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**THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT AS OBSERVER AND PARTICIPANT:
HAROLD WILLIAMS AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York**

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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I was lucky. I was born to parents who never finished college but always believed that I would accomplish what circumstances had denied to them. My father, Patrick Brady, was the son of two individuals who served in World War I. That war's stories, songs, and tragedies were conveyed to me from an early age. It was through my father that I began a lifelong love of history and literature, both of which have played a role in my work here. Yet his support and encouragement for all my endeavors is a gift every child deserves but not all receive. And so, I was lucky.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
I. THE EDUCATION OF A JOURNALIST.....	15
II. AN IDEALIST COMES OF AGE.....	39
III. WILLIAMS AND THE AFTERMATH OF BLOODY SUNDAY.....	75
IV. WITNESSING THE END OF AN ERA.....	100
V. AMIDST WAR AND REVOLUTION: THE <i>DAILY CHRONICLE</i> DISPATCHES.....	133
VI. THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR: WILLIAMS AND ALLIED INTERVENTION.....	180
CONCLUSION.....	220
HAROLD WILLIAMS'S ASSIGNMENTS AS A CORRESPONDENT.....	225
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	226

INTRODUCTION

Harold Whitmore Williams (1876-1928) was a distinguished journalist, philologist, and linguist. Originally from New Zealand, he became a foreign correspondent in Russia and chose to make his residence there for fifteen years. Emotionally drawn into the struggle for Russian freedom against the autocracy, he made that struggle the focal point of his existence. As an eyewitness to both the 1905 and 1917 revolutions and the civil war, he displayed deeper first-hand knowledge of Russia than any other foreign correspondent there during those three upheavals. Before he fled Russia and its new authoritarian regime in 1920, his advice had been sought by diplomats, politicians, and the military; his linguistic brilliance had made him invaluable as a translator; his dispatches had earned him a byline in the most prominent newspapers in the English-speaking world including the *Manchester Guardian*, the *London Daily Chronicle*, and the *New York Times*. Williams also wrote *Russia of the Russians* (1914), a study of pre-Bolshevik Russia, and together with historian Bernard Pares (1867-1949) he established the *Slavonic Review*, one of the earliest scholarly journals in English devoted to the study of Russian history, politics, and culture.

While Williams stands out as a model of clarity, scholarship, and humanitarian concern, he was also committed to a cause. He welcomed the overthrow of the autocracy, suffered with the struggles of the fledgling democracy, and despaired over its collapse when Bolshevism prevailed. His dispatches revealed this bias as he redefined the responsibilities of a journalist to include moral commitment. To simply report the news was never enough for him, and he often added the insight and commentary of a compassionate observer.

Because scholarship on Williams is scarce, this study will attempt to provide a wider view of a self-effacing man who nevertheless gave significant testimony to the momentous events in Russia between 1905 and 1920. Williams's modesty creates a problem for researchers – he left few traces except in his work – and he is barely mentioned by historians of the period. The only composite of his life is a sympathetic biography by his widow, and his dispatches have never been compiled. It will therefore be the purpose of this study to resurrect from obscurity a neglected but important eyewitness to a dramatic period in Russian history. The study will piece together Williams's early life and religious education, emphasizing their impact on what he later witnessed and interpreted. Although not a professional historian, he was aware of the historical context of his coverage and conveyed it to his readers in great detail. By examining his dispatches, the study will ultimately focus on Williams's principled journalism and its link to partisan involvement.

JOURNALISM DURING WARTIME: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Williams was working in a field that was both old and new: old because accounts of military conflicts and civilian uprisings had been written by participants since ancient times, new because daily newspapers of mass production now hired and sponsored civilian writers on the scene. Barely sixty years had passed since the first such correspondent, William Howard Russell (1820-1907), had reported the “Charge of the Light Brigade” during the Crimean War. Russell referred to himself more or less

accurately as “the miserable parent of a luckless tribe.”¹ Over the years, little had changed in the haphazard and cavalier methods used by correspondents to obtain and report news on armed conflicts. The individuals who were hired had vastly different backgrounds. Few studied journalism. It was a field that people would almost fall into – sometimes for a brief time, sometimes for the rest of their lives. Williams’s fellow journalists in Russia included historians, artists, authors of children’s books, would-be politicians, women’s rights advocates, and socialists. These people varied greatly in their knowledge of Russia, but all were expected to shed light on the history shaping events during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Publishers as well as journalists faced added problems during war and revolution. Publishing a newspaper was always a struggle for survival, but between 1914 and 1920, in spite of improved sales, the increased costs to produce each issue put additional financial strains on every news establishment. The need to pay the expense of foreign correspondents quickly offset the greater revenues resulting from readers who purchased several newspapers to get broader coverage of World War I. The *New York Times*, for instance, spent approximately \$780,000 a year on telegraph cables alone.²

As the German submarine campaign heated up throughout 1916 and 1917, shipping priorities shifted to cargo immediately connected with the war. Because of their bulk, raw materials for paper production were among the first to be restricted, adversely affecting the availability of newsprint. In Britain, the paper supply dwindled, and the

¹ Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty from the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 4.

² Robert W. Desmond, *Windows on the World: The Information Process in a Changing Society, 1900-1920* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1980), 316.

prices for what remained rose by 300 to 500 percent.³ As 1917 drew to a close, newspaper publishers chose either to pass the costs on to the consumer or cut the length of each issue. Papers like the London *Daily News and Leader* valiantly fought to fit war news, casualty lists, domestic issues, classifieds, and advertisements into four to six pages. Hard choices demanded risky solutions. During December 1917, for example, the London *Daily Chronicle* faced a loss of both revenue and clients when it had to eliminate advertising; the editor needed to make room for a three-page dispatch from his correspondent with the British army.⁴

Staff shortages hit the press offices of every country participating in the conflict, adding to financial woes and the problem of big stories and little space. Compulsory military service sent editors, correspondents, copyboys, and typesetters alike to the trenches. Those who remained served the war effort on the home front by promoting Liberty Loans, aid to war victims, and recruitment for civilian volunteer groups like the Red Cross. Columnists gave advice on how to cope with air raids and food shortages, including recipes for the most economical and patriotic use of the potato. Within the first year of the “Great War,” an unprecedented mobilization of domestic as well as military forces had taken place within the countries of the belligerents. Support at home for the war was critical, and newspapers – in their role as creators and mirrors of public opinion – were in a position to influence morale.

³ *Newspaper Press Directory and Advertiser's Guide, Containing Particulars of Every Newspaper, Magazine, Review, and Periodical Published in the United Kingdom and the British Isles, Seventy-Third Annual Issue* (London: C. Mitchell and Company, Ltd., 1918), 18.

⁴ The correspondent was Sir Philip Hamilton Gibbs and his popular dispatches were notorious for causing crises in the editor's office because of their length and expense. His work was syndicated in British provincial newspapers as well as in the United States. The *New York Times*, which had a news agreement with the *Daily Chronicle* and printed the dispatches of Gibbs and Russian correspondent Harold Williams, sometimes omitted as much as sixty to seventy columns of advertising in a day to accommodate. [Robert W. Desmond, *Windows on the World*, 316.]

The relationship between the press and governmental authorities during World War I was at best precarious. The public's "right to know" came in direct conflict with the strategic need for secrecy regarding troop movements, the quantity of ammunition supplies, or the schedules of ocean liners. When the democracies of England, France, and the United States temporarily placed restrictions on the freedom of the press, military security was the initial priority. As governments broadened their definition of threats to the war effort to include writers who opposed the draft or questioned the war aims of the Allies, censorship of opinion was added to censorship of information.

War correspondents faced a particularly complicated set of obstacles to get their story to the public, and an indiscretion could cost a journalist his or her press credentials and telegraphing privileges. All dispatches first had to pass through country of origin censorship. If the cable traveled through several countries, material passed by one censor could be excised by another. By the time a dispatch reached the home office of its newspaper, the local censors still had time to revise it. In France, a regulation in place since the Franco-Prussian war called for the entire proof of every issue to be submitted to the authorities. Blank spaces left by government officials typified the French newspapers, and their shortened length (regularly four pages and on some days cut to two to save paper) curtailed detailed descriptions of the war. In England, the Official Press Bureau was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of war news. Though British censorship did not require the submission of articles or editorials, many publishers used the Press Bureau to screen out material that might otherwise have left the paper open to prosecution under the Defense of the Realm Act of 1914.⁵

⁵ Sir Edward Cook, *The Press in War Time. With some account of the Official Press Bureau* (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1920), 53.

British regulations provided a model for America's Espionage Act of 1917 concerning press censorship. The Defense of the Realm Act stipulated that newspapers should not spread false reports, make statements which might compromise Allied objectives, or otherwise harm the government's relations with foreign powers. Journalists were not to print material likely to interfere with recruitment or disrupt the discipline of the Allied armed forces. Other possible offenses could fall under the category of "any information which might be directly or indirectly useful to the enemy."⁶ In Britain, offenders faced a maximum of six months imprisonment (with or without hard labor), a fine of one hundred pounds, or both.⁷ Postal censors had the right to confiscate illegal newspapers and journals, thus sparing both governments the need to prosecute to the full extent of these laws. This arrangement particularly affected the anarchist and socialist publications that relied on subscribers to survive. For example, the *New York Call* had its second class mailing privileges suspended from early November 1917 to June 1921.⁸

⁶ Regulations 18 and 27, *Defense of the Realm Act of 1914. Manuals of Emergency Legislation. Defense of the Realm Act Manual*, revised to February 28, 1918 [Fifth Edition], edited by Alexander Pulling (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1918), 101 and 113.

⁷ The discrepancy between the English and American penalties for these crimes is not as great as it seems. According to British law, press violations could be tried before either a court of summary jurisdiction, a civil court with a jury, or by court martial. This decision was made by the director of public prosecutions who, in practice, referred press offenses to a court of summary jurisdiction which could give as a maximum the six months and/or one hundred pound penalty. Trial in a civil court or by court martial could result in penalties up to and including the death penalty. [See Regulation 56 of the *Defense of the Realm Act of 1914*, 174-178.]

⁸ For a general discussion of the various aspects of press censorship during World War I see Lucy Maynard Salmon, *The Newspaper and Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923); for the United States see Sydney Brooks, "The Press in War-Time," *North American Review* 200 (1914): 858-869; James Robert Mock, *Censorship 1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941); for a discussion of the constitutional aspects of American censorship see Zechariah Chafee, Jr., "Freedom of Speech in War Time," *Harvard Law Review* 32 (June 1919): 932-973; for Great Britain see Edward Price Bell, *The British Censorship: An Examination of this institution, and of the general position of American correspondents in London, from the point of view of one of their number. An address before the American Luncheon Club, Savoy Hotel, London, November 19, 1915* (London: T.F. Unwin, Ltd., 1916); for an account of the British censorship laws and procedures from a member of the Official Press Bureau see Cook, *The Press in War-Time*; for a

Not willing to give up the biggest story of the day, correspondents and their newspapers tried to find ways of getting around the laws and behind the front lines. They soon found that the laws regulating journalists were subject to interpretation by the military. British Field Marshall Lord Kitchener (1850-1916), for example, ordered the arrest of correspondents found in the field of battle, the revocation of their passports, and their deportation. Accordingly, the London *Times* warned its correspondents to remain inconspicuous. "The principal thing," the *Times* facetiously advised, "was to keep rigidly away from the English, who take a fiendish delight in arresting war correspondents."⁹ Philip Hamilton Gibbs (1877-1962) of the *Daily Chronicle* either did not receive or did not heed such sage advice from his editors. Gibbs tried getting himself appointed as a special commissioner of the Red Cross to report on the field hospitals in France. He got as far as Le Havre where he was arrested. Kitchener had Gibbs warned that, if he returned to France again, he would be put against a wall and shot.¹⁰

The consequences of incidents like these were severe. The Allied press downplayed or failed to report the magnitude of the initial defeats of the British and French forces in an effort to avoid discouraging new recruits. Germany, initially confident of its military superiority, allowed reporters on the scene of battle. While the German military understandably prohibited correspondents from Allied countries, it actually courted those from neutral countries. The situation caused considerable confusion and frustration among the neutrals. In a letter to British Foreign Secretary Sir

useful comparison between British and French censorship see William MacDonald, "The Press and the Censorship in England and France," *The Nation* (New York) 105 (13 September 1917): 287-289.

⁹*Times* (London), *The History of the Times: The 150th Anniversary and Beyond, 1912-1948. Part I: 1912-1920* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), 221.

¹⁰ Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 94.

Edward Grey (1862-1933), former United States president Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) wrote:

There has been a very striking contrast between the lavish attention showered on war correspondents by the German military authorities and the point-blank refusal to have anything to do with them by the British and French governments....The only real war news, written by Americans who are known to and trusted by the American public, comes from the German side. If you think public opinion should be taken into account, then it is worth your while considering whether much of your censorship work and much of your refusal to allow correspondents at the front has not been a danger to your cause from the standpoint of the effect on public opinion without any corresponding military gains.¹¹

Roosevelt's letter, together with complaints from the British cabinet, inspired some relaxation of censorship restrictions, but the overall picture remained the same. While the practice of censorship may have served its purpose of protecting military security, the restrictions on the free press in England, France, and America also undermined public faith in that press. In a contemporary article on the subject, historian William MacDonald (1863-1938) of *The Nation* offered the following analysis:

Every disaster covered up has aroused fear that the situation in general was worse than it was; every victory magnified has dimmed the glory of every subsequent success; every fact distorted has cast doubt upon statements of the plainest truthfulness; every criticism silenced has bred a score of criticisms more pointed and more forceful....No reputable correspondent needs a censorship, no official ought to be shielded by it, no secret diplomatic intrigue ought to be fostered by it. Least of all should it find tolerance in a war which, like the present one, is being fought by democracies for the safeguarding of democracy.¹²

Faced with the inescapable realities of censorship, a dwindling paper supply, and increasing staff shortages, newspapermen had a difficult task getting the truth to the

¹¹ Theodore Roosevelt to Sir Edward Grey, 22 January 1915, quoted in Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 94-95.

