



CIVIL WAR IN RUSSIAN REGIONS
ГРАЖДАНСКАЯ ВОЙНА В РОССИЙСКИХ РЕГИОНАХ

<https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2025-24-1-8-18>
EDN: ABUAQA

Research article / Научная статья

**Italian Expeditionary Forces in Siberia and Military Mission
under Supreme Ruler of Russia Admiral A.V. Kolchak in 1918–1919**

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Abstract: The author considers the fate of Italian prisoners of the First World War in Russia during the Civil War, as well as the participation of Italian prisoners of war and troops of the Expeditionary Corps of the Italian Army in the foreign military intervention in Siberia and the Far East as part of the Entente forces. The author analyzed the process of the formation of Italian military units in Russia from prisoners, which began in 1918 in the Volga region, Siberia and the Far East, as well as the formation and dispatch of the Italian Expeditionary Corps in the Far East, which was small in numbers, from Italy to Vladivostok. The article provides information on the number of Italian troops during the Civil War in Russia, places of their formation and deployment, and their participation in military operations. These Italian troops were the only interventionist forces in Siberia consisting of Italian prisoners of war and expeditionary troops which deliberately arrived in Russia. There were also attempts by Italy to organize the work of the military mission in Omsk at the Headquarters of the Supreme Ruler of Russia Admiral A.V. Kolchak; the archival documents regarding its activity are published for the first time. In conclusion Italy was the least active participant in the intervention in Siberia among all Entente countries, and main undeclared goal of Italians – was to gather and rescue former prisoners of the First World War out of Russia.

Keywords: The Great Russian Revolution, anti-Soviet intervention, “Battaglioni Neri,” battalion “Savoy,” “Legion Redenta di Siberia”

Conflicts of interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Funding: The research was supported by RSF (project No. 24-18-00216), <https://rscf.ru/project/24-18-00216/>

For citation: Gagkuev, R.G. “Italian Expeditionary Forces in Siberia and Military Mission under Supreme Ruler of Russia Admiral A.V. Kolchak in 1918–1919.” *RUDN Journal of Russian History* 24, no. 1 (February 2025): 8–18. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2025-24-1-8-18>

**Итальянские экспедиционные войска в Сибири
и военная миссия при верховном правителе России
адмирале А.В. Колчаке в 1918–1919 гг.**

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Аннотация: Рассматривается судьба итальянских военнопленных Первой мировой войны в России в годы Гражданской войны, а также участие итальянских военнопленных и войск экспедиционного корпуса итальянской армии в иностранной военной интервенции в Сибири и на Дальнем Востоке в со-



ставе сил Антанты. Анализируется процесс формирования итальянских военных соединений в России из пленных, начавшийся с 1918 г. в Поволжье, Сибири и на Дальнем Востоке, а также формирование и отправка небольшого по численности Итальянского экспедиционного корпуса на Дальнем Востоке из Италии во Владивосток. Приводятся сведения о численности итальянских войск во время Гражданской войны в России, местах их формирований и дислокации, участия в боевых действиях. Итальянские войска были единственными из сил интервентов в Сибири состоявшие из военнопленных-итальянцев и специально прибывших в Россию экспедиционных войск. Отдельно рассматриваются попытки организации Италией работы военной миссии в Омске при Ставке верховного правителя России адмирала А.В. Колчака, впервые публикуются архивные документы о ее деятельности. Делается вывод о наименее активном из всех стран Антанты участии Италии в интервенции в Сибири, а также главной необъявленной цели итальянцев – сборе и вывозе из России бывших военнопленных Первой мировой войны.

Ключевые слова: Великая российская революция, антисоветская интервенция, «Черные батальоны», батальон «Савойя», «Сибирский легион спасения»

Заявление о конфликте интересов: Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Финансирование: Исследование выполнено за счет гранта Российского научного фонда № 24-18-00216, <https://rscf.ru/project/24-18-00216/>

Для цитирования: Гаскуев Р.Г. Итальянские экспедиционные войска в Сибири и военная миссия при верховном правителе России адмирале А.В. Колчаке в 1918–1919 гг. // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: История России. 2025. Т. 24. № 1. С. 8–18. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2025-24-1-8-18>

Introduction

Relevance. The Russian Revolution and the Civil War in 1917–1922 accompanied by foreign military intervention has remained one of the core issues of Russian history of the XX century for over a hundred years. The centenary of the Russian Revolution of 1917, the beginning (2018) and the end (2022) of the Civil War have attracted the attention of not only professional historians, but also society as a whole. It is due to the current events in Ukraine that the issue of the intervention in the Russian Civil War by the Entente countries and their provision of military assistance to one of the opposing sides in the internecine conflict is particularly relevant.

