

## Diary in Russia - 1917

### JANUARY 1917

It is possible that he had some of the qualities of a 'nerve specialist,' and either through attendance on the invalid, or by his influence over the mother, induced the latter to believe that he was indispensable for her boy's sake.

So gradually he became her adviser on matters of state, and through the Empress his influence affected the Emperor.

How much he was a paid agent of the enemy it is difficult to say, but there is no doubt that he received money from some sources which did good work for Germany at the time, and bad for Russia.

There seems but little doubt that his principal agent at Court was, wilfully or not, the celebrated Madame Vouirobova, who was very rarely away from the Empress.

The known influence he exercised over the Empress, and thus upon the Emperor, made him the court of appeal for all those intriguers and place-seekers who had their own axes to grind, and knew full well that here was a means of assuring their success. No doubt, wherever the money came from, whether from German sources or others, it became well spent by those who, for their nefarious purposes, brought about, by 'slow drops of poison,' as it were, the ruin of Russia.

The public scandal reached its climax in 1916, when he was 'removed' to other spheres, and of the two spheres there can be but little doubt in which he reposes.

And yet it always seems to me, in going back over past history, that the death of Rasputin, however desirable it was on moral and other grounds, was the factor leading to the final debacle of the Romanoffs.

Instead of saving Russia, by another of the ironies of fate which have pursued that great and unfortunate country, it helped to ruin it.

Looking at all the facts coldly and dispassionately, it seems possible that if this 'happy dispatch' had been postponed till a little later-after the war-Russia might have been spared the terrible blow which loyal Russians felt in the desertion by their country of the Allied cause.

But one thing must always be remembered - his dealings with the Empress were those of a bad adviser, an imaginary saint, who she believed, alas! had the interests of her country and of her son at heart.

Some stories of the many published about him were absolutely untrue and unjustified, except to those who wished for a lucrative result from them.

An unscrupulous blackguard, posing as a saint, and, owing to the cures which he apparently effected on the little Tsarevitch, trusted and believed in by the Empress, whose love for her son and naturally nervous temperament made her an easy prey to advice and suggestions from Rasputin affecting political and other appointments, on which she in her turn over-persuaded the Emperor.

The scandals which he had caused led to tales of worse ones, most of the latter being, however, without any foundation.

I never saw him, as he was not permitted to come to the armies, and he was not a person that one was anxious to see.

But anyone who knew the Empress knew full well that she might have been spared many of the wicked accusations which were made concerning her dealings with him.

#### **4th January 1917.**

In the train last night on my return from Petrograd to Headquarters I travelled with one of the Emperor's A.D.C.'s. He was naturally full of the Rasputin episode, and anxious as to its results. The question is: What will be done with the officers who took part in it? If they suffer in any way there will be trouble. The best thing, as I told my friends, would be to pack them off to their regiments at the front. It is such a peculiar case, reading like a romance of the Middle Ages, that it may lead to any and all sorts of trouble, and it requires a very strong man at Court to place the matter in a clear and impartial light before their Majesties.

The difficulty would be specially with the Empress, being as she is a firm believer in the good faith of Rasputin. And her influence reacts on the Emperor.

I confess that even with the disappearance of the most important factor in the drama I see no light ahead yet, and the situation may develop into anything.

Luckily the Emperor's manifesto on the German proposals of peace strengthened his hands before this event occurred, but these are very critical times and grave tales are told of who will be the next victim.

Strong men at Court and a good Premier, given the choice of his own Cabinet, might do something, but the Russians themselves tell me these are difficult to find.

If the Emperor spoke to me on the matter, which he certainly will not, I know what I could say, but it is impossible for me to begin, and not my place to do so, though one feels so anxious, kind as they have both been to me throughout, lest some still more serious trouble be in store for them.

The crowned heads of this country are so far from their people, and the Empress through shyness and a nervous nature is but rarely seen, though she has worked splendidly for the sick and wounded, and has a really kind and sympathetic nature, which unfortunately no one experiences except those who are very near her, or who happen to have seen a good deal of her, as I have done.

Shyness gives at once the impression of aloofness, with the result that it 'puts off' anyone getting to know her or being able to tell her things she should know.

At present she stands alone. It is a sad business, and when one looks at those pretty daughters one wonders what will happen to them all.

The very cabmen in the street are rejoicing over the removal of Rasputin, and they and many others think that by his removal German influence has received a check.

During most of January and February the Emperor was away from Headquarters, and I was up at Petrograd for the Allied conference, meeting my old chief, Lord Milner, with whom I had attended the Bloemfontein conference previous to the South African War in 1899.

### **11th January 1917.**

As the Russian New Year falls in two days wrote to-day to my old friend, Count Fredericks, to ask him to convey my respectful good wishes to the Emperor and Empress.

I said that I hoped that the new year might bring us the peace which I knew they wished to see brought about by our victorious arms, and I added that I hoped their Imperial Majesties would always find good advisers to help them in times of difficulty. I added:

'Courtisans on peut trouver assez facilement-conseillers, c'est plus difficile-et ce sont les hommes qui peuvent parler franchement, et eceur ouvert, qui sont si rares parceque la vérité n'est pas toujours la chose qu'on aime plus entendre.

'Vous me connaissez si bien que je sais que vous comprenez que je parle toujours, franchement, et je comprends beaucoup de ce qui passe dans ces temps, sans que je puisse en parler.'

### **8th March 1917.**

The Emperor came back to Headquarters to-day and kindly brought me some flowers from the Empress. I had seen him at the great banquet given to the Allied members of the conference at Tsarskoye Selo, when I had a short talk to him, but not otherwise.

At dinner, however, I sat next him and thought he was looking better. We talked a good deal on the conference, and he spoke of the retention of General Belaieff at the War Office.

### **11th March 1917.**

It was intended that I should go on a visit to Rumania about now and I spoke to H.M. on the subject, as I had to see Alexeieff, who had returned, much improved in health, that evening regarding some matters in connection with the Russian staff in that country. As I was leaving, the Emperor on bidding me good-night added: 'You have quite made up your mind to go to Rumania?' I answered, 'Yes, sir,' wondering at the reason of his inquiry.

### **12th March 1917.**

I had said good-bye to the Emperor, but various reasons put off my departure, and on sending over to ask if I might as usual lunch at the Emperor's I found he had left the night before, taking with him the Battalion of St George, and Ivanoff having left with other troops. When saying goodbye to the Emperor the only hint I got was his voice as he said to me: 'Have you quite made up your mind to go?'

(Though there were indications from Alexeieff's anxious manner when he went in to see the Emperor that something serious was afoot, we at Headquarters had no idea of the impending trouble.)

I am afraid by news which drifts in that things are very bad at Petrograd - officers arrested, and Government said to be anyhow and anywhere.

Alexeieff is said to have done his best to persuade the Emperor to let the Duma remain open, and to give the Government a free hand, and deal gently with some troops which mutinied and refused to arrest those who took part in some reported strikes, but his persuasions were useless, as the Emperor, it is said, was determined to keep matters in his own hands.

This afternoon, though here the situation was calm, dispatches kept dropping in, and there was evidently serious trouble in the air.

How matters will develop it is hard to say -the Emperor's position is very difficult, if he declines to give way to the advice offered to him.

If only one felt that he had someone with him who was strong enough to influence him, one would feel more at ease.

Rodzianko is said to be named as 'President' of a new Government.

Six P.M. - Telegrams just in say that the Hotel Astoria at Petrograd has been burned, and poor old Count Fredericks' house as well. He is said (most untruly) to be proGerman, and yet it was only a few days ago that he told me he had arranged, as president of the Yacht Club, to blackball all Germans when peace comes.

#### **14th March 1917.**

Heard to-day rumours that the Emperor is hung up at a siding en route to Tsarskoye Selo, and that no engine can be got to pull his train on-that Tsarskoye Selo is under guard of troops, and that Ivanoff's two divisions are held up on the railway line. Meanwhile all orders to the armies are going on as usual, and most of the factories are said to be working. From this distance it looks like a peaceful revolution, but all looks bad.

#### **15th March 1917.**

The situation was reported worse during the night, wires all held up for the General Staff, and I can get no news.