¹² William MacDonald, "The Press and Censorship in England and France," *The Nation* (New York) 105 (13 September 1917): 289.

public. At each stage in the information process – from correspondent to censor to editor to reader – stories necessarily underwent a transformation as they encountered the politics and prejudices of their interpreters.

Given the obstacles that Harold Williams and other correspondents faced, it is sometimes staggering to find accuracy and clarity in any of the reports. Technologically, the reporters of the early twentieth century initially appear to have been at a disadvantage compared to today's correspondents. The immediacy of instantaneous transfer of information on television and over the Internet, however, does not necessarily improve the public's grasp of "the truth"; it has only made it easier for rumor and misinformation to circulate freer and farther than before. Contradictory news reports from governmental and unofficial civilian sources bombard editors today, as in the past, and those editors must turn to their correspondents for confirmation. In the space of a newspaper column or during a television spot, a correspondent tries to make sense of a news event and put it in perspective for his or her audience. The who, what, when, and where of most news stories might be readily verified, but the causes and implications of events are usually a matter of individual interpretation.

Like historians, correspondents such as Williams are expected by their editors to gather the evidence and present all sides to any given conflict. Unlike historians, correspondents must accomplish the task over a period of days or even hours while the story is still unfolding. Often enough they are not only eyewitnesses to the events being reported but also participants. Under such circumstances, should one judge correspondents based on their presumed objectivity? How does one look at the persecution of individuals based on their race, class, religion, or politics and remain

objective? How much does blatant partisanship on the part of a correspondent discredit the report?

In Harold Williams's case, there was no pretense of objectivity. He was an editorial writer, an analyst, and a patriot. When it came to Russia in 1917, he shared the position of those urgently concerned with that country's ability to maintain the eastern front against Germany. Major conflict arose when he and his fellow correspondents also had to deal with a country simultaneously engulfed in revolution. Allied journalists and their editors saw the internal upheavals of Russian social, economic, and political life as events intricately linked to the outcome of a war of unprecedented proportions.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams (1869-1962), his widow, has provided the most comprehensive examination of his life in her biography *Cheerful Giver*.¹³ Because Tyrkova shared Williams's life from 1904 on, she was best able to bear witness to the turbulent times they lived through together, particularly in Russia. The book, while offering a fascinating array of people, places, and events, is basically a sympathetic and uncritical portrait rather than a scholarly study. Tyrkova's son, Arkady Borman (1891-1974), has written a brief sketch of Williams heavily based on *Cheerful Giver* with some additions of his personal impressions.¹⁴

¹³ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver: The Life of Harold Williams* (London: Peter Davies, 1935).

¹⁴ Arkady Borman, "Harold Williams: A British Journalist and Linguist in Russia," *Russian Review* 28 (July 1969): 327-337.

Otherwise, the most extensive work has been done in New Zealand by Irene Zohrab.¹⁵ As assistant editor of the *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, she has published four articles, including two which are annotated versions of previously unpublished works by Williams. Zohrab's other two articles deal with Williams's relationship with literary figures such as Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), Hugh Walpole (1884-1941), H. G. Wells (1866-1946), and Frank Swinnerton (1884-1982).¹⁶ These publications are informative, but they cover only partial aspects of Williams's career. No full-scale biography of Williams has appeared since *Cheerful Giver* in 1935.

Of the few additional books and articles that cite Williams's coverage of the Russian scene, none thoroughly covers his career before 1917. Harvey Pitcher (1936-) included Williams and some of his dispatches in a survey of first-hand accounts of the Russian Revolution; both Phillip Knightley (1929-) and Elisabeth Hupp Schillinger (1943-) confine their discussion to Williams's civil war dispatches; Richard Pipes (1923-) refers to him only in anecdotal footnotes in his biography of Peter Struve (1870-1944), a significant early influence on Williams; among other historians of the Kadet party, Shmuel Galai (1933-) does not even mention Williams; only William G. Rosenberg (1938-) acknowledges his early work in Russia as an outstanding journalist.¹⁷

¹⁵ Irene Zohrab's birth date is unavailable.

¹⁶ Irene Zohrab, "From New Zealand to Russia to Britain: A Comment on the Work of Harold W. Williams and his Relations with English Writers," *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1985): 3-15; Zohrab, "Leo Tolstoy from the Perspective of the New Zealand-born Linguist and Writer Harold W. Williams," *Melbourne Slavonic Studies* 19 (1985): 14-48; Zohrab, "The Place of the Liberals among the Forces of the Revolution: From the Unpublished Papers of Harold Williams," *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1986): 53-82; Zohrab, "Russia and Mongolia (from the Unpublished Papers of Harold W. Williams)," *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1987): 177-203.

¹⁷ Harvey Pitcher, *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution* (London: John Murray (Publishers) Ltd., 1994); Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*; Elisabeth Hupp Schillinger, "British and U.S. Newspaper Coverage of the Bolshevik Revolution," *Journalism Quarterly* 43 (Spring 1966): 10-16 and 24; Richard Pipes, *Struve: Liberal on the Left, 1870-1905* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970); Shmuel Galai,

It will avoid ambiguity to define some of the terms and political parties referred to in the study. Amorphous terms such as “left,” “right,” “radical,” “liberal,” and “conservative” take on meaning only in a specific context. The context of this study is Russia from 1904 to 1920, particularly in reference to its political parties. Even these defy strict definitions. Prior to the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II (1868-1918) in 1917, “left” referred generally to all opposition to the autocracy; “right” meant support of the autocracy. After the abdication, these distinctions became more complex as those on the “left” split into factions.

The terms “radical,” “liberal,” and “conservative” indicate both the degree and means of change advocated by the various political parties in Russia. The Kadet or Constitutional Democratic party represented the propertied and professional classes and advocated change through a parliamentary system. Following the March 1917 Revolution, the Kadets were increasingly pressured by extremist opposition. Once “radical” in terms of anti-establishment, they moved from “liberal” to “conservative” in a matter of months.

Likewise, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks were two branches of the Social Democratic party. Initially, both branches expected a radical change in the structure of Russian society with the proletariat gaining ascendancy over the monarchy and propertied classes. However, the Mensheviks expected the change to take place gradually with the propertied classes ruling for a short but indefinite period through a parliamentary system. The Bolsheviks, feeling that the rule of the proletariat was

The Liberation Movement in Russia 1900-1905 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973); William G. Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution: The Constitutional Democratic Party, 1917-1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

imminent, wanted to bypass the parliamentary period and attain power through any necessary means, including violence.

In terms of this study, the Russian Revolution will be defined as beginning with the Bloody Sunday massacre of civilians by government troops in January 1905 and continuing on through the Bolshevik takeover in November 1917 and beyond. This is a broad definition of the revolution but it is one that reflects best the experiences of the subject of the study, Harold Williams.

While Tsar Nicholas II abdicated formally in 1917, many in Russia including Williams perceived that he had abdicated morally as early as 1905. They felt that the tsar had betrayed the relationship and trust between himself and the people on Bloody Sunday. Critical to upholding autocratic rule, the relationship never recovered completely. As a participant during this period, Williams saw a crisis unfolding in various phases – the autocratic, the liberal parliamentary, and the communist – but all part of an ongoing revolution.

Williams's perception, that of constant redefinition of the relationship of citizen to state, has validity even for the Russia of today.

NOTE ON DATES AND RUSSIAN NAMES

When Harold Williams arrived in Russia in December 1904, Russia was still using the Julian calendar, then thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar used in the West. Because he was sending his dispatches back to readers in Great Britain and the United States, he dealt initially with this problem by simply using days (Monday,

Tuesday, etc.) rather than dates. Later he used specific dates but almost entirely following the Gregorian calendar. This study will also follow the Gregorian calendar.

Transliteration of Russian names posed a problem to Williams and are still in dispute. When quoting Williams's dispatches, I have made no attempt to modernize his spellings. Additionally, I have not tried to update accepted spellings of well-known individuals such as Alexander II, Nicholas II, Trotsky, Tolstoy, and Kerensky. For lesser known individuals and terms, I have relied upon the Library of Congress transliteration system and eliminated most of the soft and hard signs which convey little meaning to English readers.

CHAPTER ONE: THE EDUCATION OF A JOURNALIST

Every journalist has his or her own story. Who they are and where they come from can have a sometimes subtle, sometimes profound effect on how they choose to report events. In the case of Harold Williams, his religious upbringing had a lasting impact on his interpretation of events throughout his journalistic career.

Harold Whitmore Williams was born in Auckland, New Zealand in 1876, the first of seven sons whose parents had emigrated from Cornwall, England. His father, Reverend William James Williams (1847-1936), had become a Methodist minister at the age of seventeen and arrived in New Zealand in 1870 to begin missionary work among the gold miners at Thames. Five years later he married Alice Hosking.¹ Her family was also closely tied to Methodism and her ancestral home in Cornwall reputedly was host to the co-founder of that denomination, John Wesley (1703-1791).²

The land in which the Williams family settled and raised its sons was still in the process of colonization. New Zealand had initially attracted European interest in the late 18th century as a territorial extension of the Australian whaling trade. Native Maori tribes soon had to cope with an influx of whalers, merchants, and missionaries. After the British government began the annexation of New Zealand in 1838, European settlers arrived in increasing numbers. The majority were upper working class migrants seeking economic and social advancement in a new environment.³

Reverend Williams joined the ranks of Wesleyans who were vying with Anglican and Roman Catholic preachers in an attempt to spread their respective forms of

¹ Alice Hosking's birth and death dates are unavailable.

² Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 1-2.

³ J. B. Condliffe and W. T. G. Airey, *A Short History of New Zealand* (Christchurch, New Zealand: Whitcombe & Tombs Limited, 1960), 21-22 and 122.

Christianity among the European immigrants and the native Maori tribes. Considered a fearless and effective speaker and writer on social reforms, he was an editor of the Methodist Church paper, *The Methodist Times*, and of the prohibition journal, *The Vanguard*. He became a leader for progressive movements within the church, helping to improve the status of laymen, while also working to unite the Methodist Church of New Zealand and assert its independence from the Australian Methodist Church.⁴ His involvement in church affairs kept his family constantly moving throughout the pastoral circuit.

Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, Harold Williams's wife and biographer, wrote in her book *Cheerful Giver: The Life of Harold Williams* about his New Zealand childhood based on her husband's oral reminiscences.⁵ He could convey colorful images of ports filled with sailing ships carrying a variety of flags, races, and languages into his seemingly remote and isolated world. His wife was convinced that the "New Zealand ports, the sailors and the sea left a deeper mark [on Williams] than all his schools."⁶ Williams's formal education was haphazard at best and his recollection of it was unpleasant. He remembered best how cold the classrooms were in winter, how unclear arithmetic was, and how even grammar at first seemed overwhelming. His father was probably the key to surmounting the shortcomings of his son's early education. He had instilled in his son a love for reading and the ports of New Zealand had sparked the boy's

⁴ G. H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (Wellington, New Zealand: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940), 517.

⁵ The biography was published in 1935, seven years after Williams's death and probably many years after the conversations. Because the biography is an affectionate tribute to her husband, there is some reason to question its veracity. Her descriptions of events tend to be romantic and impressionistic, often shaky on their sequence and vaguely referenced. However, she seems to have made an effort to be accurate. The book was also proofed by historian Bernard Pares, a friend of the family, who probably would have clarified any obvious inaccuracies.

⁶ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 2.

curiosity about languages. Tyrkova gives this account of the remarkable linguistic awakening that influenced her husband's career:

The little boy was lost amidst verbs, prepositions, syntax. And then, suddenly when he was about seven years old, there came something like an explosion in his brain. Languages, grammar, all the ramifications of philology opened to him as if a magic hand had revealed the realm of words, English and foreign, and led along the paths of philology, steep and stony for most of us, full of colour and harmony for him. He always remembered this sudden sense of inner revolution, of blissful release, as one of the happiest moments of his life.⁷

Even as a child, Harold Williams knew the New Testament almost by heart. This enabled him to construct vocabularies and grammars for the various foreign translations available in his father's library and the local bookstores. At the age of eleven he knew Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, German, Maori, and Italian; at fourteen, he constructed a Dobu vocabulary and grammar, derived solely from a St. Mark's Gospel in that New Guinean language; two years later, the Polynesian Society in Wellington published his vocabulary of the language of Niue, or Savage Island.⁸

Although he won a scholarship to the University of New Zealand, Harold Williams gave up his studies there after two years. In 1896, at the age of twenty, he was accepted as a probationer to the ministry.⁹ As the eldest son of a respected and well-known preacher, Williams was more inclined to follow his father's profession than to continue his education. He was hampered, though, by a number of handicaps that made his three-year probation less than pleasant. In spite of his gift for languages, Williams

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 3; Harold Whitmore Williams, "Vocabulary of the Language of Niue (Savage Island)," *Journal of the Polynesian Society containing the Transactions and Proceedings of the Society*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 1893, Wellington, New Zealand; 2nd edition, Leipzig, Germany, Karl W. Hierseman, 1909): 17-24 and 65-70. Williams based this vocabulary on a New Testament translation by Reverend Frank Lawes.