Elaboration of the problem. The participation of Italians in the allied intervention in Siberia and the Far East in 1918–1919 has been poorly studied in Russian and foreign historiography. Italian researchers focus primarily on the fate of Italians enlisted into the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War and captured in Russia. Thus, C. Medeot wrote about the fate of Friulian Italians in Siberia back in 1978¹. The most thorough study of Italian prisoners of war in Russia in 1914–1918 was written by Italian researcher M. Rossi², who later continued her research on the issue, also examining the course of the Civil War in Russia³. In Russian historiography, the fate of Italian prisoners of war and Italian expeditionary forces in Siberia in 1918–1919 is viewed as a secondary issue, rarely touched upon in studies when examining the subject of the Entente intervention as a whole⁴. This issue is also considered in collections of published documents⁵.

¹ C. Medeot, *Friulani in Russia e in Siberia, 1914–1919* (Gorizia: Pellicano, 1978).

² M. Rossi, *I prigionieri dello zar: soldati italiani dell'esercito austro-ungarico nei lager della Russia (1914–1918)* (Milano: Mursia, 1997).

³ M. Rossi, *Irredenti giuliani al fronte russo storie di ordinaria diserzione, di lunghe prigioni e di sospirati rimpatri (1914–1920)* (Udine: Del Bianco, 1998); M. Rossi, “Il Corpo di spedizione italiano in Siberia e in Estremo Oriente. Un difficile impatto con la realtà russa 1918–1919,” *Italia contemporanea*, no. 256–257 (2009): 583–598.

⁴ I. Subbotovskiy, *Soiuzniki, russkie reakcionery i intervenciia: Kratkii obzor* [Allies, Russian reactionaries and intervention: A brief review] (Leningrad: Bulletin of the Leningrad Soviet Publ., 1926), 214, 217–218; M.I. Svetachev, *Imperialisticheskaia intervenciia v Sibiri i na Dalnem Vostoke* [Imperialist intervention in Siberia and the Far East] (Novosibirsk: Nauka Publ., 1983), 179; *Antisovetskaia intervenciia i yeye krakh. 1917–1922* [Anti-Soviet intervention and its collapse. 1917–1922] (Moscow: Politizdat Publ., 1987), 53, 60, 63.

⁵ *Dokumenty geroicheskoi borby. Sbornik dokumentalnykh materialov, posviashchennykh borbe protiv inostrannoi interventsii i vnutrennei kontrrevolyutsii na territorii Yeniseiskoi gubernii (1918–20 gg.)*

One of the first scientists to touch upon this subject was A.I. Deryabin⁶. A more detailed study of the Italian expeditionary forces and the sources of their recruitment was written by L.G. Kapustin whose work was based on a review of Italian historiography on the issue⁷. The work of V.G. Datsyshen with extensive use of publications of Siberian periodicals examines in detail the history of the formation and participation in military operations of the Italian Expeditionary Forces in the Far East⁸. At the same time, the historiography lacks information on the existence and activities of the Italian military mission at the Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief in Omsk in 1919.

The purpose of the study is to provide a comprehensive presentation of the participation of Italian prisoners of war and Italy as an Entente country in the allied intervention in the East of Russia, including an examination of the Italian military formations in Siberia and the Far East in 1918–1919, as well as attempts to create an Italian military mission in Omsk.

The source base for the study was the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian government of Admiral A.V. Kolchak, the Supreme Ruler of Russia (the State Archive of the Russian Federation F. R-200. Op. 1. D. 566) which were introduced into scientific use for the first time. The correspondence on the issues of the deployment and organization of the work of the Italian military mission in Omsk allows us to form a view of the attitude of the Russian command towards it, the complexity of the situation of Italian officers, and to show Italy's belated measures in organizing the mission.