I had thought over the situation very seriously during the night, wondering how I could help in any way. Apart from my anxiety for the Emperor, from whom I had received such invariable and extraordinary kindness, I felt the premonition that a real and serious revolution would mean the debacle of the Russians as a fighting force for the Allied cause.

I determined, therefore, to take upon myself the responsibility of writing a personal letter to him.

I drafted it and of course sent it to Alexeieff, asking him whether he approved of it and of its dispatch, in which case he would possibly arrange for its being delivered. While it was with Alexeieff the Grand Duke Serge sent over to ask if I would go and see him. I went at once, and lie talked over the position, laying stress upon the importance of allowing free discussion in the Duma. He was in great anxiety, and asked me if I could not communicate with the Emperor, who knew and trusted me.

I told him that Alexeieff was in possession of a letter of mine, which he would, if he thought well, send to his Majesty. The Grand Duke asked me if he could see a copy of it and I at once agreed. He cordially agreed with every word I had written, but said the substance ought to be telegraphed,

as the letter would take so long in dispatch.

Alexeieff agreed that the letter might be of use, and an officer is to be dispatched at once with it to the Emperor, who is at Pskof with General Ruski.

The situation was so critical and urgent that I had no time to consult our Ambassador or the home authorities, and informed them of my action by wire and letter.

It is the last straw to which I can cling to help out what I fear will be a great disaster otherwise.

At a critical time like this decision, and quick decision, is necessary.

Quiet must be restored.

Work must proceed.

The armies must be got into a settled state of mind if possible.

The anti-war party must be checked.

The letter I addressed to the Emperor was as follows:

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,

RUSSIAN ARMIES IN THE FIELD.

14th March 1917.

SIR, - Your Imperial Majesty knows full well that I would not venture to approach your Majesty at this time, nor indeed at any other, in the form of a letter were it not that my devotion both to the Emperor and Empress of Russia makes me do so.

I am neither diplomatist nor politician, but a pretty old soldier who has seen much of both sides of the British Empire as well as war.

Russia, I know well, is a country which does not admit of treatment in the same way as other countries, but in all countries there are times when it is necessary to have a (. velvet glove over the iron hand.'

I hear a good deal and I say little, but I consider quietly, and in my judgment, for what it is worth on matters now, when above all considerations I know it is nearest your Majesty's heart to end this war by victory, there is danger that the army, which is devoted to the cause of beating the enemy, may say, We cannot continue to fight against the Germans if we have to fight against our own people, and if; we are withdrawn from the front for that purpose.

It overlooks the fact that your Majesty and those around you are as keen to win the war as any soldier in the ranks. It is ignorant of the fact that old and trusted servants around you, like Count Fredericks, are true Russians at heart.

Your Majesty's position is that of an autocrat, but an autocrat can govern only in these days with the advice of good counsellors, and the people want to feel that these counsellors are chosen from amongst the people themselves.

In all the troubles I have seen in different countries it has always been found the best plan to have an outlet. It is like an inflammatory growth in the body which wants piercing so that the poison may escape.

Free talk in the Parliament or Duma seems to me the outlet, so that the people can feel that those they send to the councils of the Emperor can express their feelings.

No doubt German mischief is at the bottom of this trouble now, but it would conquer that German mischief if it was said to the people that your Majesty trusted them to advise you as to the necessary action to be taken at the present time and that you accepted the Government appointed by them. It seems to me that the moment has now come when appeal to the peoples of Russia to assist you in the heavy task which lies on your shoulders is necessary.

I know full well that in thus approaching your Majesty I am liable to be told that it is not my business, and that I should return to my own country, but I have absolute belief and trust that you are devoted to the cause of the Allies, and it is only with that cause at heart, and my determined and sincere devotion to both your Majesties, that I venture to take what may be a most improper action and even at my own risk of dismissal.

But whatever happens no one can say that there is a man in Russia, of the Allies or the Russians, more devoted to the welfare of their country.

I have served here to the best of my ability since the beginning of the war, with the same devotion to your Majesty as to my own King, and it is only with that equal devotion to both that I venture to write this letter.

I trust your Majesty may forgive me for what may appear to you a most improper way of writing.

(Sd.) J.H.W.

[N.B. - The officer who was dispatched with the letter was stopped and disarmed, but got away with my letter, which was sent back to me with the seal unbroken, and is lying in my desk now as it was returned to me.]

Petrograd telegraphs me to-day that reports there say that Rodzianko, who is head of the present temporary Government, is going to meet the Emperor and invite him to abdicate, nominating the Tsarevitch as his successor, with the Emperor's brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch (who commanded the Division Sauvage and other cavalry during the war), as Regent, and Prince Lvof as head of the Council of Ministers. But there are so many rumours about that it is difficult to get hold of anything definite.

The most sensible plan, so far as Russia's continuance in the war is concerned, would be to leave the Emperor as he is, with condition that he accepts the new Government as it is.

But I fear the intention is to depose the Emperor, a great error of tactics.

Reported to-night that Emperor has abdicated.

### **16 March 1917.**

Abdication confirmed. Grand Duke Michael to be Regent, and Grand Duke Nicholas to take command of the armies.

The latter news is good, but the crown is another story, and there will probably be further developments about that.

If the Grand Duke Nicholas is retained as C.-in-C. there is a good prospect for the military position, but the other situation is a very doubtful factor.

The Emperor returned here to-night, and some discussion arose as to whether we should go to the station to meet him, but it was wiser under the circumstances that we should not. It is difficult and sad enough for him as it is, without a crowd looking on.

Meanwhile the mischievous head of Anarchy is beginning to protrude its ugly face on the scene, and there are signs that the actors in this drama, which looks like turning into a tragedy, have taken on a bigger piece than they can stage properly.

If the Grand Duke Nicholas can arrive from the Caucasus in time to steady the navy and army it will be well, but sufficient mischief has already been done to upset much of the work in factories and other essentials for carrying on the war, and all our efforts and hopes look black just now.

The Grand Duke Serge spoke to me on the question of the Grand Duke Michael (the Emperor's brother) taking temporary office as Regent. That, I said, was only a palliative, and temporary at that. It required a very strong man. The immediate point, I added, was to continue the war to victory, and for that purpose it would have been better to retain the Emperor, with a Government, such as I have mentioned above.

If this new Government had been accepted by the Emperor as his, it would be a concession to the people, and would put an end to the hopes of the enemy to destroy the power of Russia.

So many Russians had told me that a revolution would come after the war, but none till then.

I pray for a patch of blue sky, but I cannot see it, though some people talk as if it were a 'new Russia.'

The new Russia, if so, will not be in a state to help us Allies much.

### **17th March 1917.**

At a meeting of my Allied colleagues in my room we decided to wire to the Grand Duke Nicholas to assure him of our support as Allies. We said that we awaited him as C.-in-C.

Bazili, the diplomatic officer attached to Headquarters, called on me, and General Janin joined us. B. told us that the Black Sea Fleet was all right up to date, but there had been grave signs of mutiny in the Baltic Fleet, which is largely composed of men of the industrial, not agricultural, classes. This morning's reports, however, were better.

Anxiety is expressed as to some place of refuge for the Emperor - a difficult point. Poor old Count Fredericks sent word to ask

if I could go over and see him. I found him, naturally, much broken and distressed, but a gallant old man as usual; his house at Petrograd burned, all his beautiful treasures looted, and his wife, who is very old and ill, removed to the regimental hospital of the Corps de Garde-his old regiment.

The Emperor is allowed to communicate with Tsarskoye Selo, where all the Imperial family are confined under guard, all the children but one laid up with scarlatina, to add to the poor Empress's troubles, bad enough as they are already.

it is said that Voyekoff, of the Emperor's staff, son-in-law of Count Fredericks, was arrested tonight.

Count Graubi, commander of the Emperor's Cossacks of the Guard, came to my room last night, and Janin and de Ryckel and I had a long talk to him. In the anxiety felt for the Emperor's life we chiefs of Allied missions offered to accompany him in the train that is to take him to Tsarskoye Selo.

### **18th March 1917.**

There were daily meetings of the chiefs of military missions in my room, to discuss the situation, and endeavour to evolve some means of encouragement to the armies to remain in the field and continue the war.