⁹ In *Cheerful Giver*, Tyrkova-Williams incorrectly gave the date as 1898.

was shy and did not enjoy public speaking. He had a stammer that only worsened when he was nervous, and he was constantly in the shadow of his famous father.¹⁰

He began his work on the St. Albans circuit (Christchurch). There he made the acquaintance of the Lovell-Smith family, owners of a printing business and active in church affairs.¹¹ Their non-traditional home, Arcadia, became a haven for Williams. Arcadia was a home full of young people experimenting with the ideas of the time such as spiritualism, mental healing, telepathy, vegetarianism, socialism, and women's liberation. Having grown up with six brothers, Williams was used to a crowd. A Lovell-Smith family member wrote to Tyrkova many years later:

Harold came often as minister to my home. He was tall, dark-haired and grey-eyed, and very much afraid of getting fat. We were a large family of five boys and five girls, with father and mother, and he became a favourite with us all. He told the younger ones stories, and danced Maori hakas with them. With us older ones he discussed social and spiritual problems, talked and read Tolstoy, in whom, as in many other reformers, he was greatly interested. Harold's innate modesty made it impossible for him to realize his intellectual superiority, and he was just the very good comrade and simple-hearted friend of us all. At his suggestion a few of us started a magazine in 1898, hand-written and circulated amongst ourselves, but Harold, and, indeed, all of us, became very busy with other affairs, and there were only four issues of "Light Ahead."¹²

In 1898, Williams began a correspondence with the eldest of the Lovell-Smith daughters, Macie (1876-1959), after he was transferred from Christchurch to Inglewood in the Waitara circuit. Beyond the friendship of two people who shared intellectual interests, there is no indication in the letters of a romantic relationship between Williams and Macie Lovell-Smith. What does emerge is a picture of what he felt about the

¹⁰ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 6.

¹¹ *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography (1870-1900)* (Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 1993).

¹² Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 5. Tyrkova credits the letter to Lucy M. Lovell (1861-1936), an aunt. It is more likely that the letter was written by her niece Macie.

ministry, his future, and the state of mankind. Williams wrote that he was “trying to make the best of a bad job.” He clearly wanted to do what he believed was God’s work but had little patience for the “drudgery” of a country minister’s routine.¹³ Between 1898 and 1900, the endless rounds of visits to the homes of his scattered congregation nevertheless provided Williams with tales of his exploits and the characters he met.

There was an unidentified young lady teacher from Tariki with whom he was left alone while their hostess went to milk the cows. She spoke to him about religious matters at first and then about her loneliness and “want of congenial society.” Williams became uneasy and reported to Macie Lovell-Smith: “I felt rather uncomfortable in being made a young lady’s confidant at so early a stage of our acquaintance. This is the kind of thing that makes me feel shy....”¹⁴

His widespread and varied congregation found itself under the guidance of a likable but inexperienced and awkward young minister. He was able to win over some of the newer European immigrant parishioners by conversing with them in their own languages. He also seems to have bridged the cultural gap with the native islanders in the same manner, but to some of the British New Zealanders Williams was a puzzle. He was not content with traditional Methodist teachings that opposed political and social reform movements. He immersed himself in the works of various socialists and reformers, and was constantly searching for ways to live what he felt would be a more consistent

¹³ Harold Whitmore Williams to Macie Lovell-Smith (hereafter cited HWW to MLS), 28 January 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University, New York. The letters in this collection were transcribed and edited by Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams from the manuscripts that Lucy M. Loveli had lent to her when she was writing *Cheerful Giver*. Some of the original letters were water damaged and partially illegible.

¹⁴ HWW to MLS, 9 May 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

Christian life.¹⁵ Methodism alone was inadequate for him, and he sought instead philosophies which could combine Christianity with socialism. One of his guides on the circuit was “kind enough” to warn Williams that “they wou’d want to turn you out at the end of one year.”¹⁶ Williams had sensed part of the problem himself:

Underneath all the friendliness of the people there is a sensitive mass of prejudice composed of all the old methodist traditions. It’s all over with my success if I come up against that. My difficulty is how to deal with it. If I preach in my own way, they will miss so many notes they have been accustomed [to] that I am afraid my sermon will seem too remote from them to be effective. I must do what I can to find their needs & speak living words for them. And all my future is so uncertain. I am very much afraid that my unorthodoxy will prevent my ordination. I say I am afraid because I feel now that the work of the ministry is worth doing & I would like to find some corner where I can work in the methodist church.¹⁷

Clearly, the young Harold Williams was torn between his obligation to the ministry and a desire to depart from tradition while expanding his moral and social consciousness. He was aware of the implicit contradictions.

Probably the most outspoken and influential of religious and political critics of the last quarter of the nineteenth century was Leo Tolstoy, and Williams became an avid disciple. Tolstoy believed that Christ’s central message was found in the words “that ye resist not evil” from Matthew 5, 39 and non-resistance to evil became the foundation of Tolstoyanism (*Tolstovstvo*). Tolstoy recognized that as a member of organized society the individual is obliged to submit to forces inimical to the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. Outside the confines of society, however, no limit need be placed on an

¹⁵ By 1898, Williams felt confident enough to offer to write a series of articles for “Light Ahead”: “I will say what I know about Tolstoy, Mazzini, Carpenter and others.” [HWW to MLS, 25 June 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive. Lucy M. Lovell did not believe Williams ever completed the articles.]

¹⁶ HWW to MLS, 28 April 1898, Tyrkova –Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

¹⁷ Ibid.

individual's striving for moral perfection.¹⁸ A sharp critic who condemned all governments, churches, and economic systems, Tolstoy became a formulator and proponent of Christian anarchism. While he opposed violence and preached the virtues of a simple communal life, his teachings were nevertheless revolutionary.

Harold Williams tried to explain his understanding of the concept of non-resistance to evil to Macie Lovell-Smith.¹⁹ Society too often resorted to violence as a means of resisting evil. Prisons created more criminals than they reformed; wars only increased hatred and strengthened world armaments; murder, even state-sanctioned, was vengeful and created an atmosphere of bitterness and fear.²⁰ Williams believed that non-resistance depended on abstinence from violence combined with "full reliance in and entire obedience to the spiritual power of love." He confessed to his reader:

I must say that I am fast inclining towards Anarchism. I doubt often. I am held back by many considerations. Yet sometimes there come to me moments of insight when it seems to be the only Christ-like, the only divine way to remedy the world's evil, to cast aside all faint hearted trust in violence, the weapon of evil, and to believe in the spiritual power of love. For non-resistance is not a mere negative belief, in spite of its name. Abstinence from violence would be a poor thing if it meant abstinence from action....I am sure that was Christ[']s method. I have learned to see lately that the secret of the atonement lies somewhere there. Good alone can overcome evil, Love alone can overcome hate. The time is ripe for us to do the right when we see the right. We must not allow any theories of the revolution of society to chill us into a lazy fatalism. For each one of us the call is plain and clear to do the right, and trust to God to bring out of

¹⁸ Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy: Volume II: The Years of Maturity 1880-1910* (1945; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1960), 14.

¹⁹ Beyond a passing reference to teaching himself Russian in order to read *Anna Karenina* in the original, Williams did not specify the works of Tolstoy that he had read up to this time. Tolstoy had entered a period when he was concentrating on religious, moral, and didactical writings in the 1880s until his death in 1910. He completed *A Confession* (1882), *What I Believe* (1884), and *What Then Must We Do?* (1886), and Williams may have had access to any of these works. The arguments that Williams uses in his letters to defend pacifism and non-resistance are, however, particularly reminiscent of Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1893). See also Irene Zohrab, "Leo Tolstoy from the Perspective of the New Zealand-born Linguist and Writer Harold W. Williams (with the publication of a forgotten interview between them on 20 January 1905)," *Melbourne Slavonic Studies* 19 (1985): 14-48.

²⁰ HWW to MLS, 29 July 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

our right-doing and wrong-doing the social order of the coming generation. Behold! A plea for Anarchism!²¹

Williams accepted Tolstoy's interpretation of the teachings of Christ without rejecting the teachings of his own church. Whereas Tolstoy was not concerned with the salvation of men's souls, Williams continued to believe in the need for a reconciliation of God and man through the death of Christ. Williams's common ground with Tolstoy was that Christ's teachings were meant to show people how to live with each other while on earth. Tolstoy's primary influence on Williams at this point in his life stems from a basic if naive belief in the power of love.

In a letter dated June 2, 1898, Williams indicated his interest in the work of a contemporary clergyman, Reverend John Coleman Kenworthy (1861-19??) of Great Britain.²² Kenworthy was part of the Christian Socialist revival movement which had begun in 1877 and would last until World War I. His major work, *The Anatomy of Misery: Plain Lectures on Economics* (1893), had attracted the attention of Tolstoy who would write an introduction to its later edition in 1901. Kenworthy recognized a kinship of ideas with Tolstoy and visited him in Russia during the winter of 1895-1896.²³ To encourage Kenworthy, Tolstoy gave him legal rights to the first English translations of any of his new works.²⁴ The royalties were to go to the Brotherhood Publishing

²¹ Ibid.

²² HWW to MLS, 2 June 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

²³ Kenworthy wrote: "I had not realized how completely the position thus disclosed (in *The Anatomy of Misery*) is the position taken these twenty years past by Leo Tolstoy until this book established with him that friendship which has been an inexpressible encouragement and source of strength to me. With the names of Ruskin and Tolstoy I would wish "*The Anatomy of Misery*" to always be associated." [John Coleman Kenworthy, *The Anatomy of Misery: Plain Lectures in Economics with an introduction by Count Tolstoy and an appendix of correspondence between the author and Dr. Alfred Russell Wallace* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1901), 10.]

²⁴ Tolstoy's generosity added further to the confusion regarding foreign editions of his works. Tolstoy had previously repudiated his copyrights. [Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy: Volume II*, 216-217.]

Company, a branch of the Brotherhood Trust that had been established in 1894 by Kenworthy and Reverend J. Bruce Wallace (1853-1939).²⁵ The Trust was designed as a cooperative society to carry on trade and industry, paying trade union wage rates to its workers, and providing pensions and medical benefits out of its profits. Wallace and Kenworthy hoped to build a cooperative colony with its own farms, factories, stores, and homes. Kenworthy was in charge of Croyden, one of the first three Brotherhood churches.²⁶

Soon after his visit to Tolstoy, Kenworthy gave up the pastorate at Croyden to devote more time to the publishing company and a journal called *The New Order* which gave reports on communitarian experiments. By February of 1897, he and a small group of followers founded the Tolstoyan community of Purleigh in Essex, England. Williams, who was reading Tolstoy-related literature extensively at this time, became an avid reader of *The New Order*.²⁷ Kenworthy's Purleigh community captured his imagination.

The thought of Kenworthy and his Brotherhood often comes to me. It comes to me especially when I am tired. When I am riding alone at night my imagination wanders away & I can see myself quite vividly working with the brotherhood, thinking with them, writing with them in a carefree life: then suddenly the horse stops & I am brought back to the coldness of the present reality.²⁸

²⁵ Rev. J(ohn) Bruce Wallace was born in India and educated at various universities including Queens College and Presbyterian College in Belfast, Ireland and the University of Bonn in Germany. In addition to being a co-founder of the Brotherhood Trust, he was also editor of its literary organ, *Brotherhood*. [*Who Was Who Among English and European Authors 1931-1949* (Detroit: Omnigraphics and Gale Research Company, 1978).]

²⁶ Peter d'A. Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914: Religion, Class, and Social Conscience in Late-Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 336-337; W.H.G. Armytage, *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 342-358.

²⁷ Williams wrote: "I used half my last wedding fee to send home for the shilling worth of Brotherhood literature, of course including the New Order.... I think I have pretty thoroughly soaked myself in the New Orders I have now. I often use them as a night cap." [HWW to MLS, 4 July 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.]

²⁸ HWW to MLS, 2 June 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

Williams dismissed his musings reluctantly as a form of self-indulgence but could not abandon them.²⁹ He had made the acquaintance of “Old Leech”, a former Wesleyan preacher who had become a drunkard, a freethinker, and finally a “rabid old Socialist.”³⁰ Leech was on his own crusade to begin a community in New Zealand, and Williams knew he had found something of an ally in the old man. A bout of influenza gave Williams some unexpected time to reevaluate his role in life. “I begot a head full of ideas & hopes now, and I feel that life is worth living for the sake of the age to come.”³¹ Having been confined by theological and social conventions, Williams felt that his “true self was striving to be let out.” He didn’t intend to shock his parishioners but he wanted them to know his deep convictions. “And whether I stay in the ministry or not, I don’t care,” he wrote. “Life is worth living now that I see I can live for the sake of a noble cause.”³² Williams here confirms his romantic idealism, however impractical. At the very least, he is ambivalent about his future.

While Leech was writing pamphlets promoting a communitarian settlement, Williams was trying to introduce co-operative economics along with Christian brotherhood to his congregation in his sermons and visits. In addition to disseminating the precepts of Tolstoy and Kenworthy, Williams began to circulate penny pamphlets containing the ideas of Dr. George Davis Herron (1862-1925) of the United States.³³

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. Leech was one of the more curious characters Williams encountered during his ministry. Williams further wrote: “He [Leech] lives alone in a little hut at the back of our stable. His great hobby is the Ruskin colony in Tennessee.... His education is scanty, his logical powers indifferent, his statement of the present condition of things hardly accurate, his religious sentiment not highly developed. I can acknowledge all this & yet say that I like the man because of his earnestness & also, I expect, because his hobby is so near akin to mine.”

³¹ HWW to MLS, 19 June 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

³² Ibid.

³³ In July of 1898, Williams proudly wrote that he had “Herronized” Inglewood to the extent of about four dozen copies. [HWW to MLS, 29 July 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.]