Foreign intervention in the East of Russia

During the Russian Civil War in 1918–1922, people from more than ten countries took part in the military intervention against Soviet Russia in the Urals, Siberia and the Far East. Great Britain, Italy, Canada, the USA, France and Japan sent their military forces varying in strength and size. The number of the Allied forces in the East of Russia was quite large and, according to various sources, ranged from 100 to 150 thousand people. American historian J. Stephan cites data for the end of 1918 on the Allied forces in the Russian Far East – 73,000 Japanese, 9,000 Americans, 5,000 Chinese, 4,000 Canadians, 2,000 Italians, 1,600 British and 700 French⁹. In 1918–1919 the numerous forces of the Entente states and their allied countries were far from the front line, controlling the rear areas in the Far East, occupying large cities and guarding transport routes – railways and ports.

Moreover, in the East of Russia there were national formations representing the states formed on the ruins of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires subordinated to the allied command. They were created from soldiers and officers taken prisoner by the Russian army in the First World War, sent in 1914–1916 to prisoner of war camps in the east of the Russian Empire. The most famous of them were the troops of the Czechoslo-

[Documents of the heroic struggle. Collection of documentary materials dedicated to the struggle against foreign intervention and internal counterrevolution in the territory of Yenisei province (1918–20)] (Krasnoyarsk: Book Publishing House Publ., 1959), 151, 249–250.

⁶ A.I. Deryabin, *Grazhdanskaia voina v Rossii 1917–1922. Voiska interventov* [Civil War in Russia 1917–1922. The interventionist troops] (Moscow: AST Publ.; Astrel Publ., 2003).

⁷ L.G. Kapustin, “Italian armed formations in the East of Russia. 1918–1920,” *Belaia armiia. Beloe delo*, no. 22 (2015): 46–70.

⁸ V.G. Datsyshen, “Italian garrison in Krasnoyarsk. From the history of the Civil War in Siberia,” *Journal of Ancient Technology Laboratory* 15, no. 2 (2019): 186–195, <http://dx.doi.org/10.21285/2415-8739-2019-2-186-195> C. 186–195.

⁹ J.J. Stephan, *The Russian Far East: A History* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 132.

vak Corps subordinated to the French command (about 60,000 people¹⁰). The second largest were the Polish units, which in 1919 numbered 8,900 soldiers and officers in February¹¹ and over 11,200 in July¹². Formations of small size and combat significance were created from Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (a total of about 7,600 people in numerous small formations of “Yugoslavs”)¹³, Romanians (about 4,500 people)¹⁴, Latvians (about 400 people)¹⁵ and a number of other small national units. In total, in 1919, they numbered about 85,000 people. All these formations were subordinated to the commander-in-chief of the Entente forces in Siberia west of Lake Baikal, French division general Pierre Thiébaut Charles Maurice Janin.

Italian prisoners of war in Russia

The Italian troops in Siberia in 1918–1919 were the only ones of all the expeditionary forces of the Entente states to have a dual source of recruitment. On the one hand, they were composed of soldiers and officers who arrived directly from the Kingdom of Italy; on the other hand, they were actively replenished with Italian prisoners of war from the Austro-Hungarian army, who ended up in it after mobilization in the parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire populated by Italians. During the First World War, they made up about 1% of the army's personnel¹⁶.

According to the official data, there were up to 26,000 Italian officers and soldiers captured in Russia, who had served in the Austro-Hungarian army (according to some estimates, up to 40,000), half of whom were residents of Trieste and Istria. After the Kingdom of Italy entered World War I on the side of the Entente in May 1915, most Austro-Hungarian Italian prisoners (almost 4,000 people) were in the Kirsanov camp in the Tambov province. The Italian embassy in Moscow aimed to quickly repatriate their compatriots to the homeland. The prisoners' hopes of returning to Italy were linked to the Italian Military Mission, which arrived in Petrograd in June 1915. Moreover, in August 1915, a special military mission arrived in Russia, whose task was to search for Italian prisoners of war, to identify those wishing to acquire Italian citizenship and organize their departure to Italy. By the end of the year, three groups of Italian prisoners of war, totaling over 4,000 people, had been sent by sea to Italy via Arkhangelsk. The evacuation of Italians lasted until the establishment of Soviet power in Russia in October 1917¹⁷.