To-day we sent the following telegram to the army chiefs:

'Au moment ou un nouveau Chef va prendre le Commandement de l'Armée et de la Flotte, les Généraux représentants des Armées Alliées au Grand Quartier Général de toutes les Armées Russes ont cru de leur devoir de lui dire qu'ils conservaient une confiance absolue dans la victoire finale et prochaine de nos armes, toutes dirigées contre l'ennemi commun.

'Dans les circonstances actuelles, les représentants des Armées Alliées croient aussi de leur devoir de dire a leurs frères d'armes de Russie que cette confiance absolue qu'ils ont dans la victoire prochaine est fondée sur les és incessants remportés actuellement sur succé tous les fronts de Pordre de bataille. Elle est fondée aussi sur la grandeur des preparatifs en vue de l'offensive générale du printemps ainsi que sur les résultats certains que garantit le concert établi pour assurer Punion sacrée des efforts. Seule cette union peut assurer définitivement le triomphe des principes de la liberté des nations et des peuples.'

Answers were received as follows (spelling and wording as received):

GENERAL HANBURY WILLIAMS.

J'adresse de la personne de votre excellence ma plus profonde reconnaissance a tous les repre'sentants des Armées Alliées au Grand Quartier General de toutes les Armées Russes pour l'expression de leurs sentiments et partage entièrement leur certitude de la victoire prochaine des Armées Alliées sur l'ennemi commun.

(Sd.) ROUZSKY, PSKOF. 7/20 Mars.

GENERAL SIR J. HANBURY WILLIAMS.

Les buts élevés pour les quels coulé le sang fraternel des Armées Alliées ne peuvent pas ne pas nous garantir la victoire finale sur l'ennemi cruelle et opiniatre et je prie votre excellence d'agréeer et d'adresser aux généraux représentants des Armées Alliées ma conviction. ferme que les



Armées operant sous mon commandement rempliront leur devoir sacré et appliqueront tous leurs efforts pour vaincre l'ennemi qui commence déjà a s'affaiblir sous la pression de nos vaillants Alliées et pour garantir le triomphe de la vérité et de la justice.

(Sd.) GENERAL SAKHAROFF, JASSY.

GENERAL HANBURY WILLIAMS.

La dépêche signée par votre excellence et par les autres repre'sentants des Armées Alliées je l'ai faite parvenir a la connaissance de tous les troupes et établissements du front ouest. J'exprime ma plus profonde conviction que notre patrie supportera tous les ébranlements intérieurs et transitoires et en sortira grandement recomfortée ce qui permettra aux armes Russes dans Punion étroite avec nos Alliées d'assurer un succès finale et décisif dans notre lutte contre un ennemi commun.

C'est alors que sera atteint un développement pacifique de nos peuples libres et seront brisées les aspirations Germanique vers la dominion basée Sur force et violence.

(Sd.) EVERTH.

Received answer from the Grand Duke Nicholas:

GENERAL HANBURY WILLIAMS,

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS RUSSIAN ARMY.

Send you and chiefs of military missions of the Allies my very sincere gratitude for the telegram, and I feel sure that you will all help me in organising and maintaining that combined ascendance of efforts of the Allies so indispensable for our general success and final victory.

(Sd.) GRAND DUKE NICOLAS.

An answer also from Alexeieff, at whose disposal I had placed myself in case I could help in any way.

He writes as follows: -

MON CHER Général, - Je vous suis profonde'ment reconnaissant des sentiments qui vous ont dicté votre lettre dans les heures pénibles qui traversent actuellement mon en pays.

Soyez assure que si l'occasion se présente de faire appel a la bonne volonté dont vous m'avez si aimablement transmis le témoignage je serais heureux de la saisir.

Croyez, mon cher Général, a mes sentiments affectueux.

(Sd.) ALEXEIEFF.

I have also wired to the commanders of armies on behalf of my colleagues and self.

The Emperor and the Empress-Mother attended church this morning.

Communications with Petrograd all anyhow.

**19th March 1917.**

After dinner last night I received a telephone message from Count Fredericks asking if I would go over and see him. I went straight off, walking through the sombre night to the Emperor's quarters. There I found him with all his things packed.

He told me that he had received information that he was 'condamné 'a mort,' and in view of the scandal that would arise from his arrest while with the Emperor he was leaving that night, if he could get away, for the Crimea. He said that he had nothing to live for now, that he did not care so far -as he was concerned, but that he was determined not to make the position more difficult than it was already for the Emperor.

Then the poor old man broke down completely, kissed me several times in the Russian fashion, and begged me to convey the news to my colleagues.

His last words were: 'You have always been such a good friend to me.'

[N.R -A fine, gallant old gentleman accused most unjustly of being of German birth and pro-German.]

This morning early I received a telephone message to say that the Empress-Mother wished to see me, so I went off and remained with her Majesty alone for about half-an-hour, a most sad and painful interview, in which she showed great courage.

We talked and discussed various matters, and on leaving I met the Grand Duke Alexander, who spoke of the very serious and dangerous condition of the country, and of the enemy influences acting on the working classes for a stoppage of the war on the part of Russia.

The present Government have declared their intention to continue the war, but intrigue and other mischief are corrupting the working classes, and obviously playing for a separate peace on the part of Russia.

The sooner the Grand Duke Nicholas arrives the better, but there may be difficulties on his journey owing to the danger that some of the revolutionaries may delay the train and put obstacles in way of his journey.

If we are to keep our Allies in the field it is obvious that a declaration of support of the present Government must be made, though how long it will last, God knows. But it is necessary to back this Provisional Government lest worse befall.

The Grand Duke Alexander discussed various proposals to aid in restoring a determination to stand by the Allies and continue the war.

I got out pretty late that afternoon, as the anxiety about the Emperor's journey to Tsarskoye Selo had made it necessary for us 'Allies' to consider whether we could be of any assistance in the matter.

Alexeieff and everyone else who had served under him here were equally anxious.

We decided to offer to accompany him in his train, with the hope that the presence of Allied generals would ensure his safety.

After a short walk, on reaching my quarters I found a message to say that the Emperor wanted to see me, or rather that I was wanted at 'the palace' at 6 Pm.

I walked down through the gathering darkness and through the gloomy, dirty streets, rendered more sombre by my thoughts as I went along, and there passed through my mind the many happier days when I went to visit the Tsar of all the Russias, who had always received me with that bright and happy smile, which he invariably greeted me with, even when things were not at their best.

There were no premonitions about this visit, for I knew full well what was awaiting me now -and that there could be no good news.

Except for a small crowd of loafers outside the entrance gates, there was no one about, and I reached the door of the house, a ray of light from the adjoining General Staff Offices just showing up the muddy path.

At the entrance I was stopped by a sentry with the red band of revolution round his arm. He at first would not hear of my admission, but I explained who I was, and at the same moment the faithful old body-servant of the Emperor appeared and told the sentry to let me pass unhindered.

Each step I took seemed to bring back some memory to me, the stairs along which the little Tsarevitch used to run to bid us good-bye, the ante-room, which used to be full of officers and ministers on official visits, and where we used to gather daily before lunch and dinner, or with a mission, such as that which brought the Field-Marshal's baton.

The ante-room was empty now and one bracket light only above the piano where I had stood talking to the Empress on the last occasion upon which I saw her. Such scenes seem to rush pellmell through one's brain on such occasions.

I had no time for a set or stilted speech, and all I could say when I saw that familiar face again was: 'I am so sorry.'

I think, indeed I know, he understood.

I walked into the room, being left alone with him.

Apparently everything had been packed up, as the room, which used to be bright with flowers and the photographs and so on on his big table, looked now quite bare.

But he was sitting at the table in his khaki uniform, just as he used to sit when I went in to see him.

He looked tired and white, with big black lines under his eyes, but smiled as he shook hands with me, and then asked me to come and sit on the sofa where we could talk.

I asked him if he had been able to sleep, and how the children who were ill at Tsarskoye Selo were getting on.

He told me that he had been able to get a certain amount of sleep, and that the news of the invalids was better. An officer had brought him a letter from the Empress hidden in his tunic. This he said had been a great comfort to him in his anxiety for her and the children.

