

Theodore Roosevelt's Last Editorial

Bring the Fighting Men Home

On Thursday, January 2nd, Colonel Roosevelt dictated this article to his secretary Miss Stricker who took it to him on Saturday, January 4th. One of the last things he did on the Sunday evening before his death was to correct the typewritten copy.
The Editor

OUR army abroad is composed of three elements. The first includes the officers and men who have entered the regular army as a permanent profession. These men's homes are in the regular army wherever it may be and they are indifferent as to where they are ordered, and the best among them accept the Philippines, or Mexican Border, or Panama with like equanimity. There are, second, the volunteers. These include the national guard regiments and also very many men who went into the regular regiments and the drafted divisions because thereby they could quickest get to the other side. These men entered for the one great purpose of beating Germany to her knees and winning the war. Third, the drafted men. These were drafted under a law specially devised to provide for fighting this great war through to a successful ending. Congress never would have passed such a law if there had been any thought of permitting the men to be kept away from their ordinary business and from the task of earning their livelihood for themselves and those dependent upon them in order to take part in obscure European contests as to which the American people as a whole has little interest or information.

There are in this country, however, many regulars and many volunteers who did not get over into the fighting, who bitterly regret this fact and who would welcome the chance to see some service overseas under the American flag no matter what form it might take.

THERE are plenty of politicians willing to go to any maudlin extreme in praising our soldiers when they don't have to translate the praise into anything effective. But there has been altogether too much acquiescence in the really scandalous failure of our Administration to see that the soldiers are promptly paid, that the allotments to their dependent relatives are promptly issued, that such a simple thing as getting them their mail is efficiently done and that reasonable expedition is shown in letting their kinsfolk at home know when they are killed or wounded. There have been the queerest abuses in the refusal to allow the promotions whether for doughboys, medical men or any other which have been recommended by and on behalf of the men actually on the firing line. But the most serious grievance is the proposal which has appeared in the public press from both the State and War Departments and indeed the Navy Department also to the effect that it might be a year or two before our men were brought home because they would be needed to police Europe and preserve order.

NOW, as regards Russia. I cannot speak with decision because neither I nor anyone else knows what has been promised explicitly or implicitly by the Administration—and I am by no means certain that the Administration itself knows. We must keep our promises. But it does seem exceedingly silly to have our gallant boys waging a midwinter campaign south of Archangel for objects which President Wilson has with de-

termined furtiveness kept to himself. Surely the men at Archangel can be brought home. In Siberia, however, the case is different. The Administration has waged war in Siberia with the maximum of fatuity. We went in to aid the heroic Czecho-Slovaks. We took no really efficient steps to aid them, but we did do enough to make the Bolsheviks, who unquestionably at the moment represent the majority of the Russian people—feel that we are their armed enemies. In fact the Administration in Siberia went on the theory of the back-woodsman

who, seeing a black object in the twilight, fired so as to hit it if it was a bear and miss it if it was a calf. This is never a plan that is conducive to good marksmanship. If fifty thousand troops under General Wood had been sent to Siberia last April, the American, Czecho-Slovak and allied line would now have been west of the Urals, and possibly in Moscow. But we sent an insufficient force too late and we wouldn't permit that force to do anything. Now, most emphatically we must keep our engagements. Under no consideration must we abandon the Czecho-Slovaks and the Siberians who have trusted to our promises, nor need there be any difficulty about sending over plenty of troops to their aid. The regular army and any number of volunteers would eagerly go.

I EMPHATICALLY disbelieve in any proposal to conquer Russia with an alien army and order her to set up the sort of Government which we think the Russians ought to have. Such an army tends to unite all the people of the country against it simply because it is foreign. We should give all the means and arms that we can to the Russians who are our allies and who have been anti-German and to whom we have been committed. If, as they say, the majority of the people are with them, then they will upset the Bolsheviks. But we have finished the great war with Germany, the war which brought about our interference in Russia. I do not believe in keeping our men on the other side to patrol the Rhine, or police Russia, or interfere in Central Europe or the Baltic Peninsula. At the peace table it is to be presumed we shall give to each nationality all the aid we can in peaceable fashion. But I do not believe that the United States should enter into a world-wide career of disinterested violence for the right; because where both the lands and the issues involved are remote from us our people wouldn't know with certainty where the right lay and wouldn't feel that we ought to go into the quarrel. We have enough to do that is our business. Mexico is our Baltic Peninsula and during the last five years, thanks largely to Mr. Wilson's able assistance, it has been reduced to a condition as hideous as that of the Balkan Peninsula under Turkish rule. We are in honor bound to remedy this wrong and to keep ourselves so prepared that the Monroe Doctrine, especially as regards the lands in any way controlling the approach to the Panama Canal, shall be accepted as immutable international law.