From 1918, in conditions of the Civil War in Russia, further evacuation of Italians could only take place through the Russian Far East. Italian military representatives who were in Russia at that time attempted to concentrate Italian prisoners of war on the Pacific coast of Russia. In late 1917 – early 1918, 2,500 Italian prisoners were transported from European Russia to Harbin in China, and from there sent to the Italian concession of

¹⁰ A.M. Zaharov, “*Dvoiurodnye brat'ia*”: *Slavianskie dobrovolcheskie vooruzhennye formirovaniia v Rossii* [“Cousins”: Slavic Volunteer Armed Forces in Russia] (St. Petersburg: Russian State Pedagogical University Publ., 2020), 386.

¹¹ M. Janin, *Ma mission en Sibirie. 1918–1920* (Paris: Payot, 1933), 88.

¹² H. Baginski, *Wojsko Polskie na Wschodzie 1914–1920* [Polish Army in the East 1914–1920] (Warszawa: Wojskowy Instytut Naukowo-Wydawniczy, 1921), 560.

¹³ N.B. Popovich, “‘Odyssey from Odessa to Krasnoyarsk...’ Serbs in Siberia in 1919–1921,” *Slavic Almanac* (2004): 190–191.

¹⁴ A.V. Bodrov, I.E. Magadeev, A.Yu. Pavlov, E.P. Feskova, *Vrag, protivnik, soizuznik? Rossiia vo vneshnei politike Frantsii v 1917–1924 gg.* [Enemy, adversary, ally? Russia in French foreign policy in 1917–1924] (St. Petersburg: RHGA Publ., 2021), 246.

¹⁵ J. Legras, “L’agonie de la Sibérie (1918–1920),” *Le Monde Slave*, no. 2 (1931): 65.

¹⁶ S.N. Vasileva, *Voennoplennyye Germanii, Avstro-Vengrii i Rossii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny* [Prisoners of war of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia during the First World War] (Moscow: MGOPU Publ., 1999), 85.

¹⁷ M. Rossi, *I prigionieri dello zar...*, 54, 149; M. Rossi, “Il Corpo di spedizione italiano in Siberia e in Estremo Oriente,” 584; L.G. Kapustin, “Italian armed formations in the East of Russia,” 47–49.

Tianjin, to Beijing and other settlements in China. Another 2,350 prisoners who were in Vologda and Kirsanov at the end of 1917 were sent to the Far East, where they later joined the Italian Expeditionary Forces¹⁸.

The Italians who found themselves in Siberia, the Russian Far East and China were subjected to political pressure from the Italian military representatives in Russia, who sought to persuade them to participate in the fight against the Soviet government. An important step was the decision by the Italian government in the summer of 1918 to delay former Italian prisoners of war in Russia to participate in the intervention. They were to join the Italian Expeditionary Forces arriving in Russia¹⁹.

As a result of the transfer of Italian prisoners of war from European Russia to Siberia and the Far East, a number of Italian formations were created that took part in the intervention of the Entente states in Russia. The first ones were the “Black Battalions” (“Battaglioni Neri”) formed in China, named after the color of the tabs on their uniforms (there were four battalions in total). As early as 1917, an Italian formation of three battalions was created in the prisoner of war camp in Kirsanov by Cosma Manera. After the transfer of Italian prisoners of war to China, they were distributed in three locations: 1,750 people in Tianjin, 500 in Beijing, and 250 people in Shanghai. At the end of June 1918, the prisoners were informed of the formation of expeditionary forces, and it was suggested that they join the ranks of the Italian army, on the condition that they participate in actions against the Bolsheviks, acquire Italian citizenship and swear allegiance to the king. Those who joined the expeditionary forces were subsequently sent home as Italian citizens; those who refused to join were sent to a special camp²⁰.