We then talked over plans for his future, as he evidently saw that plans were no longer in his own hands.

He said that he had meant to carry out what I had written in my letter to him, but that matters had advanced so quickly, and it was too late. The proposal that the Tsarevitch should take his place with a Regent he could not accept, as he could not bear the separation from his only son, and he knew that the Empress would feel the same.

He was much touched with the offer we had made to accompany him to Tsarskoye Selo, and hoped that he would not have to leave Russia. He did not see that there could be any objection to his going to the Crimea, which he hoped would be allowed, and if not, he would sooner go to England than anywhere.

He never referred to any anxiety in regard to his own safety, which was typical of him.

The question of his eventual place of asylum is for many and various reasons a difficult one.

He expressed a wish to write to me personally and not through some other channel, and then added that the right thing to do was to support the present Government, as that was the best way to keep Russia in the alliance to conclude the war. On this he laid great stress. He feared the revolution would ruin the armies.

As I prepared to leave he asked me for my photograph, which I sent him to-night, and said he would send me one of his.

As I said 'good-bye' in anticipation of the more formal farewell to-morrow, he turned to me and added: 'Remember, nothing matters but beating Germany.'

I went away sad and depressed, fearing that he has still hopes, though I have none.

It was a black night in more senses than one as I walked home.

### **20th March 1917.**

I went to bed last night thinking a good deal of the crash which has fallen upon a man who has failed.

After dinner the Grand Duke Serge came up and sat in my room for a long time. We hope to get messages of encouragement from England to the armies here. Anarchism is showing itself already, and it will be lucky if the Imperial family can be got away somewhere in safety.

As I left the palace last night I saw hanging out of the windows of the local Duma, almost opposite the Emperor's windows, two huge red flags, and people in the streets, who about a week ago were shouting hurrahs for the Emperor, parading with red colours on their coats.

If there were some strong men about things might change again, but autocracy is dead.

A message from Alexeieff to say we had better not accompany the Emperor as he has already had great trouble in arranging for the Emperor to go to Tsarskoye Selo, and now that the Government have guaranteed his safe conduct it would be a reflection on that body. We bow, of course, to his decision, as we must not hamper the Government, and the Emperor even in the midst of his trouble would think it right to support the chosen Government, two members of which are to accompany him.

12 NOON. - I have just seen the Emperor to bid him farewell. He said he hoped to see me at Tsarskoye Selo, and can hardly realise, I suppose, the unlikelihood of such a meeting.

He told me he had slept a little, but looked terribly worn and sad. He told me he was issuing a farewell message to the armies which he hoped would be published.

I was followed by my other colleagues of the military missions, all distressed and sad. He bid them each good-bye, and we all doubt if we shall ever see him again.

News from Petrograd is bad. Place more settled and calm itself, but army said to be 'anyhow.' British officers moving about among the men trying to get them right, but it looks now as if they wouldn't even have the Grand Duke Nicholas in command, in fact any Romanoffs.

That is all madness, but they are mad and have started a fire which will be mighty hard to put out.

2 P.M. -Reports from Baltic Fleet said to be better, and men expressed regret at the murder of the admiral, which they say was done under great provocation.

Count Fredericks said to have been arrested at Gomel. One has been through pretty bad times one way and another over here, but this will take a lot of beating. Alexeieff is very anxious as to the situation.

A message from General Staff regarding the guarding of the Emperor:

'Le Gouvernement temporaire resout les trois questions affirmativement: il prendra toutes les mesures pour garantir le voyage sans obstacle jusqu'a Zarskoie Sielo, le se jour a Zarskoie Sielo et le voyage jusqu' a Roumanoi au Mourman.

'Le President du Conseil des Ministres, '(Sd.) PRINCE C. LVOF.'

### **21st March 1917.**

The Emperor before leaving bid good-bye to the staff to-day - a very touching ceremony, I am told, several of the officers bursting into tears.

General Staff have just informed me that telegrams are coming in from all over the country in support of the Grand Duke Nicholas as Commander-in-Chief. The more this feeling can spread the better for the Allied cause, as it might rally the armies back to their work and a more settled frame of mind.

Meanwhile people are walking about the streets here with red ribbons on. Police have all been dismissed, this being a 'free country' now (God save the mark!). I saw one of the results to-day when I was walking with the Italian general past a church. We noticed that the chimney and wall over the stove of this wooden building was ablaze with fire, and the church spire also had caught fire. The people sitting calmly in the presbytery attached didn't seem to know, so we told them and looked round for someone to give the fire alarm, but police being abolished had to get a stray soldier to go off for the fire brigade, which eventually, not having also been abolished, appeared on the scene and salvaged some of the remains.

One of the Emperor's A.D.C.'s came in early to see me to ask my advice as to whether he should go to Tsarskoye Selo, or remain here in his new appointment in the artillery section.

I advised him to remain here, as I felt sure H.M. would prefer him to do so.

### **22nd March 1917.**

When I woke up, Missi, my orderly and servant, put a crowd of telegrams on my bed.

At 10.30 I went down to see the EmpressMother at her request, as she is leaving for Kieff. All this is so terribly sad and trying for her, but I never saw a braver person.

### **23rd March 1917.**

Last night Alexeieff sent for me and we had a long talk. He is gravely anxious as to what may happen to the Emperor and Empress, who are now, he tells me, under close arrest at Tsarskoye Selo.

He is most anxious that both should be got out of the country to some haven of refuge.

Janin, de Ryckel and I have done what we can to help, having talked it all over, though our efforts to accompany the Emperor to Tsarskoye Selo were snubbed.

Major-General John Headlam, who had been on an 'artillery adviser' trip, turned up, and gave me a most interesting account of what he had seen of the feeling among troops he saw.

Many of the officers had the unfortunate and totally false impression that the Court from top to bottom was pro-German. At same time no anti-dynastic sentiment was expressed. The Grand Duke Michael's appointment was welcomed, and a prospect of the Tsarevitch eventually succeeding was welcomed. The appointment of the Grand Duke Nicholas as C.-in-C. was very popular. The impression was that German intrigues would be effectually checked, and that the change might lead to representative government.

Over and over again he heard the expression: 'Now we shall have responsible ministers.'

Kieff, through which he had passed, was a mixture of quiet and hysteria.

A Russian officer whom he knew and had just arrived from Petrograd gave him his impressions as follows:

'The real danger of the situation lies in the extreme wing of the Labour party, who are nothing but anarchists and terrorists. They are only a small percentage, perhaps 15 per cent., but they exert great influence. These men care nothing for consequences so long as they can spread their own doctrines. They are ready to end the war for this.

'The cry is already to kill Rodzianko, who, the anarchists say, is now only thinking of making himself first President of the Republic, and Kerenski, their own socialist representative in the Government, because he is too moderate, and now that he has become a minister does not want to do more.

'The Government dare not tackle this anarchist element because they have succeeded in obtaining the support of the soldiers, and the Union is now called the Union of Workers and Soldiers.

'The soldiers in question are those in the depots at Petrograd, not 2 per cent. of whom are old soldiers and have seen servicemostly youths of 18 to 19. During the first two or three days they looted the food and drink shops, going to sleep on the spot when they got drunk. Now when spoken to they don't know what they are out for. They are already saying they have done their work in dethroning the Emperor, and demand to be given pensions and let go.

'It is very important to avoid letting the anarchist wing get hold of the real army. The delegates who have been sent from the Government will do no harm-they have gone officially and work through the commanders.

The danger lies in secret emissaries from the extremists inciting to mutiny.

'Not much material damage was done in Petrograd, and the offices of the Ministry of War were not interfered with, only a few windows broken, etc., but six generals were killed in the street, and some police inspectors said to have been burned. The sailors of the fleet are the most dangerous element. They burned an admiral alive, his wife dying of shock and daughter shooting herself.

'The greater part of the munition works are beginning to work again, but badly. They think they can do without officers-there is too much talk and visits from agitators.

'The Minister for War no doubt knows the importance of the munition question, but it is doubtful whether it will really be possible to increase the present output.

'The conditions in Russia cannot be compared with those in England in industrial matters. The setting up of national shell factories as in England is quite out of the question.'