Herron had initially come to prominence in 1891 when he made a moving appeal for the application of Christian ethics to business in an address entitled “The Message of Jesus to Men of Wealth.”³⁴ In subsequent writings, he gave his views on the state. Unlike Tolstoy and Kenworthy, Herron did not view the state as inherently destructive. He saw it instead as a necessary tool, and in his book *The Christian State* (1895) he urged that it be converted to the cause:

If the state would be saved from the wrath of the rising social passion, it must believe in Christ as its Lord, and translate his sacrifice into its laws. Our institutions must become the organized expression of Christ's law of love, if the state is to obey the coming social conscience that is to command great moral revolutions in political thought and action. For society is the organized sacrifice of the people.³⁵

Herron was not an anarchist. Williams, who still believed in Tolstoy's and Kenworthy's pacificism, nevertheless was moving closer to Herron's position regarding the state as a vehicle for reform. Whereas Kenworthy had rejected all forms of political action, not just violent revolution, Herron was a political activist. Kenworthy stressed personal conduct as a means of reforming society, but Herron felt that example and precept alone were insufficient. Williams reluctantly admitted to Macie Lovell-Smith that he could not bring himself to abstain from voting, declaring that “my unfaith in the use of violence is stronger than my faith in love, that so far my belief is more negative than positive. May I grow and attain to the true abiding faith.”³⁶ Williams's lack of

³⁴ In 1893, a professorship of applied Christianity was founded for his occupancy in Iowa College (later Grinnell) by Mrs. E. D. Rand of Burlington. During Herron's service the college attracted interest as he attempted to translate Christianity into social, political, and economic terms. [Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography: Volume 4* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931, 1960), 594-595.]

³⁵ George Davis Herron, *The Christian State: A Political Vision of Christ: A Course of Six Lectures Delivered in Various American Cities* (New York and Boston: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1895), 62.

³⁶ HWW to MLS, 29 June 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

“faith in love” shows that he was not yet ready to trust either himself or his fellow human beings to be generous and forgiving toward one another as Christ taught.

Both Williams and Leech continued their proselytizing, but details remain sketchy. Williams’s letters to Macie Lovell-Smith became infrequent after July of 1898. They do indicate that Williams was having difficulties during his last months as a probationer. In September 1898, Williams expressed concern that he might not be reappointed to the same circuit. “But as it must come,” he wrote, “it will come & I’ll try to be dispassionate.”³⁷ Five months later he wrote that he had to leave the circuit. “I could not have stayed another year with my comfort, knowing as I do know that some of the leading men in Inglewood are opposed to me.”³⁸

Williams did not detail why he would not remain on the circuit, but some years later told Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams that clerical superiors cited his stammer as the reason for not giving him a permanent post within the ministry.³⁹ It is more likely that Williams was correct in fearing that his differences with Methodism would prevent his ordination. In an earlier letter Williams had noted that the minister who evaluated him had been initially surprised at the unusually diverse nature of his library.⁴⁰ Reports of his sermons and activities would certainly have reached his superiors. Williams had made a conscious decision to begin preaching “a religion of aggression instead of the religion of

³⁷ HWW to MLS, 24 September 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

³⁸ HWW to MLS, 19 April 1899, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

³⁹ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 12.

⁴⁰ “My superintendent, Mr. T., came in on Thursday morning. I am afraid I am a standing puzzle for him. He can’t face the problem how a youth with such a heterodox library as mine can do the work of a Methodist minister.” [HWW to MLS, 2 May 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.]

acquiescence” and the consequences were expected. He had chosen advocacy of reform over tradition.⁴¹

Now living at home, Williams found himself with abundant time to contemplate his future. He speculated to Macie Lovell-Smith on the possibility of a trip to “see with my own eyes the working of the Christ spirit in the Commonwealth” and thought he might use some of his spare time “in learning the true nature & possibilities of communistic life.”⁴² Having often extolled the virtues of communal life in his sermons and letters, he wanted to visit some of the communities in the Commonwealth, in the United States, and possibly even Purleigh itself in England. Yet there is no indication that he intended to make a definitive move from his homeland. In the months that followed his probationary period, Harold Williams was still struggling to find “some corner” in the New Zealand Methodist church. He continued to serve occasionally as a substitute minister and was sent to fill in for an ill minister at Maryowhare in Northern Wairoa. There he encountered again the Maori who had fascinated him as a child. “On the second night after I came Hamaki Paul, the Maori minister, shared my solitude & for the time my thoughts on the surface matters were Maori thoughts.”⁴³ Williams was sensitive to the decay of Maori culture which European encroachment had hastened and began seriously considering missionary work among the natives.⁴⁴

A personal crisis intervened to cause him to abruptly change the direction of his life. Some time during late 1898, Williams had become involved with a “Miss

⁴¹ HWW to MLS, 29 July 1898, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

⁴² HWW to MLS, 19 April 1899, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

⁴³ HWW to MLS, 27 June 1899, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Harkness.” With anguish, he recounted the progress of this relationship to Macie Lovell-Smith. Williams felt he had “a kind of mission” to help Miss Harkness through some undefined troubles and had made the error of believing that an engagement to her would provide the solution.⁴⁵ After struggling with the situation for about a year, he determined that “the love I had for her was a feeble thing & nothing like she expected.”⁴⁶

At last I could bear it no longer & to be honest I had to tell her the other day the true state of my feelings. I cannot tell you now the agony of it all. I only know that I am now the man I most despise – a man who has broken his engagement....I cannot go on with the ministry now. I was to have entered the Maori work but that must not be. I shall go away somewhere – I don’t know where. My brother Aubrey is going to South Africa. I may possibly go with him, or else with Hugh to England. I am glad now that I can use so many languages. They will help me through the world.⁴⁷

Harold Williams’s decision to leave New Zealand was pivotal. He makes it clear that his broken engagement convinced him to abandon all ministerial work – even missionary work that did not require his ordination. Williams may have considered his actions dishonorable; he may also have found his personal conduct unworthy of a minister. This situation alone provided him with a rationalization for putting New Zealand behind him.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Williams probably became engaged in June of 1899 when he thanked Macie Lovell-Smith for her good wishes on behalf of himself and Miss Harkness.

⁴⁶ HWW to MLS, 18 December 1899, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

⁴⁷ Ibid. In *Cheerful Giver*, Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams omitted any mention of Miss Harkness and the engagement, possibly out of respect for Miss Harkness who may still have been alive. In 1930, Macie Lovell-Smith responded to Tyrkova-Williams’s inquiries about the engagement: “You will know that Harold was for a short time, in 1899 I think, engaged to a Miss Harkness who was a bright and attractive girl, I believe. The news of this was given to us by Harold and we were disappointed because there was a feeling that he should not at that time be tied. In fact, though I couldn’t say that to him, I felt it might mean tragedy, in the shackling of a spirit that needed above all at that time to be free to soar. When he broke the engagement after a short time, I’m sure he felt that marriage must give spiritual freedom, intellectual companionship as well as love in order to ensure happiness. And this he found later in life when really ready for it.” [Macie B. Lovell-Smith to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 19 January 1930, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 27, Bakhmeteff Archive.]

Leaving New Zealand was not as simple as it seemed. Williams needed both a definite destination and the money for his passage. His initial plan of going to South Africa with his brother had been thwarted by the ongoing war between the British and the Boers (1899-1902). Instead, romanticism tempered by logic drew Williams toward Europe. He decided to take the seemingly less hazardous path and go back to school. He would study philology at a German university, preferably Berlin where fees were low. En route, he could stop in England, meet Kenworthy, and possibly visit the community at Purleigh. Armed with letters of introduction and planning to do some tutoring in English to defray his living expenses, Williams was ready to embark. His father was concerned that his son would become stranded in Europe and decided to ask William Wilson, a proprietor of the *New Zealand Herald*, if he knew of anyone needing a secretary on the voyage.⁴⁸ Wilson did not, but generously gave Reverend Williams fifty pounds to help cover Harold's expenses.

On February 10, 1900, the "Königin Louise" left Sydney, Australia, with Harold Williams travelling in steerage. He wrote to Macie Lovell-Smith of the beginning of his adventure:

Our polyglot ship's company is shaking together very comfortably. We have a little more diet in the steerage than is necessary for maintenance of health, but we philosophically accept this as one condition of gaining experience. You may imagine my affinity when I tell you that I speak least of all in German & most of all in Croatian & Russian. This seems to prophesy a visit to Tolstoy, doesn't it?⁴⁹

Russia, Tolstoy, and communitarianism were still very much on Williams's mind. He spent a great deal of his time aboard the ship practicing his Russian and discussing

⁴⁸ William Wilson's birth and death dates are unavailable.

⁴⁹ HWW to MLS, 1 March 1900, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

Tolstoy with fellow passengers. Even before he departed, Williams had written that his ambition was “to make a pilgrimage to Tolstoy. If by any piece of good fortune I can get to Russia before he died I shall consider myself happy.”⁵⁰

Dreams of Russia were put on hold. Williams arrived in England, met with Kenworthy in London, and afterward made a visit to Purleigh. Details are lacking, but Williams certainly became aware of serious conflict within the Brotherhood Trust and the threat of its dissolution.⁵¹ Subsequent to his disillusioning experience with Kenworthy, Williams went to visit his mother’s family in Cornwall. There he was warmly received and was able to obtain the necessary funds to get him to Berlin.⁵²

Philology and ethnography were his principle subjects at the University of Berlin. He also studied philosophy, history, and literature without even thinking of when or how he would use his knowledge.⁵³ The progress of his university career was compromised by his need to make a living and even further by doubts about his future.

I believe philology is my strong point, but I don’t feel the least attracted by the life of a German scholar....I seem to be forced more and more to writing for my living, and it is barely possible that I may turn journalist. I can’t say that I rejoice particularly at the prospect.⁵⁴

Indeed, prior to receiving his degree in philology from Munich University in 1903, having transferred there from the University of Berlin a year earlier, Williams had gotten some work as a journalist. In addition to tutoring as he struggled to pay his expenses, he

⁵⁰ HWW to MLS, 27 January 1900, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

⁵¹ HWW to MLS, 11 April 1900 (incomplete letter due to water damage), Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

⁵² Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 18.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ HWW to MLS, 21 February 1901, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

occasionally produced articles for a German women's magazine, but even that experience proved disappointing.⁵⁵ Tyrkova later wrote:

Never in his life was he able to give any details about frocks and society gatherings. It was useless to ask him how a woman was dressed. He would draw vague designs in the air with his hands and helplessly reply: 'The hat was so-and-so. Light blue. No, it was black...and there was something on it.'⁵⁶

Political journalism was more to Williams's taste. While in Berlin, he became friends with Dr. Dudley Disraeli Braham (1875-1951), who was an assistant to the London *Times* Berlin correspondent George Saunders (1859-1922). It is probable that Braham, when sent to Russia as the *Times* St. Petersburg correspondent in October 1901, recommended Williams to Saunders to fill the temporary vacancy.⁵⁷ Saunders was the type of journalist who nurtured younger colleagues such as Williams. "He showered upon me a plentiful supply of good advice," wrote Williams, "and has told me a great deal about German politics."⁵⁸

When Williams left the *Times*, Saunders promised to keep him in mind for a future permanent position. This position materialized in May 1903 when Braham was expelled from Russia. The *Times* created a new post for a special correspondent to work with Russian émigrés in Stuttgart. Braham recommended that Williams be offered the assignment.⁵⁹

Braham's expulsion resulted from a severance of relations between the *Times* and the Russian government. The controversy that produced these circumstances began on

⁵⁵ In his letters Williams wrote that he also worked for a paper he called the "German Times" that was ostensibly published in English. These articles have not been found.

⁵⁶ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 20.

⁵⁷ Williams's first assignment with the *Times* lasted only two weeks. [HWW to MLS, 26 November 1901, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.]

⁵⁸ HWW to MLS, 20 November 1901, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

⁵⁹ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 21.

April 20, 1903, when an organized massacre of the Jews, or pogrom, occurred in the town of Kishinev, in Bessarabia. The *Times* printed a dispatch on April 24th stating that the anti-semitic riot had left twenty-five dead, about seventy-five severely wounded, and about 200 slightly wounded. Over the next few weeks the newspaper printed editorials, reports, and letters denouncing the “Kishineff Outrages.” In the May 18th edition, the *Times* disclosed the text of a confidential dispatch to the governor of Bessarabia from Minister of the Interior Viacheslav Plehve (1846-1904). The newspaper had obtained the dispatch through a trusted though unnamed Russian correspondent but admitted it could not completely verify the document’s authenticity. The dispatch indicated that not only had the central government been aware beforehand that the Jews in Kishinev were to be attacked, but it also provided evidence that the local authorities had been instructed not to use arms against the rioters, only “admonitions.” Updated information reported in the editorial of the day cited 4000 Jewish families destitute and homeless and described Jewish children being thrown out windows to die on the pavement below, Jewish women being raped, and corpses mutilated. “All this time,” the writer noted, “the Governor and the Vice-Governor, with a garrison of nearly 10,000 in this town of but 110,000 inhabitants, made no active effort to stay the work of robbery and murder. Formal dispositions, we are assured, exist which prove that the police actually hounded on the rioters and disarmed the Jews who strove to defend themselves.”⁶⁰

In his dispatch dated May 18th, Dudley Braham wrote that “there is much in the action of the Central Government which needs explanation.” He particularly condemned the “indulgence” extended to the anti-semitic press.

⁶⁰ “Anti-Semitic Riot in Russia,” unsigned dispatch dated Petersburg, April 23, *Times* (London), 24 April 1903, p. 5 and “The Anti-Semitic Outrages at Kishineff,” *Times* (London), 18 May 1903, p. 10.