When the “Black Battalions” were created, about 1,200 applications for service were received, of which Major Manera accepted 850, who were enlisted in the Italian army from August 1, 1918. From August 15, the “Black Battalions” formed the core of the Italian Expeditionary Forces in the Far East that had arrived from Italy²¹. The “Declaration of the Italian Government on the Action in Siberia” signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Baron Sidney Costantino Sonnino dated December 3, 1918 stated:

In obedience to <...> the voice of justice and humanity, Italy sent a detachment of two battalions of its troops to Siberia, which are ready to come to the defense of the Czechoslovaks now, together with the allies. <...> On the occasion of its present action, the Italian government wishes to declare in the most solemn form its firm decision not to interfere in the internal affairs of Russia, and to respect unconditionally its sovereignty and territorial integrity ...²²

The second major Italian formation organized during the Russian Civil War was the “Savoy” Battalion numbering about 300 people (according to other sources, the number was 800 people). The battalion was created in September 1918 in Samara by a civilian, Andrea Compatangelo, and bore no relation to the work of the Italian military representatives. The battalion supported the Czechoslovak revolt, and then went east, being replenished along the way with captured Italians. The “Savoy” Battalion stayed in Krasnoyarsk until the arrival of the Italian Expeditionary Forces, after which it was sent to the Far East. In January 1919, upon arrival in Tianjin, Compatangelo proposed that Manera

¹⁸ M. Rossi, “Il Corpo di spedizione italiano in Siberia e in Estremo Oriente,” 584–585.

¹⁹ L.G. Kapustin, “Italian armed formations in the East of Russia,” 50.

²⁰ M. Rossi, “Il Corpo di spedizione italiano in Siberia e in Estremo Oriente,” 586; L.G. Kapustin, “Italian armed formations in the East of Russia,” 50.

²¹ M. Rossi, “Il Corpo di spedizione italiano in Siberia e in Estremo Oriente,” 585–587.

²² “Deklaratsiia italyanskogo pravitelstva po povodu vystupleniia v Sibiri. 3 dekabria 1918 g. [Declaration of the Italian Government on the Action in Siberia. December 3, 1918],” in Zh. Pishon. *Soyuznicheskaya interventsii na Dalnem Vostoke i v Sibiri* (Moscow; Leningrad: State Publishing House Publ., 1925), 74–75.

include his subordinates in the “Black Battalions”, but he was refused. Later, due to the military's mistrust, the “Savoy” Battalion was reorganized; it became part of the Siberian Salvation Legion (Legion Redenta di Siberia) and sent to Vladivostok²³.

Italian Expeditionary Forces in the Far East

The most significant Italian formation during the Russian Civil War was the Italian Expeditionary Forces in the Far East (Corpo di Spedizione Italiano in Estremo Oriente). Colonel Fassini Eduardo Camossi was appointed its commander. Unlike the two previous ones, it was formed in Italy and left for Russia in July 1918. It included an infantry battalion, a mountain artillery section, and the 159th section of the Royal Carabinieri. On the way to the Far East, a company of the 85th Infantry Regiment and two machine gun sections were included in the Expeditionary Forces. On October 17, 1918, the Italian Expeditionary Forces in the Far East (numbering, according to various estimates, 700–900 people) arrived in Manchuria. After being replenished with officers from among the Italian prisoners of war who were in the Far East, the Expeditionary Forces set off for Siberia: on November 17 it arrived in Irkutsk, and on November 21 – in its final destination, Krasnoyarsk. A total of 39 officers and 1,350 soldiers arrived in Krasnoyarsk. The tasks of the Expeditionary Forces included protecting the Trans-Siberian Railway from Red rebels, performing security duty, guarding prisoners of war of the Central Block, and assisting in the gathering of Italian prisoners²⁴. After Colonel Camossi arrived in the Far East, he began commanding the Italian Expeditionary Forces.

In 1918–1919, several thousand more former Italian prisoners managed to reach the Far East in various ways. The shortage of its troops in Russia led to the Italian command's enrolling in the newly formed “Siberian Salvation Legion” not only volunteers who joined the army in exchange for subsequent return to Italy, but also those Italians who refused to join. They began to form units called “Red Battalions.” In organizational terms, the “Siberian Salvation Legion,” which included the “Black Battalions,” the “Savoy” Battalion and other prisoners of war, was part of the Italian Expeditionary Forces in the Far East. In practice, however, only a part of the volunteers from the “Black Battalions” (up to 850 people who joined the army) served in it²⁵.