### **24th March 1917.**

Very busy yesterday on the wires in morning. Then a message announcing arrival of the Grand Duke Nicholas. At 5 PM. I went down to the station to see him in his car, and had a most affectionate greeting from him and the Grand Duke Peter. My old friend Galitzin was with him, and we adjourned to the Grand Duke's room to have a talk. Later on General Janin and the rest of the colleagues joined him at dinner, J. and I sitting at his table.

He has had a regular triumphal 'march' here, cheering troops and others meeting him at all the stations, which looks as if he might have had the same welcome if he had gone to Petrograd, and who knows whether it would have put a different complexion on affairs?

But the whole position is still very critical and uncertain.

At 10 A.M. this morning Janin and I got a message asking us to go down again to see the G.D.

We remained waiting in Prince Galitzin's car till 12, but nothing happened, and we then joined the G.D. at lunch. Were obliged to leave then as our hands are pretty full of our own job. And we get continual messages to warn us to be most correct in 'our attitude.'

'Nous ne sommes pas des idiots, quoique nous sommes soldats,' said a friend of mine.

As a matter of fact, not only did the Emperor say that it was one's duty to support the Government, but it is obvious.

There appears to have been a message sent to the Grand Duke inviting him to resign his command. He wished us to be aware of this, but was expecting the arrival of the messenger bearing it this morning, and hoped we should be with him to be witnesses of his attitude.

This message should have caught him en route here but failed.

The following is a translation of the correspondence:

TEMPORARY GOVERNMENT,

MINISTER PRESIDENT.

9/22 March 1917.

No. 9 PETROGRAD.

The Temporary Government, considering the question of your appointment to the post of Commander-in-Chief, which took place just previous to the abdication of the late Emperor, has come to the conclusion that the situation which has arisen and exists at the present time renders necessary your resignation of this appointment.

The national feeling is decidedly and insistently against the employment of any members of the house of Romanoff in any official position.

The Temporary Government does not consider it right to be indifferent to the voice of the people, an indifference which might lead to the most serious complications, and it feels convinced that you, for the good of the country, will meet the situation half-way and resign, before your arrival at the Stafka, the title of Commander-in-Chief.

(Sd.) Minister President, PRINCE LVOF.

To the above the Grand Duke, absolutely loyal to the Temporary Government, and to any consideration which he was told was for the good of his beloved country, and again absolutely correct in his attitude, straight and dignified, even at a cost which few can quite grasp without that intimate knowledge of his fine character with which we who served with him were so well acquainted, answered as follows:

STAFKA,

11/24th March 1917.

To the MINISTER PRESIDENT.

In your letter of 9/22nd March, in the name of the Temporary Government, appointed by the Imperial Duma, is stated the inadmissibility of any members of the house of Romanoff to occupy any official posts.

The Government also expresses assurance that for the good of the country I should meet the requirements of the situation halfway and resign, before my arrival at Headquarters, the title of Commander-in-Chief.

I am happy once more to be able to prove my love for my country, which so far Russia has not doubted.



In accordance with Para. 47 of Regulations for Troops in the Field, which says, 'In the event of the departure of the Commander-in-Chief, a temporary fulfilment of his duties shall devolve upon the Chief of Staff,' I hand over this day to General Alexeieff these duties until the appointment by the Temporary Government of the new Commander-in-Chief.

At the same time I hereby beg the Minister for War to retire me from the army.

As regards the wishes expressed by the Government that I should relinquish the chief command before my arrival at Head quarters, this I could not do, since I arrived here on 10/23 of March at four in the after noon, while your letter was received on 11/24 March.

Since I am in the zone of the active armies and in agreement with Army Regulations referred to above, I shall carry out such orders as may be given me by the Temporary Commander-in-Chief, General Alexeieff.

I am taking the oath to-day.

(Sd.) GRAND DUKE NICOLAI NICOLAIEVICH.

11/24 March 1.917.

To the MINISTER FOR WAR.

In accordance with desire expressed by the Temporary Government in a letter from the Minister President dated 9122 March, I have relinquished the duties of Commander-in-Chief, 11/24th March, to Chief of Staff, General Alexeieff, who, according to Article 47 of Army Regulations for Troops in the Field, is obliged to assume temporary position of Commander-in-Chief until the appointment of a new Commander-in-Chief by the Temporary Government.

At the same time I beg you to retire me from the army with right to wear uniform, a right which I have according to law as a Cavalier of the Orders of St George.

(Sd.) GRAND DUKE NICOLAI NICOLAIEVICH.

### **25th March 1917.**

At 6 P.m. Prince Galitzin came to see me and said that the Grand Duke had received a letter, which should have caught him en route here, from the Government asking him to resign as it was 'the wish of the people' that none of the Romanoff family should remain in office. The G.D. has answered that he was under the impression that it was the wish of the people that he should be Commander-in-Chief, and he had received a message from the Emperor asking him to take command.

As, however, that appeared not to be so, he placed his resignation in the hands of the Government, and awaited information as to what he should do, and when and where he should go.

Janin, who was with me, and I expressed our regrets, and informed our colleagues.

After dinner two generals called on me and agreed that under the circumstances it was the best, and indeed the only, course for the Grand Duke to take under the circumstances.

One, the head of the cavalry school, told me he thought all would go well now, and that he had a telegram from Gourko saying he was due here to-day or to-morrow, and he thought he would be C.G.S. and Russki Commander-in-Chief.

He begged me to think the position would soon right itself-all was quiet at Petrograd, and so on.

'What about food,' I answered. 'It has been distributed lavishly lately, but will that last 9 '

Of this he seemed doubtful, and there trouble will come in.

The other general told me that unfortunately the men now being called up for service at Petrograd were of the class that was in the 1905-1906 revolution, were independent of the officers and all 'red.'

I told the Grand Duke of the message I had received from Petrograd that the safety of the Emperor had been assured by the Government.

2.30 P.M. - Colonel Bazaroff of the General Staff came to my room and asked me if I had heard anything of an incident which had occurred last night in regard to the Grand Duke Nicholas and some workmen on the railway.

I said 'Yes.'

I had heard from a general officer that a lot of workmen had collected near his train, asking for an interview with him, and that a staff officer had been sent to see them. The leader of the deputation wanted to know why the G.D. had resigned, said that the army loved him as well as the working classes.

They were then told that it was true, and that his reasons for sending in his resignation were that he had been invited by the Provisional Government to do so. They could not believe it, so the Grand Duke saw them and explained the situation.

I was told these working men said he was still the man they wanted, and they would stop the train from leaving. A meeting was got up at the theatre last night, and the position is awkward.

It is rumoured that they will still stop the train if possible, but one may rest assured that the G.D. will do nothing incorrect, or which may hamper the task of the Government.

The men in question have wired to Orsha, an important railway junction to the north of this, asking them to join. So it looks like a 'pocket' revolution in favour of the Grand Duke.

To-night it is reported that the aeroplane hangars at Kieff are on fire.

### **26th March 1917.**

A message to say that the Grand Duke Nicholas will receive the chiefs of Allied military missions this afternoon.

Polivanoff, who is Assistant Minister for War, has arrived. I met him at the staff mess at lunch. He came straight up to me and shook hands most cordially, addressing me as '4 my oldest friend among the Allies,' as I knew him when he was Minister for War. He was in great spirits, said: 'All is going well, and I like a busy time like this, it suits me. Difficulties and excitement are splendid.'

I hope he will not have more than he bargains for; it looks to me as if they had 'bitten off more than they can chew.' I am to see him to-morrow at 10.15.

At 3 Pm. we went to see the Grand Duke Nicholas in his railway car. We were all shown in together, and he was perfectly calm and collected, talking only about the war situation. He then bid us all a formal farewell, and the others left, I staying behind to talk to my old friend Galitzin.

I had been longer with the Grand Duke than any of the others, having joined up in August 1914.

I was naturally a good deal upset at this end of our service together, and poor Galitzin felt it all terribly. While we were talking, the Grand Duke sent for me, and giving me his photograph, bid me a final good-bye. It was all very touching' and memories of the long months we spent together at the beginning of the war kept cropping up.