Even now, when the effects of this crusade have been made clear to the whole world, they [the anti-semitic press] are permitted to continue their attacks on the Jews and even to declare that the massacre at Kishineff was a "well-earned lesson," that it "served the Jews right," that they have but "reaped what they have sown," etc....But no corresponding freedom of speech is given to the defenders of the Jews.⁶¹

Braham's position as the official *Times* correspondent left him vulnerable to the fallout from the resulting struggle between the Russian government and the *Times* editorial staff. Not surprisingly, the Russian authorities believed it was Braham who had provided the paper with the Plehve dispatch. Less than ten days after filing his report on the massacre, Braham was deported. The *Times* responded with indignation and refused to send a new correspondent. The dispute received worldwide attention. One French newspaper, *Français*, offered the following assessment:

We confine our attention to one point in this open war between an Empire and a newspaper. It is the enormous force acquired by the Press at the beginning of this century, since a single journal is sufficient to harass an autocratic government which rules over a large part of the inhabited globe. Notwithstanding the most despotic constitutions, the sovereign of the world is public opinion, provided it be informed and enlightened by a powerfully organized Press. That is why in the duel that has begun between Russia and *The Times* it is not at all certain that victory will belong to the large battalions. The army of *The Times* correspondents is capable of holding its own with advantage against all the army corps of the Muscovite Empire.⁶²

The *Times* took a novel approach. In defiance to the Russian autocracy, the newspaper decided to turn the public's attention instead to anti-tsarist activities, in particular to the headquarters of liberal leaders then located in Stuttgart, Germany. An initial attempt to get the Russian émigré Peter Struve to serve as its correspondent failed,

⁶¹ "The Kishineff Outrages" (From Our Correspondent), dispatch dated St. Petersburg, May 18, *Times* (London), 20 May 1903, p. 7.

⁶² Quoted in "Russia and *The Times*," unsigned dispatch dated Paris, June 29, *Times* (London), 1 July 1903, p. 7.

but he agreed to provide the *Times* with information. The newspaper responded by offering to send a special correspondent to work with Struve.⁶³

Williams again found himself at a crossroads in his life. With his degree in philology he could have pursued an academic career.⁶⁴ The opportunity to work again with the *Times* came unexpectedly. Two years earlier, Williams had dutifully reported back to New Zealand his first impressions of the journalistic experience:

I enjoyed the work so far as it was merely journalism, but I felt a sort of oppression at the thought of being attached in any way to the *Times*. I respect the ability with which the *Times* is managed, the high standard of its English, and the completeness of its organization, but really I have little sympathy with the *Times* conception of life. I am glad to have had the experience, but I am glad it has not been continued.⁶⁵

It is curious that Williams should have viewed the *Times* with reservation. Europe had broadened his perspective and sobered some of his faith in grand schemes, and he was basically not at odds with the newspaper's editorial policy. While still something of a romantic, his critical abilities had developed. As early as August 1901, Williams confessed to his friend that he could not call himself a socialist "except in the most general sense."

I sympathize with their motives and aims but I haven't much faith in legislation, and the reformers who appeal to me are the men who work from within outwards. The old Methodist experience won't get out of my blood, and I don't want it out. The spiritual life is the chief matter to be

⁶³ Richard Pipes, *Struve: Liberal on the Left, 1870-1905* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), 353. Despite the controversy surrounding their correspondent, the *Times* continued to retain Braham. He went on to assignments in Constantinople and the Far East. In 1912, he became Director of the *Times* Publishing Company and continued to travel for the *Times* in Europe, Asia Minor, the Far East, and America. In 1914, he left the service of the *Times* to become editor of the *Daily Telegraph* of Sydney, New South Wales (1914-1922) and then editor of *The Western Australian* of Perth, W.A. (1924-1930). Like Williams, Braham would end his career where it began; in 1930 he returned to the *Times* and remained with the newspaper until his retirement in 1945.

⁶⁴ Williams's dissertation, *Grammatische Skizze der Ilocano Sprache mit Berücksichtigung ihrer Beziehungen zu den anderen Sprachen der Malayo Polynesischen Familie*, was the first printed grammar of the Ilocano language.

⁶⁵ HWW to MLS, 26 November 1901, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

insisted on. When this is right, the rest will follow. At the same time I think that socialistic laws are thoroughly in place as far as they are brought into being through the growth of a spirit of brotherhood in a people. If this spirit is too faint and weak the best socialistic laws are bound to fail. I am beginning to have a distrust of men who put forward vast schemes of reform. Idealists are necessary, and thank God, they exist – Carpenter, Tolstoy, and the rest. But it is hard to see the use of men who want to reform the world to-morrow by a combination of enthusiasm and ignorance....I believe most heartily that the Power at the heart of all is Love, and that all human history is a record of the struggle of man to come out from his own unconsciousness, half-consciousness or phantom consciousness into clear knowledge of his relations with this Central Power. We get many buffetings on the way, but we need not complain, rather should we rejoice. Every difficulty should be a spur to faith.⁶⁶

Despite Williams's near dismissal of Tolstoy along with other idealists, he still advocated a Tolstoyan approach to life. Here he departed from Herron and rejected faith in legislation and the state to impose a sense of brotherhood on a nation. Williams saw the impetus for brotherhood coming from within the individual.

By 1903 when Williams rejoined the *Times*, he found a newspaper that had changed its orientation. For the staid, status-quo *Times* to use Struve and other Russian reformers as its major source for information implied a shift – however subtle – toward sympathy with Russian anti-government groups. Williams agreed to the arrangement at least in part because the whole project had an implied mission to aid Russian freedom. The assignment brought together his fascination with Russia and his interest in helping people and society build a better way of life.

⁶⁶ HWW to MLS, 12 August 1901, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive. The reference to "Carpenter" in the letter is the poet and social reformer Edward Carpenter (1844-1929). The writings Williams may have been familiar with by Carpenter before 1905 include *Towards Democracy* (1883), *England's Ideal* (1887), *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure* (1889), *Angel's Wings* (1898), *The Art of Creation* (1904), and *Love's Coming of Age* (1896). Williams's faith in individual reformers was not helped by the failure of two early influences, Herron and Kenworthy, to live up to expectations. Herron was embroiled in a scandal involving his benefactress and Kenworthy, whom Williams had met with several times during a stay in England, was already suffering from a breakdown which would eventually land him in an asylum for the rest of his life. Williams's disappointment with the two men is evident in his letters.

Peter Struve was notable for his erudition in economics and Marxist theory and his remarkable gifts as a political publicist. Born into a Baltic German noble family residing in Russia, he studied at the University of St. Petersburg. In 1894 he published his first major work, *Critical Remarks on the Question of Russia's Economic Development*, in which his Marxist leanings are mingled with praise for the efficiency of capitalism. Briefly editor of the periodical *Novoe Slovo* (New Word) in 1897 and later of the journal *Nachalo* (The Beginning) in 1899, he was already moving away from orthodox Marxism. In March 1901, he took part in an anti-government political demonstration, was arrested, and exiled for one year to the provincial town of Tver. Stifled by authority and seeking a better life for his family, Struve left Russia in December 1901 and moved to Stuttgart. There he became editor of the liberal constitutionalist journal *Osvobozhdenie* (Liberation), completing his break with Marxist affiliation.⁶⁷ When Williams met him, Struve was heavily involved editing this political organ which would subsequently be smuggled into Russia and throughout Europe. The Russian edition bore a disclaimer that would supposedly clear the addressee of any intentional association with the conspirators, but the whole enterprise was risky to anyone involved.⁶⁸

One visitor who had paid the price by serving prison time in Russia for smuggling *Osvobozhdenie* was Ariadna Tyrkova. While attending Princess Obolensky's school for Women in St. Petersburg, she had been a schoolmate of Struve's wife, Nina Heard.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Richard Pipes, *Struve: Liberal on the Left*, 123, 273, and 312-314.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 344-347; Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 23. The copies of *Liberation* intended for Russia had on their left upper corner the printed statement: "We found your address in a directory, and take the liberty of sending you our publication."

⁶⁹ Nina Heard's birth and death dates are unavailable. Also at Princess Obolensky's school, Tyrkova was a schoolmate of Nadya Krupskaya who later became Lenin's wife. [Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 188.]

Since her school days, Tyrkova, the daughter of well-to-do Russian landowners, had been involved in the reform movement calling for a constitution limiting the autocracy. She became an émigré when she jumped bail and escaped to Germany. She and Williams quickly became friends and would eventually marry.⁷⁰

Caught up in the endless stream of news and people passing through from Russia and the rest of Europe, Williams spent the next year and a half working closely with Struve. The Struve household during this period was imbued with an air of mystery, romance, and adventure that both appealed to Williams and frustrated him. Though given the run of the house and called “Uncle Willy” by the Struve children, Williams often found himself playing hide-and-seek with Russian visitors. Heated conversations would suddenly stop when he entered a room. If a guest didn’t disappear, Struve might introduce the *Times* correspondent but use a fictitious name for the Russian involved. No one in this entourage was under any illusion that he was immune to surveillance by the Okhrana, the tsarist political police.

At the request of the Okhrana, the German authorities began to step up their surveillance and harassment of Struve, making it even more uncomfortable to continue publishing the journal in Stuttgart. The Struve contingent was obliged to relocate its operations to Paris. As a result, Williams’s assignment came to an end, leaving the New Zealander temporarily unemployed. Determined to go to Russia to see the events for himself, he took the initiative and offered his services to the more liberal *Manchester*

⁷⁰ Tyrkova does not mention their marriage date in *Cheerful Giver* although she indicates that she and Williams lived together from 1905 on. In the Archives of the *Times* (London), their marriage date is listed as February 14, 1918. [Vital Statistic Record of Dr. Harold Whitmore Williams, Archives of the *Times* (London), London, England (photocopy, Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand).]

Guardian as a foreign correspondent. His offer accepted, he left for Russia in December 1904 on the eve of events that would drastically change his life.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Harold Williams was a twenty-three-year-old idealist in search of a cause. Still declaring his faith in Christian ethics to foster the brotherhood of man, Williams refused to accept philosophies that would dictate such ethics through force. Defined by neither career nor mission, he was at least motivated by a desire to do good in the world and bolstered by a belief in religious pacifism. His naiveté was coupled with humane if unclear objectives. What he could not have anticipated at the time were the violent and dynamic world events to come that would severely compromise any chance of building the Kingdom of God on earth.

CHAPTER TWO: AN IDEALIST COMES OF AGE

Shortly after beginning his work with Struve in Stuttgart in the summer of 1903, Williams wrote a note to Macie Lovell-Smith in New Zealand.

I feel ashamed that my life should be so limited, that I should be so tied down as I am to merely selfish objects. And yet I somehow try to hope that if I do the work that I am doing well my time is not altogether lost. And for a great many reasons I am thankful for the experience in Europe. Only I feel that I should be heartily glad to lose myself in work for some great cause. For the present I feel that the liberation of Russia is the great cause I have to work for.¹

How Russian freedom was to be achieved was not only debated by the émigrés, but also more and more openly by the intelligentsia, or educated vanguard, inside Russia. The rallying cry was for a constitution that would ensure basic democratic rights such as freedom of speech, assembly, press, and religion. Using European and American institutions as models, the intelligentsia sought freedom from arbitrary laws and with it an elected representative assembly to advise on and even approve of legislative acts. When Williams arrived in Russia in December 1904, few expected a revolution was imminent because after nearly 300 years in power the autocracy seemed invulnerable.

Optimists expected the tsar, as autocrat, to reform Russia from above as his grandfather, Alexander II (1818-1881), had done. Alexander had earned the honorary title of Tsar-Liberator for emancipating the serfs, but he had also granted reforms that expanded education and the responsibilities of local assemblies. Before his reign ended there were rumors that he would finally grant a constitution. The assassination of Alexander II in 1881, however, made a constitution unlikely. His son, Alexander III (1845-1894), had responded by tightening the autocracy and rescinding little by little the

¹ HWW to MLS, 6 September 1903, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

reforms he believed had led to his father's untimely end. His own death in 1894 brought Nicholas II to the throne amid new hopes for reform. These were quickly dashed when the new tsar promised to uphold autocracy and pass it on to his heir just as he had received it from his father – intact. When pressed to address the questions of a constitution and other reforms, Nicholas called them “senseless dreams.”² That phrase in itself became a badge of honor to the would-be reformers and revolutionaries alike. Yet the new tsar did not prove to be the man his father was. Nicholas was not resolute but weak, and the opponents of autocracy sensed this weakness. Their hopes were revived that reason would prevail and the tsar would eventually be convinced to grant the desired reforms.

Foreign policy concerns, however, soon took center stage. Russian expansion had spread into Manchuria where its interests were focused on the Chinese Eastern Railway. In addition, Russians were engaged in banking, coal mining, shipping, and in administrative functions associated with the railway. An anti-Western sect, the Boxers, destroyed telegraph lines and railway track during their rebellion in June 1900. Russia used the Boxer Rebellion as an excuse for its military occupation of Manchuria, ostensibly to protect the railways. Japan saw the Russian presence in Manchuria as a threat to its interests in Korea, and by January 1904 negotiations between the two nations had broken down.³ In his biography of Nicholas II, Robert D. Warth (1921 -) describes the tsar's attitude:

Although Nicholas was sincere in his desire to avoid war, he had presided with stubborn ineptitude over an adventurist policy of expansion that intimidated a weak China but could not fail to infuriate a strong Japan.

² Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 22.

³ Andrew Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1958), 177-249.

His contempt for Japan as a “barbarous country” and for the Japanese as “monkeys” proved a psychological block that prevented him from recognizing an accomplished and dangerous foe. The conflict stands as the classic example of imperialist rivalry and national aggrandizement run amuck.⁴

On January 26, 1904, Japan launched a successful sneak attack on Russia, beginning the Russo-Japanese war. The attack showed Russia’s obvious military unpreparedness and the fact that, despite strides in industry and education, the country was still backward in relation to its neighbors. By December 1904, it was apparent that Russia could be defeated despite her size and manpower. Port Arthur, a key seaport for Russia, fell to the Japanese on December 20, 1904 after a siege of 156 days. Was it imprudent to press for reforms while the country was at war, or did the war only make reform more urgent? Reform at home was a live topic and agitation for it constant. This was Russia when Harold Williams arrived, another “senseless” dreamer.⁵

In his earliest identifiable articles for the *Manchester Guardian*, Williams used the events of the day to illustrate various aspects of a nation in turmoil. His constant theme in these articles was the urgent need for change. Through interviews with participants in student protests and riots in St. Petersburg, with the Zemstvo Assembly in Moscow and the Assembly of the Nobility in Tver, with returning soldiers in St. Petersburg, and with peasants on the Tyrkov estate, Williams was convinced that Russians were ready for the war to end and ready for reform. The resulting articles were

⁴ Robert D. Warth, *Nicholas II: The Life and Reign of Russia’s Last Monarch* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 65.

