administration continued its limited efforts, by means of intervention and diplomacy, to end the single-party rule of the Bolsheviks and hopefully to bring Russia back to the lost liberalism of the March Revolution.”¹²⁰ As David McFadden concluded, “Wilson’s policy was so torn between anti-Bolshevism and anti-intervention that it

¹¹³ Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano*, xii.

¹¹⁴ *Dollars and Diplomacy*, 4.

¹¹⁵ Mayers, *The Ambassadors and America’s Soviet Policy*, 85.

¹¹⁶ Foglesong, “A Missouri Democrat in Revolutionary Russia,” 39.

¹¹⁷ Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War*, 40.

¹¹⁸ Arthur S. Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist: A Look at His Major Foreign Policies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), 14.

¹¹⁹ Lloyd C. Gardner, *Wilson and Revolutions, 1913–1921* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1976), 18.

¹²⁰ Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 7.

was not a Wilson policy at all, but instead a nonpolicy, often determined by subordinates, allies, or events in Russia.”¹²¹

Francis's diplomatic career is a particular case of Wilsonianism, with its liberal illusions and democratic prejudices. That is why his failure as a diplomat may be considered a display of the Woodrow Wilson's greater fiasco, which culminated in the Senate's refusal to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. Francis was an ordinary American politician with a rather narrow provincial outlook. As an American who found himself in Petrograd, he wished to see in Russia another America. But Russia is a world in itself, and a foreign embassy is not the best point for observation. History itself, with the magnitude of events, was against Francis. Nevertheless, he was not the worst of the US ambassadors in Russia. Francis was not, of course, the right man in the right place, but obviously he deserves sympathy, and his memoirs—the closest attention.

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