What impressed one so much was his dignified and calm demeanour, not a word of reproach for anyone, only his steadfast love for his country, and determination not to hamper the already sufficiently difficult task of the Government.

(How long will that Government last, and what will succeed it?)

I walked home sad and wondering if ever I should see any of my old comrades again.

### **27th March 1917.**

A long interview with Polivanoff this morning, he being very optimistic as to the future. He thought Alexeieff was an overstrong disciplinarian. (Lord knows how long discipline of any kind will last with these men, who are really like children.) He laid stress on the necessity for supporting the Provisional Government. I assured him that we should do all in our power in that direction, and added quite frankly that it was not only for the sake of Russia, but for the continuation of the war in conjunction with us Allies.

### **28th March 1917.**

Bazaroff of General Staff came to see me and asked me if I had a satisfactory talk with Polivanoff.

I said: 'Yes, so far as it went,' but that he was anxious about Alexeieff's orders to the troops.

I did not see how discipline, very especially at this moment, could be 'loosened up,' and that the only way would be to alter the wording a little, but retain the principle.

I am gradually becoming a sort of intermediary between Russians and Russians, and I wish I could help them more. Anyhow they get a perfectly frank expression of opinion, be it acceptable or not. This is no time for anything but frankness.

The Grand Duke is, I hear, waiting for two deputies from the Government to accompany him to his destination. He is fully determined that they should deal with any demonstrations which may occur in his favour en route, and quite rightly.

Poor General Coanda, the Rumanian, came to me about the difficulties regarding railways, supplies, etc., for Rumania. The staff here, in the present state of debacle, can do little, and I well understand his anxiety, but his only course was, so I told him, to go to Petrograd and see whether

some order out of chaos might be arranged at the War Office there, but I fear the advice is only a broken reed.

### **29th March 1917.**

General A., an old friend of the Grand Duke's, brought me copies of the correspondence which had passed between the Grand Duke Nicholas and the Government regarding his retirement from the command.

He told me that they had all gone to Livadia in the Crimea, where H.I.H. has a property of his own, and that Galitzin and his staff will remain with him for the present. He remarked upon how calm and dignified had been the attitude of the G.D. throughout, which I agreed was no surprise to his friends.

A. told me that a soldier friend of his travelling in plain clothes heard two Jews discussing the situation and saying that the present kind of republic was not the sort they wanted at all.

Some of the Cossacks at Petrograd were so sick with the state of affairs that they had marched straight off to the front on their Petrograd reports the killing of eighty Russian naval officers by mutineers. And this is what telegraphic reports from home describe as a 'peaceful revolution'!

### **31st March 1917.**

Reports say that General Ivanoff has been arrested. Only a few months ago he was one of the heroes of the war.

What makes me sick is that some people who, a very short time ago, were squealing to be presented to the Emperor, are now abusing him.

It is right to do all possible to help the existing authorities to tide over these difficult times, and no doubt there was much in the previous regime open to criticism, but when one hears of the Emperor being 'in with the Germans,' etc., it is a d-d lie, and to one or two of the squealers I have said so.

Goutchakoff, the new Minister for War, arrived yesterday, lunched at the staff mess, and came up and spoke to us afterwards, saying he would see us chiefs of Allied missions to-day.

### **1st April 1917.**

Yesterday morning the chiefs of Allied military missions called on the new Minister for War in his car at the station here. The following is a full account of the interview which, as it is historical, I give in full. As we took no notes, we all met afterwards and drew up a precis which we all agreed to as correct.

Mr Goutchakoff, Minister for War in the present Government of Russia, received us at 12 noon on the 31st March.

He first thanked us for the great services we had rendered to Russia since the beginning of the war, and also during the sad circumstances through which we are now passing.

He had the conviction that we should continue to lend 'our precious aid' to the Provisional Government.

He had assembled us, he said, to lay before us the situation in such a manner as to consolidate our agreement regarding their eventual action, and also to show us plainly what the Russian Government can do and cannot do, with the view that our operations should be clearly undertaken with a definite understanding of the possible efforts of the Russian armies.

He then gave us an exposé of the revolution.

When the Duma received the announcement of its dissolution, tumultuous assemblies took place in the streets of Petrograd. The regiments called up to maintain order did their duty, but with an entire absence of enthusiasm. It was obvious that discipline would relax next day.

The revolution declared itself suddenly. There was no plotting for it. Indeed, no plot existed. There were no leaders.

The entire mass-army, citizens, populace - rose as if magnetised by the oppression of the ancien régime - of autocracy, an excess of despotism, obsessed by nepotism - carried away by the 'scandals of the Court.'

In the evening Goutchakoff tried to get into touch with the military commandant of Petrograd. He failed to do so. He was nowhere to be found, but during the night it was learned that he had taken refuge with his family in the outskirts of Petrograd.

The situation was a very grave one.

Petrograd contained about 150,000 to 160,000 men of reserve troops undergoing instruction. These troops were re-divided into regiments mustering about 10,000 to 15,000 with fifty or sixty officers, mostly officers of auxiliary forces, or more or less incapable officers sent back from the front to the headquarters of their unit with a view of being given further instruction.

On the same evening the Duma drew up a telegram to the Emperor with a view of obtaining from him certain concessions notably the constitution of a liberal ministry.

The next day at a very early hour certain of the Petrograd regiments came and offered their services to the Duma. In the morning delegations of the regiments at Tsarskoye Selo, Of the Emperor's Court, and of the private police of their Majesties came and placed themselves under the orders of the Duma, saying they would continue to carry out orders on condition that lives should be spared.

Finally, the Ministers then in power, in order to save their lives, fled or placed themselves under the protection of the Duma.

Thus as has already been pointed out, the revolution had no chief. Certain officers agreed with their men, others were massacred by them, and the revolution appeared to have entered into the hands of the rebel soldiers.

In the meanwhile the workmen, the social democrats and the Radical socialists, who were quickly joined by the 'intellectuals,' students, medical men, lawyers and so on, formed themselves into a union and elected a committee which established itself at the Finland railway station.

From this moment a meeting was organised at the Maronydon, or 'People's Palace,' which sat day and night without interruption and lasted for several days.

In the streets, fire and massacre were the order of the day. It was under these conditions, while anarchy reigned supreme, that certain members of the Duma united themselves under the presidency of Rodzianko to try and turn this overwhelming tide into canals. These members formed themselves into a committee which considered as coolly as possible the whole situation and decided to make every effort to dominate the rumbling mass of rioters. It was of first importance to calm down public opinion.

Thus it was necessary to select chiefs to whom some communication should be made.

In the meanwhile the former Government had nominated a new commander of the troops at Petrograd - a General Officer, formerly Military Attache' at Vienna.

Goutchakoff searched for him all day in vain. He found him in the evening, absolutely alone, and asked him if he could rely on any single regiment, or any single company, or even on one man. The answer was - no.

The partisans of the Emperor had no longer any existence. No partisans of the old regime existed any more.

The members of the Committee were all Monarchists except one -M. Kerenski, a Republican socialist.

It was decided that a deputation should be sent to the Emperor to lay the situation before him and obtain his abdication in favour of his son, with the Grand Duke Michael (the Emperor's brother) as Regent. It was thought that the sympathetic soul of the Russian people would be moved by the youth and delicate health of the young heir.

The committee also counted upon the mild and indulgent nature of the Regent as a means of establishing the new basis of a new regime before the accession to the throne of the young Alexis.

Goutchakoff and another member of the Duma left for Pskof. On arrival at Louga they saw the troops of the second line established in trenches and with batteries of guns and machine-guns ready to meet the troops from the front whom they expected to be marching on Petrograd.

On approaching Pskof they found the same measures taken by the first-line troops in preparation to meet the advance of the troops which they expected as marching on against them to cover Petrograd.

It was nevertheless certain that the front-line troops gave their support to the revolutionary movement.

During the three days the new movement had spread, and those regiments which seemed the most loyal to the Emperor, especially those of the First Cavalry Division of the Guards, turned out to be those most opposed to him. Composed as they are of officers of the highest ranks of the aristocracy, they were even better acquainted than anyone with the 'scandals of the Court.' They felt that the war was being badly managed, that supplies were not assured, the question of transportation hopeless and badly run, etc., etc.