⁵ The exact date of Williams’s arrival in Russia is unknown. The *Manchester Guardian* hired him sometime in December 1904 when he was in Paris with the Struve family. His first article cited by his wife is dated December 27th from Moscow.

published in the month of January 1905 and were to culminate in what proved to be Williams's first "big" story – Bloody Sunday.

It was as an investigative journalist rather than as a reporter that Williams showed the most promise. He early displayed this ability in his "portrait" pieces. These articles allowed Williams to create pictures of places, ideas, or people that would stay with a reader long after the events that may have prompted the story. In the January 21st edition, the *Manchester Guardian* published an undated article by Williams entitled simply "In a Russian Village: A Peasant's Views."⁶ One of Williams's contacts in Russia was Ariadna Tyrkova's family. A Christmas visit to the Tyrkov estate, Vergezha (near Novgorod), became the occasion for the first of these portraits.

According to Tyrkova's biography of Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, the New Zealander quickly became friends with Ariadna Tyrkova's father and brothers.⁷ Wanting to show off their guest from halfway around the world and show Williams some local color at the same time, the Tyrkov brothers took the New Zealander to an officers' party complete with wine and vodka, women, and song. As a fervent supporter of the temperance movement on his old preaching circuit back home, Williams was still a teetotaler himself. He apparently enjoyed himself nonetheless and somehow managed to restrain any urge to give a sermon on the subject to his new friends. He was sober but very cold when the Tyrkov brothers got lost on their way home during a snowstorm following the party. Luckily the horse knew the way.⁸

⁶ "In a Russian Village/A Peasant's Views," undated dispatch from St. Petersburg, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 January 1905, p. 8. The article was probably written shortly after the Orthodox Christmas in mid-January according to the Julian calendar. Williams used either the Gregorian calendar or simply the weekday to date his articles. The Russians used the Julian calendar, which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar during the twentieth century until 1917.

⁷ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*

When he got around to putting together his article on the Tyrkov estate, Williams tried to give his readers a feeling for Vergezha. He spoke especially to the woodman of the estate, "Alexei".⁹ Using Alexei was a way to give a name and face to the millions of peasants in Russia and in Alexei's complaints about land distribution and taxes, Williams saw an opportunity to educate his readers about Russian peasant life. The land in the village was owned communally, Williams explained, and supposedly divided equally among the males at certain intervals. Yet despite a doubling in the male population, no repartition had been made since the community first received its land at the time of the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Alexei was considered lucky by his neighbors; he had about forty acres, and this was atypical. Following custom, however, his land consisted of strips in the meadow, woods, and cornfields. The harvest had failed that year leaving Alexei and his neighbors with just enough corn to feed their families until January. Without the opportunity to supplement their income with work on the estate and in a nearby pottery works, the peasants of Alexei's village could not survive. The peasants aired their problems and complaints in meetings that were called by the elder, who was elected every three years. The peasant elder was the liaison between the peasants and the cantonal authorities, with a canton district comprising approximately 2000 peasants. The elder of each village brought peasant issues before the *starshina*, or elder of the canton. The *starshina* was a government appointed official from the peasantry. He, in turn, had to report to the *zemsky nachal'nik* who was an administrative overseer for peasant affairs.¹⁰

⁹ Williams did not use the names of the estate, village, or the Tyrkov family in his article. In *Cheerful Giver*, Tyrkova writes that Williams interviewed Nicholas, the estate gamekeeper.

¹⁰ A *zemsky nachal'nik* or land captain was usually a member of the nobility.

In his article, Williams made it clear that any idyllic picture that his readers might have entertained of Russian peasant life was at best incomplete. The bureaucratic maze between the peasant and the tsar was frustrating, and Alexei did not hesitate to cite his grievances to a foreign reporter. It seems that many of the peasants in the village had not paid their taxes because of the poor harvest. The *starshina* therefore demanded instead that they bring their household effects to the cantonal office. The peasants ignored the summons. In response, the *starshina* with the approval of the *zemsky nachal'nik* imposed a fine or, in default, a prison term on all the peasants in the village without discrimination. Alexei was both shocked and angered by the *starshina*: "He is our brother, and he dares to treat us this way."¹¹

Williams was concerned with the plight of the Russian peasant, and he wanted to communicate this concern to his readers. The peasants on the Tyrkov estate were the first Williams had ever met. Before coming to Russia, he was unaware of the realities of peasant life.

In his conversations with peasants, talk eventually turned to the war. Alexei was convinced that the Japanese were being helped by the Chinese or some other power because "the Japanese could not manage our soldiers alone." Williams asked, "What is the war all about?" Alexei replied: "Who knows? We don't know. They say the Emperor took a town that wasn't his. What did he want the town for? Why did he take it?" A neighbor, "Vassili", explained that "if I take a house that isn't mine and spend a million on it, and then they come and want to take it back, I'm not going to give it up." "Yes," said Alexei, "but why did he want to take it first of all?" The question remained

¹¹ "In a Russian Village/A Peasant's Views," undated dispatch from St. Petersburg, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 January 1905, p. 8. This response and what follows in quotes are from Williams's reconstruction of the

unanswered. Vassili was confident that in the end Russia would outlast the Japanese. The village had only three men fighting in the conflict and after all "Russia is a great land. You can't empty her very soon." Williams observed the following:

Old Alexei declared that if he were called to fight he would go and shoot. He admitted that to shoot men who had never done you any harm was simply murder. "But if you are told to go, what can you do?" he said. And as to the result of the war, perhaps the Japanese would win, perhaps the Russians. He seemed to care little. How should he care when all was so remote from him, enveloped in that mystery that surrounds his life and contains within itself strange powers whose nature he does not know but the effects of whose working he constantly feels. He dimly distinguishes these powers; there are winds and storms and bitter frosts, there is God in heaven and there is the Government on the earth. And a failure of the harvest, a famine, a summons to a distant war – these are all to him inexplicable blows from the heart of that great mystery which encircles that little span of light within which he walks and which he calls his life.¹²

With this quote, Williams indicates that Alexei belongs to an older generation of Russian peasant, still bound by traditional obedience to the state. Williams's lyric analysis of Alexei's life and attitudes is more than an observation on the fate of the Russian peasant. It also reflects Williams's sympathy with those who face but cannot understand their harsh destiny. He notes that Alexei knows instinctively that killing is wrong, but he is unable to actively resist the coercion of his government.

In spite of his interview with Alexei, Williams was cautiously optimistic about the political potential of Russian peasants. In the article, he credited education, newspapers, and socialist propaganda with the rural awakening.¹³ New economic needs were also contributing to what Williams expected would be an eventual breakdown in the old rural

interview.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Williams does not discuss the zemstvo movement in this article. Zemstvos were organs of local self-government and provided teachers as well as doctors for the local peasantry, and these individuals were

organization. Blind submission to authority would soon become a thing of the past. Sympathizing with Alexei's passivity but hoping that it would change with education, Williams concluded that "the peasantry, no longer children under the tutelage of a despotic Government, will become fitted to take their places as intelligent citizens of a free State."¹⁴

Among earlier articles, Williams submitted to the *Guardian* a review of a clash between students and police in St. Petersburg. The incident had occurred earlier in December, probably before he had arrived. Entitled "Russia's Troubles – The Street Riots," the two-column article contained an abbreviated version of a written protest against police brutality signed by Russian journalists and writers.¹⁵ Williams also included the written testimony of an eyewitness. By presenting these documents to his readers, Williams gave them a more cohesive picture of the sequence of events.

The students had staged a demonstration complete with red flags and banners with slogans such as "Down with the War!" and "Down with Autocracy!" Singing the *Marseillaise*, the "workmen's" song, the students marched along until they met up with the police who had been forewarned about the demonstration. According to the account, the students did "nothing of a provocative character." Here Williams plays down the revolutionary nature of the protest by not acknowledging the eyewitness's sympathy with the students. The police, the account continues, had been instructed at one station to "beat the students without fear of punishment" and at another "to punch and kick the

often university educated. Advances in education for the peasants were a direct outgrowth of programs run locally through the zemstvos.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Russia's Troubles/The Street Riots," dispatch dated Moscow, December 28, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 January 1905, pp. 7-8.

students in the ribs out of sight of the public.” Students and bystanders alike were brutally beaten and “dragged off like sacks.” The eyewitness, an overseer at a Roman Catholic church near where some of the bloodiest confrontations took place, testified that he saw the police digging their hands into a student’s face trying to tear out his nose. The overseer himself was seized and some personal belongings were taken but later returned. When he protested that his pencils were not returned, he was arrested; later, a senior officer came and released the overseer along with the pencils. When the overseer then asked that no one be beaten on the church grounds, another officer told him not to get softhearted about these things. “You ought to see,” he said, “what is going on in the street.”

Williams reported that the brutality of the St. Petersburg police was surpassed the following week by that of the Moscow police who used bayonets as well as their fists to answer demonstrators. Professors at Moscow University as well as representatives of the legal and journalistic professions sent written protests to Minister of the Interior Prince Peter Sviatopolk-Mirsky (1857-1914). When told of the incidents, he answered that it was impossible to cure the police suddenly of the habits they had acquired under former conditions.¹⁶ Williams concluded: “Whatever may be the wisdom or unwisdom of the students’ demonstrations, no excuse can be found for these wanton attacks of the police upon a miscellaneous crowd.”¹⁷

By his choice of quotes in the dramatization of these events, Williams is clearly on the side of the students in spite of the questionable nature of his source. Williams had

¹⁶ Sviatopolk-Mirsky was likely referring to the regime of his predecessor, former Minister of the Interior Plehve, who was assassinated in July 1904.

¹⁷ “Russia’s Troubles/The Street Riots,” dispatch dated Moscow, December 28, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 January 1905, pp. 7-8.

been heavily influenced by his association with Russian émigrés and their reports of the brutality of Russian authorities. Against a background of pogroms, an unpopular war, and suppression of demonstrations, it was not surprising that Williams took sides.

Student unrest was a symptom of larger problems for the autocracy. By November and December 1904 even the segments of society most likely to support the autocracy, in particular the nobility and the government officials, were adding their voices to those calling for an end to the war and autocracy. One of the most significant developments that helped give an air of respectability to the government opposition were the liberal resolutions of the national zemstvo congress held in St. Petersburg during November 1904. The zemstvos were assemblies that met once a year and whose members were elected for three-year terms. Part of Alexander II's reforms in the 1860s, the zemstvos provided for a measure of self-government on the local level. Voting was conducted on an estate basis (i.e. with the nobility, the wealthy urban population, and the peasant communes electing their respective representatives). The electoral system was weighted to insure the supremacy of the noble class, even more so after revisions made by Alexander III in 1890. The zemstvos nevertheless provided one arena where representatives of the local population could actually shape policy regarding education, medical care, relief for the poor, and other local matters. The concerns of the zemstvos were supposed to remain strictly local, but over time many zemstvo leaders saw that their local problems demanded national solutions. Though it was illegal for the assemblies to send representatives to meet together for national meetings and discuss national issues, this was done informally.

Before Harold Williams arrived in Russia, the November 1904 zemstvo congress in St. Petersburg convened. It seemed to have approval of Minister of the Interior Prince Sviatopolk-Mirsky, and even more surprisingly the tsar himself. When it became clear that the congress would discuss political reforms that were not strictly zemstvo affairs, the government withdrew its support. Mirsky, who was part of a moderate faction within the government, was still interested in the suggestions for reform that such a congress might produce. He asked the organizers of the congress to postpone the event or at least move it to a less conspicuous location in the provinces, but they refused. Mirsky finally agreed to allow the meetings to be held as long as they were “private” gatherings. He then tried unsuccessfully to suppress all news about the congress.¹⁸

After four days of gatherings in private homes, the delegates, who numbered around one hundred, agreed to resolutions that would echo in the local zemstvo meetings and political gatherings of the coming year. They signed resolutions protesting the arbitrary application of the law by government officials and proposed the official granting of civil liberties; they called for an end to the estate principle in the election of deputies to the local organs of government and urged the establishment of such organs throughout the Russian empire. Most significantly, the delegates, who represented a broad spectrum in the political climate of Russia at the time, agreed to call for the formation of an elective legislative body. This body was to participate in the exercise of legislative power, the drawing up of a national budget, and the determination of the legality of administrative acts. As promised, Prince Sviatopolk-Mirsky accepted a report of the

¹⁸ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988), 61-62.

congress from several of the key delegates and later, upon request, was furnished with details of the proposed reforms.¹⁹

While Mirsky and the tsarist government considered these proposals and prepared their official response, Harold Williams arrived in Moscow where he had the opportunity to observe the workings of that city's local zemstvo. He described the zemstvo's membership as consisting of provincial landed nobles from the outer sections of the region and wealthy merchants and industrialists from the city itself. Though naturally such an assembly "should be disinclined to break with old traditions..." Williams reported, "the Government itself, by its relentless affirmation of the claims of the autocracy during the last two years, has made the majority of the members of the Assembly advocates of radical reform."²⁰ Williams's observation that even the privileged classes were discontented suggests his own partiality toward those who opposed the autocracy.