The most significant group of Italians in Russia was in Krasnoyarsk, where the expeditionary forces were replenished with Italian prisoners of war. According to various estimates, in the Yenisei province there were 1,500–2,000 people from the “Black Battalions” and prisoners of war who had arrived from Italy. In 1919, the Italians took part in battles against the Red partisans. In August, after the strategic defeat of the Russian army of the Supreme Ruler, Admiral A.V. Kolchak became apparent, the Italian units were withdrawn from Krasnoyarsk and sent via the Trans-Siberian Railway to the east. In September, there began their evacuation from Vladivostok to Italy: over 4,000 Italian soldiers and officers were taken away. In total, more than 10,000 former Austro-Hungarian army officers were repatriated from the Russian Far East to Italy. The last Italian units left Russia in November 1919²⁶.

²³ M. Rossi, “Il Corpo di spedizione italiano in Siberia e in Estremo Oriente,” 593–594; L.G. Kapustin, “Italian armed formations in the East of Russia,” 52–53.

²⁴ A.I. Deryabin, *Grazhdanskaia voina v Rossii 1917–1922*, 32; L.G. Kapustin, “Italian armed formations in the East of Russia,” 53–54; V.G. Datsyshen, “Italian garrison in Krasnoyarsk,” 189–190.

²⁵ L.G. Kapustin, “Italian armed formations in the East of Russia,” 51, 58.

²⁶ I. Deryabin, *Grazhdanskaia voina v Rossii 1917–1922*, 32; M. Rossi, “Il Corpo di spedizione italiano in Siberia e in Estremo Oriente,” 583; L.G. Kapustin, “Italian armed formations in the East of Russia,” 58–59.

Italian military representatives in Siberia and military mission in Omsk

The wide representation of the Italian military personnel in Siberia and the Far East testified to Italy's desire to establish stable relations with the Russian government in 1918–1919.

As early as 1918, two Italian missions were created to work in the Far East and Siberia. In February, Major Cosma Manera, who had been working in Russia since 1916, was appointed the head of the Italian mission for prisoners of war located in Gornostai (near Vladivostok). His tasks included continuing the search for and gathering Italians in eastern Russia. In October, the Italian military mission headed by Lieutenant Colonel, Count Vittorio Filippi di Baldissero began its work in Vladivostok. From November 1918, the headquarters of the Italian Expeditionary Forces headed by Colonel Camossi was located in Krasnoyarsk²⁷; he commanded the real Italian combat forces.

In June–September 1919, Captain Aldo de Ferrari, a representative of the Italian mission in Siberia and military attaché to the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces in Siberia was in Omsk. His tasks included representing Italy's interests to Supreme Ruler, Admiral A. V. Kolchak and the Russian government, as well as interacting with Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces, French General M. Janin. The sending of representatives of the Italian military mission to Omsk in the context of the already apparent defeat of the Eastern Front of the White movement may indicate that Italian diplomats and military personnel were searching for additional ways to influence their Entente allies within the framework of the ongoing Paris Peace Conference. The documents indicate that the Italians did not gain any influence in Omsk, and the attempts of the Italian representative to get an audience with Kolchak apparently were unsuccessful.

Probably soon after arriving in Omsk, the Italian military were given access to operational information from the front. On June 21, 1919, the acting head of the Special department of the Office of the second quartermaster-general under the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, staff captain N.L. Zhadvoy, on orders from his superiors, notified Italian military attaché to the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces in Siberia, Captain de Ferrari

...that at the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief (Omsk Railway Administration) daily at 2 p.m. operational reports on the situation on all fronts are given. If you wish to use the information provided in the above-mentioned reports, I ask you to attend them personally at the specified time or send your representative²⁸.

However, the status of the representatives of one of the powers allied with Russia did not provide the Italians with accommodation in Omsk which was filled with refugees, military personnel, officials and diplomats. On June 18, 1919, Captain de Ferrari wrote to the second quartermaster-general of the headquarters, Major General P. F. Ryabikov that

despite numerous requests over several months, the Omsk department of the Italian military mission in Siberia has not yet received suitable rooms for offices and quartering its officers²⁹.

