

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

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CANADA'S FORGOTTEN FAILURE:

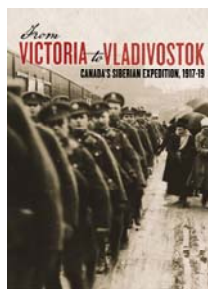
Historian details mutiny, working-class radicalism that accompanied ill-fated mission to Siberia in 1918

Vancouver – While the Canadian victories of the First World War have become celebrated parts of our country's national fabric, at least one of its military failures has largely escaped historical scrutiny, until now. In *From Victoria to Vladivostok: Canada's Siberian Expedition, 1917-19*, historian Benjamin Isitt brings to life a forgotten chapter in the history of Canada and Russia – the journey of 4,200 Canadian soldiers from Victoria to Vladivostok in 1918 to help defeat Bolshevism.

The armistice that ended the Great War was only six weeks old when the men of Canada's 259th Battalion, 16th Infantry Brigade, marched out of Victoria en route to Siberia to fight a new enemy – the amorphous, largely ideological spectre of Bolshevism. Canada's achievements on the battlefields of Europe had earned the young country international respect, and the government was ready to capitalize on it by sending Canadian troops out as leaders in the Siberian mission. At home, however, citizens were tired of war, and the country's increasingly radical working class were actually agitating in favour of the Bolshevik cause. Amongst the soldiers, many of them conscripts from French Quebec, dissent turned to mutiny, resulting in their deployment to Siberia by force. By Spring 1919, the mission was a failure, and Canadian forces returned home to a country facing a broadscale labour revolt, never having seen the active battlefield.

An innovative and original work, *From Victoria to Vladivostok* tells the story of Canada's first defeat as a world power. Isitt eloquently shows how domestic factors, such as the working class opposition to war and rising leftist sentiment among workers, played a major role in the outcome of the expedition. In so doing, he sheds new light on Canadian military, social, and labour history and illuminates the complex factors that shaped foreign policy in a country that was just beginning to become a world power.

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From Victoria to Vladivostok: Canada's Siberian Expedition, 1917-1919

By Benjamin Isitt

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Benjamin Isitt is Assistant Professor of History at the University of British Columbia. A specialist in the social history of twentieth-century Canada and the world, Dr Isitt's research has appeared in scholarly and popular publications including the *Canadian Historical Review*, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *Legion Magazine* and the *Vancouver Sun*. *From Victoria to Vladivostok* is his first book, the result of a decade of archival research and two trips across Russia meeting with scholars and sharing research at universities in the Russian Far East, Siberia, and European Russia. The book is complemented by the Siberian Expedition Virtual Exhibition and Digital Archive -- www.SiberianExpedition.ca -- an interactive, trilingual teaching resource that preserves and provides public access to 2,300 photographs and documents on this forgotten military force. For more information, visit Dr Isitt's website: www.Isitt.ca.

Review Quotes

Short, inglorious, hugely unpopular at the time and largely forgotten now: most Canadians probably have no idea that, once upon a time, this country invaded Russia...Isitt's extensive analysis of why we were there—mostly trying to deprive revolutionary workers at home of an international beacon—is convincing, as is his ironic conclusion: the blatant class warfare of the expedition did more to incite radicalism at home than it did to suppress it in Russia. Less than six months after the Victoria mutiny, a rising tide of industrial unionism would spark the Winnipeg General Strike.

- Brian Bethune, *Macleans.ca*

Isitt's fascinating study of the Canadian contribution to the military expedition to Siberia designed to crush Lenin's nascent Communist state punches a large hole in how much of Canada's chattering class conceives of the country: i.e. as the world's boy.

- Nathan Greenfield, *The Times Literary Supplement*