In the wake of the St. Petersburg zemstvo congress, Williams concluded from interviews that the representatives of the Moscow zemstvo felt a sense of urgency combined with caution for their normally routine annual gathering. By the time the zemstvo met, several other zemstvo assemblies already had sent proposals for a constitution to the tsar as part of their congratulations on the occasion of the birth of his son and heir, Tsarevitch Alexis (1904-1918). The tsar replied to one particularly blunt zemstvo that its request was "impertinent and tactless." While the response dampened the mood of the reformers, Williams noted that the tsar's reaction should not have been

¹⁹ Ibid., 62-68.

²⁰ "Russia's Troubles/The Struggle for a Constitution/ Scenes at Moscow," dispatch dated Moscow, December 27, *Manchester Guardian*, 6 January 1905, pp. 5-6.

unexpected nor should it be taken as an absolutely unfavorable sign.²¹ This astute evaluation of the tsar's response shows that Williams was capable of evenhandedness.

Not surprisingly, the Moscow zemstvo opened with debates about the exact wording of its address to the tsar. The struggle between liberal and conservative representatives resulted finally in a document that stressed the zemstvo's loyalty to the tsar while downplaying precise constitutional demands. When the meeting adjourned, Williams noted in the delegates a sense of dissatisfaction and missed opportunity.

In response to the zemstvo congresses, the government issued an edict on December 12, 1904. The edict was an attempt to take control of the reform movement in the traditional way – from above. The result was disastrous. The edict was filled with promises to consider legislation but contained no guarantees that such legislation would ever be enacted. Worse still was the edict's reassertion of the autocratic principle of government. Again, hope that the government would ever agree to share power with a representative assembly was dashed. An accompanying communiqué made matters worse when it reprimanded the liberals for what the government saw as irresponsible demands and resolutions that had caused unrest in the country. According to Harold Williams's own newspaper, the *Manchester Guardian*, the government was mistaken in its approach. This was skillfully pointed out in an editorial leader that appeared on December 28, 1904.²²

²¹ Ibid.

²² Editorial leaders can be written by either a paper's editor or someone on his staff. In the case of the *Manchester Guardian* during 1904-1905, there were two people writing the leaders on foreign affairs. The first was Herbert Sidebotham. Some of the Russian leaders were written by H.N. Brailsford, who, among other things, was a sympathizer with the Russian revolutionaries and who lent his passport to one of them. The aforesaid revolutionary wound up blown up by his own bomb. Brailsford was prosecuted for misusing his passport and lost his job with the *Guardian* temporarily. He was only fined by the court when he claimed that he thought the Russian was a peaceful reformer. About a third of the long leaders that

It is too soon to say whether the promised reforms deserve even a passing attention.... The so-called Edict is in reality no more than a programme and a project which have no more force of law than a speech from the throne in a constitutional country. It is a plan upon which the Council of Ministers is to work.... Had the Tsar really meant to inaugurate an epoch of reform he would have done one of two things. He might have issued his new ordinances in the form of absolute decrees, which would have had the force of law from the date of his signature. Still better, he might have accepted the demand of the Zemstvos and called a species of constituent assembly to draft the new charter of rights. The plan he has chosen suggests that he shrinks equally from both the parts that were open to him. He will neither be a reforming autocrat nor a constitutional king.²³

The writer of the leader tried to look at the bright side of the situation: there wouldn't be any real reforms in sight, but there wouldn't be an angry era of repression either. This was primarily due to the new administration of Prince Sviatopolk-Mirsky and the troubled war with Japan. If Plehve had been in office, the writer suggested, the universities would have been closed, the students sent to the front, the prominent zemstvo leaders sent to Siberia, a "fresh Kishineff massacre" organized, and the country subjected to a minor siege. The war with Japan had "shaken the fabric of tyranny" and the tsar instead replied with minor concessions to a movement for freedom that had broadened tremendously:

The work of protest was no longer left to students and the obscure city mobs. The learned professions, the literary class, and the nobility itself, through the Zemstvo, had spoken clearly. It was no longer a case for flogging youths and exiling pioneers. Even M. Plehve could not have sent the whole aristocracy of birth and talent to Siberia. There remained no course but a show of mildness.²⁴

appeared during the last quarter of 1905 were written by Brailsford. [David Ayerst, *Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper* (London: William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., 1971), 359-360.]

²³ "The Tsar's Decree", *Manchester Guardian*, 28 December 1904, p.4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

The situation brought to the writer's mind the remark of Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), the Norwegian dramatist, to some Russian exiles: "You are much to be envied. You have such a splendid tyranny to fight against."²⁵

Mirsky was probably calculating that the forces for reform and revolution would lose "something of their heroism and reckless daring" once the government had conceded to "respect a few of the elementary rights of citizenship, tolerate mild criticism, and assimilate the less sweeping suggestions of the reformers." The assumptions of the government about the mood of the country were misguided. Even his own newspaper, the writer admitted, had underestimated the degree of resolution in the reformers' demands. The situation had become "too grave for these palliatives and the unrest too angry to be soothed."²⁶

Harold Williams was still attending the Moscow zemstvo congress at the time. He was able to observe the reaction of its members on the morning following the publication of the imperial edict and the accompanying communiqué warning against any further agitation for a constitution. The zemstvo delegates, under the leadership of Prince Sergei Trubetskoi (1862-1905), voted to adjourn the session in light of the new developments, but the informal discussions only continued more intensely. Williams described the scene as follows:

In the anterooms, members of the Zemstvo paced up and down in excited discussion. Behind the barriers swayed a throng of students, male and female, with a sprinkling of professional and business men. In a corner sat a priest tranquilly and with folded hands, and the portrait of Alexander II looked down with a glance of authority upon these strange developments of a later day....The excitement behind the barriers was intense. The students immediately improvised a meeting amidst a clamour of murmurs,

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

appeals, and counter-appeals.... It was a strange sight. At one end of the hall stood the men of weight and standing, who had foregone their legal right of assembly in indignation at a Government communiqué; at the other end an excited throng of revolutionary students listening to speeches that exposed both speakers and hearers to the danger of imprisonment or exile. It was a striking illustration of the way in which the Government is intensifying the force of the opposition.... Serious men express grave fear of the possibilities of the new situation. The demand for a Constitution is too strong to be repressed by any violent means.... A general revolution is improbable, but unless the present state of tension is relaxed there cannot fail to be grave disorders. And in the background of all this turmoil of struggles and fears at home loom the spectres of further disasters in war – the fall of Port Arthur, the destruction of the Baltic Squadron, and another terrible battle in Manchuria. It is little wonder that many thinking Russians are tormented by the question whether blood must always be the price of liberty.²⁷

Stylistically, Williams conveys a dramatic atmosphere that is almost cinematic.

Reportorially, he does not fail to warn of the potential for serious domestic unrest as a consequence of failed military campaigns abroad.

Before assuming his official post in St. Petersburg, Williams stopped at what he termed the “humdrum town” of Tver.²⁸ The tsarist government, he reported, was in the habit of exiling undesirable St. Petersburg intellectuals to Tver after the excitement of street demonstrations. The town attracted his interest as a journalist because it was the site of a meeting of the Russian nobility, the leading segment of Russian society.

Williams took time in his article to explain the “peculiar” nature of the Russian nobility in comparison to the European nobility more familiar to his readers. While some nobles came from ancient families who were still closely connected to the throne, most

²⁷ “Russia’s Troubles/The Struggle for a Constitution/Scenes at Moscow,” dispatch dated Moscow, December 27, *Manchester Guardian*, 6 January 1905, pp. 5-6.

²⁸ “The Russian Upheaval/Alternatives Clearing/ Reform or a Revolution,” dispatch dated Tver, January 1, *Manchester Guardian*, 7 January 1905, p.9.

had attained their rank through civil or military service. “A title with such a purely bureaucratic origin,” Williams noted, “can lend little glamour or distinction to its wearer.” As a consequence, the gathering reflected a group whose opinions were as diverse as the clothes they chose to wear. The more conservative nobles often wore the traditional blue uniform with red facings that distinguished the nobility; the liberals wore evening dress “as a sign of their indifference to class distinctions.” Nobles owning 2000 or more acres of land were required by law to meet every three years to discuss matters concerning the nobility in general. The constitutional movement, so prevalent in the zemstvos, had nevertheless penetrated the nobles’ assembly in Tver and caused an immediate crisis. With the publication of the edict and communiqué, the tsar had made it clear that a constitution for the country was not a subject for discussion.²⁹

Circumstances made it possible for the president of assembly to open a topic for discussion that would cross the fine line between a purely local issue affecting the nobility (which was a permitted subject for debate) and national issues.³⁰ The assembly president pointed out that although the ordinance against the Tver zemstvo had been lifted regarding the nobles, there were many zemstvo employees still suffering. He motioned that the nobles’ assembly petition the tsar for the removal of the ordinance in its entirety and that no ordinances be applied to Tver that were not applicable to other parts of the empire. Suddenly, Williams reported, the assembly came alive:

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid. According to Williams, the Tver zemstvo had incurred the wrath of then Minister of the Interior Plehve in January of the previous year. A district zemstvo within Tver had refused to comply with an order transferring local schools to the Holy Synod, a branch of the state administration. Plehve responded by issuing an ordinance disbanding the zemstvo, exiling many members (a number of them nobles) and replacing them with his own nominees. Employees of the zemstvo such as teachers and doctors were dismissed and barred from working in any public institution within the empire. Prince Sviatopolk-Mirsky had restored the nobles of the zemstvo to their former status, and many of the recent exiles were present at

A number of members eagerly claimed the floor, and one immediately proposed that the Assembly should petition for the abolition of all special ordinances – ordinances which suspend the action of the ordinary law and place the districts affected practically under the despotic control of the police; that the Assembly should petition not only for this but for a general amnesty to all suffering exile or imprisonment for political offenses....The President thereupon proposed that the general question should be treated apart from the local one, and gave the word to M. Ivan Ladizhinsky. M. Ladizhinsky began by pointing out a fact that may prove to be of great importance in the future course of the struggle for a Constitution. The Government has in its *communiqué* forbidden the zemstvos to touch upon questions of general political interest. But the Nobles' Assemblies have the right to petition in regard to the needs of the nobles not only of one province but of the whole Empire, for the class was not confined to any particular province. If the Liberal members of the Nobles' Assemblies take advantage of this right they may possibly transform even the Nobles' Assemblies into organs of constitutional demands. Then M. Ladizhinsky proposed that in the address to the Emperor the Assembly should, after thanking the Monarch for his care for the people's needs, request that the proper execution of the law should be guaranteed by the constitution of an Assembly of elected representatives of the people, and that the independence of judicial institutions should be made secure. The Imperial Decree had entrusted the working out of a plan to secure the proper execution of the law to the very administrative agents who were the authors of the special ordinances. A fitting project could only be elaborated by representatives elected by the people. And it was only an Assembly of such representatives that could guarantee the extension of the liberties of the press of which the Imperial Decree had spoken. There was a storm of applause from the Liberal side of the Assembly and from the galleries. The challenge was thrown down. Here was the demand for a Constitution, naked and undisguised.³¹

Williams provided his readers with lengthy background material in an effort to explain the issues facing the zemstvo. His detailed account of the heated discussion that ensued strongly implies the impossibility of compliance with the government's demand that zemstvos limit their concerns to local issues. The contradictions within the legal system were made evident by the participants he chose to quote. Williams clearly was on the

the Tver assembly including future Kadet leaders Ivan Petrunkevich (1844-1928) and the zemstvo president, Fyodor Rodichev (1856-1933).

³¹ "The Russian Upheaval/Alternatives Clearing/Reform or a Revolution," dispatch dated Tver, January 1, *Manchester Guardian*, 7 January 1905, p. 10.

side of the constitutionalists while demonstrating the defiance of those involved in the struggle.

It took veteran zemstvo constitutionalist and former exile Ivan Petrunkevich (1844-1928) to put the passions of the moment into perspective.³² He addressed the assembly, insisting that as “representatives of culture” the nobles could not in conscience refrain from discussing the nation’s needs in spite of the tsar’s *communiqué*.

Petrunkevich wanted to make it very clear that this defiance to the government directive was not casually or unwittingly done:

If we speak we speak in opposition to the instructions of the Government *communiqué*. We enter into dispute with the Government and we must show good reason for so doing. The reason lies not in any cases of special law. It is, said M. Petrunkevich solemnly, “our existence as a great nation that is in question. This is the situation. Before us is a terrible war; before us is a task that must be accomplished. Within the land reigns anarchy.— (Cries of “True, true.”) Where is the anarchy? It is in the Government itself. We must admit that there is no respect for the law. We may evade or infringe the law with impunity. The law is in such a position that to defend it is a crime. Under such conditions as these we have anarchism above and beneath. And a revolution is only to be avoided by summoning the citizens to discuss the fundamental statutes of the law.”³³

Williams’s admiration for Petrunkevich, so apparent in the background sketch and the synopsis of this dramatic speech, began long before the Tver assembly. As a co-founder of the Union of Liberation, Petrunkevich had been associated with

³² Williams established Petrunkevich’s character in the article with a brief outline of his personal history. Here was an elderly man who had lived through the period of Alexander II’s reforms and had devoted his life to working for change within Russia through the zemstvo movement. He was exiled for his liberal beliefs thirty years earlier and again in 1904 as a member of the zemstvo that had defied Plehve; he was also a founder of the Union of Liberation. In his article Williams wrote that Petrunkevich had confessed to friends a few months earlier that his only hope was to return to his native Tver before he died. With a sense of ironic justice, Williams declared, “he (Petrunkevich) has returned to his home and taken his place at the head of a great constitutional movement that as late as July would have seemed impossible. So swiftly does history move in Russia these days.” [Ibid.]

³³ Ibid.

Struve and his followers. Williams may have chosen to go to the Tver assembly specifically to see Petrunkevich.