De Ferrari hoped for Ryabikov's help in providing accommodation for the Italian military mission, believing that

²⁷ M. Rossi, "Il Corpo di spedizione italiano in Siberia e in Estremo Oriente," 586, 588; L.G. Kapustin, "Italian armed formations in the East of Russia," 51–52.

²⁸ Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archives of the Russian Federation – GARF), f. P-200, op. 1, d. 566, l. 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 2.

the rooms in the “Paris” hotel currently occupied by some of the mission officers are to be vacated today, as the hotel has recently been requisitioned by the Navy Department. In addition, other [Italian] mission officers will soon arrive in Omsk, and they will not be able to stay in the city hotels, as there are no vacant rooms in them³⁰.

The number of Italians in Omsk soon increased. Apparently, in June, a small Italian unit was transferred from Krasnoyarsk to Omsk; it was supposed to increase the influence and significance of the Italian military mission. On July 2, 1919, Major General P.F. Ryabikov wrote about its arrival to commandant of Omsk, Colonel E.M. Kataev³¹.

The representatives of the Italian military mission in Omsk remained unsettled. Ryabikov was forced to write to commandant of Omsk Kataev about improving their living conditions.

... Italian poruchik Tsoki (there was no rank of poruchik in the Italian army, what is meant here is lieutenant. – *author's note*) asks for assistance of the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief that he should be provided with vacant room 28 in Yegorov's rooms, in exchange for room 20, which is very small and is located in the basement. <...> I ask you to immediately provide lieutenant Tsoki with the mentioned room...³²

On July 31, commandant of Omsk, Colonel Kataev, reported to Ryabikov that “Italian officer lieutenant Tsoki is already occupying room 28 in Yegorov's rooms.”³³ However, despite the satisfaction of this request, the Italian military representatives appealed to the Headquarters with requests to improve their living conditions right up until their departure from Omsk. On September 17, 1919, Captain de Ferrari, the representative of the Italian mission in Siberia again sent a request to Major General Ryabikov to improve the living conditions³⁴.

Some disdain towards the representatives of the Italian mission was also evident in the matters of traveling via the Trans-Siberian Railway. As early as August, Major General P.F. Ryabikov appealed to the Chief of military communications of the Headquarters with a request

...not to refuse an urgent provision of a seat on the express train departing today, August 3, to Krasnoyarsk to the officer of the Italian Military Mission, lieutenant Tsoki, who is traveling on the orders of the chief of the mission with very important and urgent documents; he is accompanied by one orderly. In the event that there is no vacant seat, I ask that, in view of the importance of the mission, the said officer be allowed to travel in the corridor³⁵.

Since Tsoki, despite Ryabikov's request, was unable to leave for Krasnoyarsk that day, on August 4 lieutenant Shatsky, the clerk of the Special Department of the second quartermaster-general's office of the Headquarters was forced to write a report on what had happened to the department chief, Staff Captain N.L. Zhadvoyn. He reported that he had approached lieutenant Yaskov, the assistant of the station commandant with a request for help, also presenting the letter of the second quartermaster-general, Major General P.F. Ryabikov, but

... the assistant of the station commandant replied that he could do nothing and the letter presented (as in the text. – *R.G.*) to him meant nothing, and the inspector of the Omsk railway who was passing by stated in a very harsh manner that no seats on the train would be provided for anyone...³⁶

³⁰ Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii..., l. 2–2 ob.

³¹ Ibid., l. 4–4 ob.

³² Ibid., l. 7–7 ob.

³³ Ibid., l. 9.

³⁴ Ibid., l. 14.

³⁵ Ibid., l. 8.

³⁶ Ibid., l. 11–11 ob.