On arrival at Pskof the delegates were at once received by the Emperor. He had already prepared for his abdication, but refused to be separated from his son, whom he wished from his fatherly affection for him to take with him in his retirement and fall. In face of such tragedy the delegation

did not desire to insist. It carried off the declaration which has already been made public in the announcement of abdication.

Meanwhile events had moved very rapidly, and during their return the deputation felt pretty certain that the decision of the Emperor would not satisfy the rebels.

The next morning the members of the Provisional Committee, now turned into a Provisional Government, called on the Grand Duke Michael, and obtained his abdication, thus leaving to the people a free choice of a Government 'regime.'

The Provisional Government thus finds itself in a position of 'wait and see.' It must wait the decision of the Constituent Assembly, and whether the latter rallies to a Monarchy or Republic, the new members will bow to the decision of the people -they will, in fact, be either Monarchists or Republicans.

The situation of the Provisional Government is therefore a very critical one, and is in sore need of the sympathy and help of the Allies to bring the war to a satisfactory conclusion.

Hitherto every Russian has been a partisan of 'war a' l'outrance,' to final victory, but there are influences at work to prevent this wish being realised.

Regular work must be resumed in the factories. All the material in them is intact, but the workmen have dismissed some of the directors and engineers.

Production is thus reduced in quality and quantity, the latter not being more than 50 per cent.

In the armies one must proceed with great care and slowly and tactfully to restore order and discipline. The first madness of triumph must pass away, and it will only be by slow degrees that one will be able to instil energetic measures.

The Provisional Government is fully aware that its actual issue of instructions savours of weakness, but the fact of this knowledge is its own excuse, and it has the firm intention of recovering after a short period of delay - say a fortnight-the mastery of the situation.

German intrigue is at its full height at present, and the Government is fighting this with all possible energy.

But at the actual moment the greatest enemy of the Government is the committee sitting at the Finland railway station. From the first days of its existence the Provisional Government looked upon its life as merely ephemeral -it daily awaited its defeat. Daily, however, it is receiving proof of sympathy from all parts of Russia, and is strengthening its position to the detriment of the Finland railway station committee. Secessions and divided counsels are showing themselves in this body.

In the first place, the military members affiliated to the Workmen's Union are no longer in complete accord with the work-men whose tendencies are opposed to theirs. Again, among the workmen divisions are appearing, divisions of persons as well as of views. Thus from day to day, indirectly, the position of the Government is becoming stronger.

The situation, however, is none the less critical, though it continues to improve. But where the situation is really grave isand I speak from a war point of view -in the navy.

In the Black Sea Fleet hitherto all goes well. This arises from the fact that the admiral in command (N.B. -Admiral Koltchak-), - a man of great energy, quickly recognised the Provisional Government, and he and his officers announced to the men the new developments - the reversal of the old regime, its consequences for the immediate present and the future, and when the echoes of the revolution arrived ' they arrived on fully prepared ground.

The situation in the Baltic is very different. There the men mutinied and killed many of their officers. Very few are left, especially at Kronstadt. Bereft of officers, they are none the less conscientiously looking after their ships. All these are intact, great cleanliness is maintained - greater than before; it would almost appear as if the bluejackets wish to prove that a 'free man' is more conscientious than a slave.

This, however, does not do away with the serious position that the right wing of the ordre de bataille is 'in the air,' and that the Gulf of Finland is open to the enemy.

It was, as a matter of fact, at Kronstadt that the rebellion was most violent and that the worst massacres took place, comprising as it does the bataillons de correction of the army and the fleet, so bandits, criminals, depraved and degenerate men had a free hand. The position nevertheless shows some slight signs of recovery.

The garrison of Kronstadt comprises a few Territorial regiments. The latter, aware of the danger that exists, have asked leave of the Provisional Government to recall to duty the recalcitrant sailors.

The Government, fearing bloodshed, which might extend everywhere, including the actual front, have contented themselves for the moment with sending to Kronstadt a governor who will be acceptable to men in the ranks.

In a fortnight, Mr Goutchakoff added, he hoped to see order restored.

The presence of the Minister for War at our Headquarters, he continued, was to maintain General Alexeieff at the head of the armies. He believes that he is the only man who at this moment can assume the heavy task. All recognise his merits and his qualities as well as his talents. A few, however, accuse him of want of recognising the need for meeting changes which are necessary in the management of men in the army-of being too strict a disciplinarian, in fact.

This accusation, the Minister pointed out, may have a certain amount of foundation in fact, but this would disappear, he thinks, once the general was put in actual command.

He asked us, however, to back him up by expressing our opinion, if we agreed with him, that Alexeieff was the one man to deal with the situation. This he begged us to do individually, as opportunity occurred, with the different members of the Government now assembled here.

He told us he had come in advance of his colleagues, who arrived later in the day, so as to consult with Alexeieff as to the higher commands of the armies and army corps. This work they completed this morning, and they were in entire accord as to removal of ' those who owed their position to nepotism.'

I then asked the Minister as to the question of the 'new sixty divisions' which are being formed.



This introduction, he said, was made against the advice of Alexeieff and without warning to the Minister for War. The new divisions lacked the necessary material. To each regiment is allotted but eight machineguns, and the men are armed with rifles which should properly be in reserve in depots to make up losses in battle.

The question for consideration is the abolition of these new divisions from the ordre de bataille.

The Council of Ministers assembled to-day was to consider measures for the protection of Petrograd against a possible landing of the enemy in the Gulf of Finland.

Such is the situation, as represented to us chiefs of military missions by the Minister.

He concluded as he had begun, with an appeal for our sympathy and assistance. The ambassadors and the diplomats of the Allies were, he said, in close touch with the Government from day to day, but he wished to represent to us as soldiers the close way in which the internal situation affected military operations and the considerations of our General Staffs in the Western theatre. He begged us to represent this to our respective chiefs, so that they might be fully aware of the situation.

I then thanked him on behalf of my colleagues and self for his clear and frank statement, assuring him of our sympathy and support to him and his Government, as also to General Alexeieff, in the grave and difficult situation which lay before them with all the serious responsibilities of Russia to the Allied cause.

I felt the compliment he had so openly paid to the British system of government, and wished him and his colleagues every success on the intricate problem which lay before them to solve, a success which, so far as we were concerned, we should do our best to ensure. The interview then closed.

I don't like the news of the Baltic Fleet, and the tendency to relax discipline in the armies is, of course, fatal, if it continues.

Generally, from a war point of view, the situation seems to me very bad.

It is, however, obviously necessary, and would be the Emperor's own wish, I know, for us all to do all that lies in our power to support the authorities of law and order, and retain Russia as a fighting force - if we can.

Both Minister for War and Minister for Foreign Affairs were most complimentary in their remarks to me as representative of the British Army.

They all left this afternoon for Petrograd.

### **2nd April 1917.**

Riggs, the U.S.A. Military Attaché, has arrived, which looks like business, and U.S.A. coming in.

### **3rd April 1917.**

The days are pretty busy with telegraphing and writing on the situation, and I keep the Ambassador at Petrograd informed as well as the War Office, which entails plenty of work for my staff of two, as well as myself. Both Edwards and Porters have worked like Trojans.

Yesterday I met the late Assistant Governor of Warsaw. He gave me an account of what he saw of the revolution at Petrograd. He was dining at the Yacht Club, when suddenly they heard firing, then a motor passed with a wounded officer. Some - waiters at the club joined the rebels. He tried to get home, but a phone message came to say his chauffeur had been shot. So he and some others slept in the reading-room of the club, as the whole place was in an uproar. Next morning he managed to get to the Duma, which had become a general assembly as place of refuge. He stayed there for some time and eventually got off here, this place being, I suppose, looked on as the safest in Russia just now.

He told me that poor old Count Fredericks, after being arrested, was conveyed to some house where he had to sleep on the floor, no food or drink on the first day and very little the next. He is reported to be very ill and still a prisoner, because of this idiotic and false idea that he is proGerman, and of German blood himself. Absolutely untrue.