Shatsky drew the attention of his authorities to the fact that “this is the second case with the Italian military mission – the first was with Captain Aldo de Ferrari.”³⁷

Finally, on August 11, lieutenant Shatsky informed the head of the department in a separate report about his conversation with Captain de Ferrari. A detailed retelling of this conversation allows us to judge the tasks facing the Italian officers in Omsk and their disappointment in the attempts to establish contacts with Supreme Ruler of Russia, Admiral A.V. Kolchak, and the Headquarters. In the document, Shatsky informed about his meeting on the evening of August 10 with de Ferrari, who told him the following:

After the conversations with you, Staff Captain Zhadvoyn and some other officers of the Headquarters, it seemed to me that I had succeeded in winning the sympathy of the Russians with my views which I did not hide but expressed openly, and I can confirm what I said about the sympathy of our people for the Russians, as well as the fact that Italy, being dissatisfied with the decision of the Peace Conference, naturally seeks rapprochement with the country which is close to it in interests. You know that I wrote to Vladivostok and asked our mission to come to Omsk in order to begin broader activities absolutely independently and finally free ourselves from the influence of the French military mission. I received positive telegrams from Vladivostok together with directives and an indication that I must personally visit Admiral Kolchak and convey to him the complete unity of our government with that of Russia. You know that the Italian command handed over the equipment and battery of the Italian detachment in Krasnoyarsk to the Russian command absolutely free of charge, which I insisted on, and the Italian equipment in Vladivostok should have been handed over in the same way, and all this, as I have already said, absolutely free of charge. You also know that I did not leave Omsk when the order was received from the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces in Siberia (General M. Janin. – *R.G.*) about the withdrawal of the Italian troops from Siberia, with which I was supposed to go, hoping for warmer and closer rapprochement...

The day before yesterday, after learning of the arrival of the Supreme Ruler from the front and having orders from my government, I asked my adjutant to find out whether the Supreme Ruler could receive me; the next day I sent my adjutant three times to inquire about the same thing, and Admiral Kolchak's adjutant said to my adjutant that it was impossible for me to see the Supreme Ruler, but he promised that he would call me on the telephone. I sat at home all day and waited, and no one called me. I am well aware that the admiral can be very busy, that he has urgent and pressing matters, and of course I cannot expect that I will be received immediately at my request, but I want to be treated with regard, i.e. the adjutant, since he said he would call, should have called me, and not keep me waiting the whole day, and finally I found out that the Supreme Ruler had left. I only fulfilled the orders of my authorities. In fact, not a single request of mine was fulfilled by the Headquarters. I asked for an apartment – I did not receive it, I put up with this, since it is difficult, I asked to give another room to my adjutant, to which the commandant replied that it had been done, but it hadn't been done at all and finally this latest act of the adjutant of the supreme ruler...

Today I will send a note to the adjutant of the Supreme Ruler with the notification that I wanted to see the Supreme Ruler in accordance with the instructions given to me by my government and personally wanted to present to His Excellency the sympathies of the Italian people and the new sacrifices that it is ready to make to save its ally. I did not manage to do this and tomorrow, the 11th, I am sending a telegram about my recall from Omsk...³⁸

Shatsky informed Zhadvoyn that he

had managed to persuade Captain Ferrari to wait a little with the decision promising to inform him this morning that what had happened was probably the result of misunderstanding and that after my report it would probably be possible to eliminate it³⁹.

Conclusion

As can be seen, the participation of the Italians in the intervention of the Entente states in Siberia in 1918–1919 was one of the least active among the allies. The main motive which was not officially proclaimed by the Italian military-political leadership, but

³⁷ Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii..., l. 11–11 ob.

³⁸ Ibid., l. 12–12 ob.

³⁹ Ibid., l. 12 ob.

was implemented in practice, was gathering and bringing former prisoners of World War I out of Russia. Having satisfied the demands of the allied command, Italy sent its expeditionary forces to Siberia, which took part in the actions against the Red rebels. At the same time, the combat readiness of all Italian forces in Siberia and the Far East was not high; like most other allied troops in 1919, they did not take part in battles against the regular Red Army. The evacuation of the Italian expeditionary forces from Russia which began in August 1919 allowed them to leave the country in relatively calm conditions. The attempts of the Italian military mission in Siberia in 1919 to establish closer relations with Supreme Ruler of Russia, Admiral Kolchak, and the Russian Headquarters failed. It was due to both the low status of the Italian representatives in Omsk and their rather late appearance in the capital of White Siberia, when the strategic defeat of the White Eastern Front had already become apparent.

Submitted / Поступила в редакцию: 16.07.2024

Approved after reviewing / Одобрена после рецензирования: 30.11.2024

Accepted for publication / Принята к публикации: 05.12.2024

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