The Grand Duke Serge came in last night and spoke to me about his position. He says he has no orders, though he has sent in his resignation from the army. I advised him to remain in his own quarters and not come to the staff mess till he heard further news of his plans from the Government.

The Grand Duke Boris is under arrest here in his railway car.

A horrible story come in that an admiral was taken out, stripped, made to stand on the ice and then burned.

#### **4th April 1917.**

Captain Basile Galiaschkine called yesterday. He was with Phillimore and me in a rather warm spot on the Riga front, and is off now to join General Palitzin in France, so routine business is still going on in a kind of way, and I daresay he is not sorry to get out of this turmoil and trouble.

I am told that to-day the Jews are to be emancipated and given full rights as citizens.

#### **6th April 1917.**

Left G.H.Q. last night and arrived at Petrograd to-day. Managed to get rooms at Hotel de l'Ours. The journey up was bad. Riggs, who came up, shared a two-berth sleeper with me, Missi, my faithful Russian servant, leaning against the door all night, as private soldiers were all over the place, allowed to go anywhere now and no class distinctions in the trains. One could not move from one's berth, and there was no food, but the men behaved quite well to us.

-My rooms good, but no heating, and one sits in a coonskin coat (which I thank my stars I brought from Canada), and shivers even in that, as this Russian winter is by no means over, and as the American paper said of North Dakota, 'it ain't no Garden of Eden in the winter-time.'

No bread or biscuits, and a boiled egg and marmalade alone are about as nasty a meal as I know; however, I suppose one is devilish lucky to get that.

Streets more or less quiet, but big hungry crowds at the bakers' shops.

Went to the Embassy and heard their news, which was far from cheering. Walked back, passing the 'Winter Palace,' where the sentries leaned against the wall and smoked cigarettes. Some of the soldiers salute me and some don't, though they look shy and half inclined to, but then I suppose they think it would not look sufficiently revolutionary.

At my table at dinner (?) sat a British merchant who has been here many years. Very depressed sees no end to the trouble. All his workmen on strike and demanding hopeless wages. Thinks there will be another sample of revolution ere long, and I expect he is right.

Imperial family rumoured to have gone to Peterhof. There is much anxiety about them here.

Just before I left Headquarters yesterday the Grand Duke Serge called to see me. He said he had something to tell me personally as he did not expect to be at G.H.Q. when I returned. He had just received by the hands of an officer a letter from the Empress to the Emperor. The officer had escaped from arrest with it. The Grand Duke wanted me to convey somehow to the Emperor that he had burned the letter.

I told him, of course, that I had no means of communicating with the Emperor, and it would not do for me to try to get into communication with him.

A newspaper says that a letter from the Emperor to me, saying that the Imperial family were all well, had been seized. It adds that I am a friend of H.I.M. -not in any unfriendly terms -only just makes the remark.

I have never received the letter, but he had said before leaving that he would write to me, and doubtless did so.

The present Government will evidently want all the support it can get. At present their position is between 'the devil ' of weakening their own hands too much by weakening of discipline in the army and navy, and the 'deep sea' of further revolution.

### **EASTER SUNDAY. 8th April 1917.**

Last Easter fell on the same day as the

Russian Easter. We were with the Emperor to celebrate it, and this-no Emperor and a shaky republic.

Went to the War Office to see the Minister. A crowd of soldiers in all sorts of clothes and deputations of sorts waiting to see him, and he is obliged to see them all in turn. Saw him eventually at 5.30, and he is to take me back to G.H.Q. in his car.

### **9th April 1917.**

The streets are full of loafing soldiers smoking cigarettes and talking; no more halting, facing a general and saluting when one passes. Every day parades of soldiers and singing of the Marseillaise at the square where the 'victims' of the revolution are buried.

I really believe the latter will rise from their graves and ask them to stop singing if they keep at it all the time. Pleasant for our Embassy, which adjoins.

The people are like naughty children who

I have run away from school, but the situation grows more and more serious every day. Soldiers idle, workmen idle, and clamouring for more wages.

If the armies don't pull themselves together I see nothing but anarchy left.

The Press communique which an American company publishes here with cuttings from Russian papers says:

'On the 19th March (?) Nicholas II., after receiving proper authorisation from the commander, sent the following telegram to the representative of the British Army at the front:

'GENERAL HANBURY-WILLIAMS.

'Children getting better. Feeling better myself. Greetings. - NICOLAS.

'Before sending off this telegram the officer in charge recomposed it. General Hanbury-Williams is one of the close friends of the ex-Emperor.'

(I never received this message and wonder how it read before it was recomposed.)

### **11th April 1917.**

Got back to G.H.Q. yesterday, having travelled in comfort with the War Minister. Went off at 11 to see General Klembovski, who takes Alexeieff 's work in latter's absence.

He is somewhat hopeful of things getting better, but even if the soldiers are, as he says, annoyed with the working men for 'slacking,' I fear it won't make much impression on the latter.

I then said that I did not think the entry of the U.S.A. into the war was half advertised enough in Russia. One clings to every straw to help now, and I thought it should be well published that a great republic like the U.S.A. having determined to join the battle line, it behoved this new republic to stand by, and that all the men at the various fronts should have this well impressed upon them.

Every effort should be made to 'drown' this 'stop the war' crowd. The matter is to be taken up with Goutchakoff.

### **12th April 1917.**

Late last night I got a telegram saying I was to return to England. I am not sorry, as I don't see any prospects of much use here. I am sorry, however, to leave my friends among the Russians, with whom I have been close on three years now, and seen so much. No one who has lived with them as I have can fail to like them.

### **16th April 1917.**

Sent a message home on the situation, a depressing one, I fear, but so far as I can see this country is 'down and out' so far as fighting assistance goes anyhow.

### **17th April 1917.**

I ride about the country much as usual. No one interferes with me, and though I do not wear a red armlet, I am recognised, I suppose, as an eccentric Englishman, unworried by revolutions.

### **20th April 1917.**

To-day I received the following letter from General Alexeieff, now Commander-in-Chief, to whom I had announced my approaching departure:

STAFKA

7/20 Avril 1917.

MON CHER General,-C'est avec un sentiment de profond regret que j'apprends la nouvelle de votre prochain depart. Après ces longs mois de travail commun marqués par les relations les -plus cordialement confiantes, soyez assure, mon cher General, que je garderais pour vous un sentiment d'estime très profonde que partageront, fen suis sur, tous mes collaborateurs.

Heureux de penser que vous emporterez un bon souvenir de votre sejour aux armées Russes, nous ferons tout ce qui dependra de nous pour inspirer a votre successeur les memes sentiments.

Il peut être assure' de trouver chez nous toute la confiance A laquelle a droit le représentant d'une grande armée Alliée. pour laquelle nous nourissons une sympathie que double une profonde admiration.

(Sd.) ALEXEIEFF.

We were all invited to a meeting of workmen and others at Dvinsk to-day, but thought it wiser not to mix ourselves up in a business of this kind.

Major-General Sir Charles Barter is to succeed me here and I wish him luck in what I fear will be but a thankless task.

A very kind letter from Sir George Buchanan on the news of my approaching departure. I have received much kindness from him throughout.

**22nd April 1917.**

At dinner I was shown an extract from a German paper practically expressing the hope that Buchanan would be assassinated.

A long interview with General Denikin, the new C.G.S., about Mesopotamia and General Maude.

On 18th May I bid farewell to Alexeieff. I asked him what I could say on my return to England.

He simply said that he intended to do all that lay in his power to keep the armies fighting, and to continue the war, but that he must be supported in matters of discipline, which, as I well knew, had become more than lax. If he was not supported he should resign.

Meanwhile Goutchakoff had resigned and Kerenski had taken over.

(On my arrival in England I heard that Alexeieff had resigned, and I knew what it meant. The night before I left he sent his son-in-law over to see me and hand me his photograph.)

(<http://www.alexanderpalace.org/hanbury/tsar.html>)

Comments on this site should to: **Bob Atchison** (<mailto:boba@pallasweb.com>)

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THE EMPEROR AFTER LEAVING HEADQUARTERS

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EMPEROR AND EMPRESS

THE TSAREVITCH

THE GRAND DUKE NICHOLAS

GENERAL ALEXEIEFF

LINKS





















































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