A representative of the governor of Tver reacted to Petrunkevich's speech with an attack on the liberal proposals. He declared that instead the nobles should unite for the preservation of the power of the tsar and profess their continuing belief in the "creative power of the Autocracy." A liberal jurist from St. Petersburg (who was described by Williams as being "of calm and venerable appearance") pointed out that none of the previous speakers had discussed the autocracy at all, but only a means of establishing orderly government in the country. The autocracy, the jurist explained, had the right to summon an assembly for the discussion of new laws. It was understood that the ongoing problem was to convince the autocracy to exercise this right.

The significance of the nobles' assembly in Tver would be lost as events in Russia moved at an ever-increasing pace in the following weeks and months. Williams evaluated the accomplishments of the assembly for his readers in a positive but cautious way. Nobles, he reminded his readers, were as a rule rigidly conservative. The resolutions of the Tver assembly were evidence of the extent of the nation's discontent.³⁴ The edict and communiqué had not crushed the constitutional movement; instead, Williams wrote, "the struggle has entered upon an acute phase, of which it is difficult to

³⁴ The debate finally ended with a decision to separate the address of congratulations to the tsar on the birth of his heir from any petitions or resolutions. Two separate addresses to the tsar were written: one by the liberals, the other by the conservatives. Williams quoted the liberal address and claimed that no copy of the conservative address could be found. In a vote of 99 to 36 with 92 abstentions, the nobles' assembly of Tver passed a resolution declaring that the necessary legislative work called for in the tsar's edict could be successful only with "the active participation of freely elected representatives of the population." Those nobles who had abstained from the vote asked for permission – which was granted – to read their opinion into the record. They did not believe that the law permitted the assembly to deal with such matters. In effect, Williams noted, they accused the president of the assembly of neglect of duty." [Ibid.]

foresee the end.” Speaking with a number of the representatives, Williams was struck by the unanimity of opinion:

They declare that unless the tension is relaxed by some fitting concession on the part of the Government, bloodshed is inevitable. They anticipate a spread of terrorism, street demonstrations, and agrarian risings, all of which will be complicated by the return of the soldiers from the war. And many are beginning to fear that the end will be a terrible revolution.³⁵

The liberals were determined to carry on their call for a constitution by using the press and their limited freedom of assembly. The Social Revolutionaries, who had temporarily toned down their campaign of propaganda and terrorist activities against the government, were ready to begin the battle again. Williams sympathized with the methods advocated by the liberals, but at the same time recognized the rapid deterioration of the situation.

Patriotism had waned dramatically. Williams observed what he called a “callous apathy” in St. Petersburg after the reports of the fall of Port Arthur. Even though the Japanese victory was long expected, he was shocked at the disregard that the public showed for the bravery and suffering of the defenders of the fort. “St. Petersburg constantly gives the impression nowadays of a city weary of thinking, hoping, and feeling.”³⁶ The returning soldiers would add yet another dangerous element to an already volatile situation. In another article, Williams used the story of one wounded soldier’s return to his home to illustrate the reasons for a typical soldier’s fierce revolt against the authorities. The unnamed soldier returned only to find his family gone and no assistance

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Feeling In Russia/St. Petersburg and the Surrender/A Callous Apathy,” undated dispatch from St. Petersburg, *Manchester Guardian*, 11 January 1905, p. 6.

available. His daily stipend would not even pay for a glass of milk. His wounds had been carelessly treated and he was in very ill health and starving. It would be men like this, Williams warned, who would be sowing the seeds of political discontent among the peasants and workers in the villages and cities. "The story is told that on the Harbin station a number of officers drank to the battle for freedom that would be fought in the streets of St. Petersburg. The anecdote is typical of the feeling in the army, and one can only hope that the Government may be wise in time."³⁷

As Williams had observed earlier, history was moving swiftly in Russia and keeping up with the events was a challenge for even the more experienced journalists. Shortly after his arrival in St. Petersburg, Williams had joined up with Dr. Emile Joseph Dillon (1854-1933), a veteran journalist. Dillon was an adventurous and spirited Irishman who had a great deal in common with his younger colleague and yet was strikingly different in temperament and style. Like Williams, Dillon had followed his father's wishes and started on a path toward the priesthood. After spending time studying in several seminaries and a monastery, Dillon abandoned the religious life in favor of philology and eventually earned doctorates in oriental languages, comparative philology, and philosophy. Adept at European languages as well, Dillon learned Russian and soon became intrigued by the country itself. He translated stories by Tolstoy, contributed articles on Russian affairs under the pseudonym "E. B. Lanin" to the *Fortnightly Review*,

³⁷ "M. De Witte's Return to Power/ The Tsar's Decree/ The Struggle for a Constitution," undated dispatch from St. Petersburg, *Manchester Guardian*, 16 January 1905, p. 7.

married the daughter of a Russian civil servant, edited a newspaper in Odessa, and lectured (in Russian) at Kharkov University on comparative philology.³⁸

From 1887 to 1914, Dillon was the correspondent in Russia for the *Daily Telegraph*, and it was in this capacity that he knew Harold Williams. By 1905 Dillon had already established a reputation as an audacious adventurer. He followed the big stories. When the action was elsewhere, Dillon would leave his post in St. Petersburg and go abroad. Often his editors would find out where he was only after he began cabling back. Borders and laws meant little to Dillon. In 1894, the sultan himself forbade Dillon from visiting Armenia after the massacres there. The journalist simply disguised himself as a Russian officer, was received with military honors, and managed to send back dispatches that shocked the world. Among his other major stories were the trials of Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) and the Chinese Boxer rebellion.

Unlike Williams, Dillon was of medium stature and without marked physical characteristics. He could and did use his features and language abilities to disguise himself, blend in with a crowd, and avoid suspicion. William T. Stead (1849-1912), editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, described Dillon as “far and away the ablest, most cultured and most adventurous newspaperman I have ever met, with an extraordinary combination of varied faculties, an artist by temperament, a journalist by instinct, a scholar and philosopher by choice, a statesman in ambition.”³⁹

³⁸ *Dictionary of National Biography 1931-1940*, edited by L. G. Wickham Legg (London: Oxford University Press, 1949). The article on Dillon was written by Henry Baerlein. [See also *Daily Telegraph*, 10 June 1933 and *Fortnightly Review*, July 1933.]

³⁹ *Ibid.* There is evidence to suggest that Dillon was also corrupt. Bernard Pares has suggested that in 1906, Dillon accepted bribes from then Prime Minister Sergei Witte in exchange for favorable newspaper articles about him. [Bernard Pares, *A Wandering Student: The Story of a Purpose* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press in cooperation with Howell, Soskin, Publishers, 1948), 132-133. See also Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Authority Restored* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 14.]

Dillon proved very helpful in introducing Williams to the city and getting him interviews with key players on the scene. Being competitive by nature and profession, however, Dillon connived to get his version of the stories or interviews to hit the presses first – even in Williams’s own paper. Part of the problem was just Williams’s lack of reporter know-how. His work with the *Times* had involved sifting through reports from Russia, days or even weeks old, and selecting items deemed worthy of interest. He didn’t have the responsibility of “breaking” stories. Until January 20, 1905, just two days before Bloody Sunday, Williams was still mailing his articles back to England. The *Guardian* editor finally insisted that he cable the news. As a scholar, Williams probably wanted to verify and corroborate his sources before committing pen to paper. The *Guardian* had faced this problem with other correspondents and used a column called “Second Edition” to supplement their reports or lack thereof. During times of major news events, the editor would select what he considered the best or most timely news articles published in other papers and reprint them, giving credit to the original paper and correspondent if he or she were well-known. During January and early February, “Second Edition” featured prominently the writings of Dr. Dillon.

The story that would begin with an industrial strike and end in Bloody Sunday was the first test of Williams’s skill as a journalist covering a major event. The Reuters news service got the jump on the story as usual. In the January 19th edition, the *Manchester Guardian* ran an unsigned article based on a series of telegrams from Reuters about a strike at the Putilov Ironworks in St. Petersburg. Strikers there numbered 12,000 according to reports and their principle grievances were long hours and low wages. Political discontent was also believed to be a major factor, but the writer of the article did

not elaborate. Subsequent telegrams announced sympathy strikes at the Neva Shipbuilding Works and the Franco-Russian (formerly Baird) Works. Reportedly, 8000 cotton workers from the Shtiglits Cotton Mills demanding an eight-hour day had also joined the other strikers. The industrial crisis “had come to a head with startling rapidity.”⁴⁰

The strike at the Neva Shipbuilding Works was a serious blow to the war effort because it suspended work on submarines, gunboats, and war materials critical for naval and military purposes. Of particular concern to the correspondent was the “unreasonable” attitude of the strikers and their inclination to resort to violent methods. According to Reuters, the strike’s leaders planned to eventually include 100,000 workers from every industry. The demands of the Putilov workers included the dismissal of a foreman and the reinstatement of two recently fired workmen, the appointment of a joint committee of arbitration, a minimum wage of a rouble a day for unskilled workmen and seventy kopeks a day for female employees, improved medical assistance and sanitary conditions in the workshops, the establishment of optional overtime paid at double wages, immunity from punishment for the strikers, and the average rate of pay during the strike. Putilov management responded by suggesting that the workers formulate the terms they would accept and forward them to the prefect of police.⁴¹

The *Guardian* further cited an article by Dillon from the *Daily Telegraph* that introduced another dimension to the story. According to Dillon the strike had broken out

⁴⁰ “Industrial Crisis in St. Petersburg/50, 000 workmen on Strike,” unsigned article, *Manchester Guardian*, 19 January 1905, p. 6.

⁴¹ The specificity of the Reuters account conceivably resulted from interviews and has been corroborated in general by Abraham Ascher in *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray*, 74-101.

under the “inappropriate leadership of an Orthodox priest.”⁴² Liberal leaders were unsure of how to respond to the strike because there were suspicions that it had been prearranged by the police with the intention of provoking disorder and initiating a policy of repression.

The present ringleader is a member of an association which was always the friend of the Government and of the workmen, and has bespoken the sympathy of the latter for the autocracy on the ground that the present regime will grant every economic demand of the workers if the latter will support the Government. This playing fast and loose with the social movement, politically emasculated, is earnestly deprecated by the enlightened section of the public as calculated to demoralise the masses.⁴³

Dillon pointed out that strikes were illegal under Russian law and the strikers faced imprisonment. Workmen were not even allowed to elect representatives and anyone assuming the position of representative could be immediately arrested. “Under these conditions a collision may at any moment occur between the crowd and the police, as happened in Baku, where millions of roubles were needlessly wasted, some workmen killed and many wounded.”⁴⁴

The *Guardian*’s editor had no word yet from his own correspondent about the strikes and the mysterious priest who seemed to be at the center of the story. In the subsequent days he printed two more articles by Dillon, the first announcing the intention of the priest, now identified as a Father Gapon, to lead over 100,000 workmen on a march the following Sunday to the Winter Palace to present a document with their demands to the tsar himself:

⁴² “Second Edition: Russian Strike/Possibilities of the Situation/Alleged Police Plot,” *Manchester Guardian*, 19 January 1905, p. 12.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

These workmen's demands go far beyond those of the Zemsky Congress and make a clean sweep of the present bureaucratic regime and all its works. Naturally, they will not be entertained, and then the real significance of the strike will become visible to all. The most important point is the sudden transformation of an economic into a political movement, the alleged reason being that the sole hindrances to the granting of an eight-hour day and other demands are of a political nature, and that the sources of these must be swept away.⁴⁵

In the January 21st issue, the *Guardian* printed Harold Williams's article about the peasants on the Tyrkov estate. In the same issue the newspaper carried Dillon's next article, far more timely than Williams's: an interview with Father Gapon. George Gapon (1870-1906) was a priest who seemed to be putting Christian socialism into practice and using pacifist methods. That alone would have attracted both Williams's and Dillon's interest. In his interview with Gapon, Dillon was not interested in the priest's background but rather in his response to rumors that he was an *agent provocateur*. Williams, in contrast, prepared for his story on Gapon by trying to find out who he was and where he had come from – information that *Guardian* readers would have to wait to learn from his article published January 24, 1905.

Gapon denied to Dillon that he was an *agent provocateur*. He admitted that he had initially worked in that capacity because otherwise he could have done nothing. Following the death of Plehve, Gapon had abandoned the ruse. He told Dillon that before the strike he had gone to the prefect with the workers' demands. The prefect had forwarded the demands to "the persons interested." Only after receiving word that the demands would not be accepted did Gapon allow the strike to begin. About the planned

⁴⁵ "Second Edition: Russian Strike/Rising Threatened/100,000 Men to March to the Winter Palace," *Manchester Guardian*, 20 January 1905, p. 9.

march to the Winter Palace, the priest admitted the workmen's petition would include a request for political rights including a representative constituent assembly.

We shall hope to present it to the Emperor and to hear words of hope from His Majesty's own lips. We shall come without red flags, without revolutionary hymns or cries, simply as loyal citizens to obtain a hearing of His Majesty, who has been deceived by the Bureaucracy and who does not know our needs, but will, we trust, learn from us.⁴⁶

If the police and Cossacks insisted on using force to prevent the marchers from reaching the Winter Palace, Gapon warned, they would have to shed blood. "I will stand in the front," Gapon told Dillon, "as behooves a leader who is responsible for the fateful action of his trusting comrades, and if the authorities shoot us down I shall be the first to fall. But our blood will accomplish more than the most successful agitation."⁴⁷

Williams's first brief telegram on the strike was also published in the January 21st issue. He admitted that the character of the priest Gapon was still a riddle and withheld his own speculations. He did write that the movement was unrelated to any of the known socialist parties. The *Guardian* editorial staff, in the daily leader entitled "Russian Upheaval," placed the blame for the escalation of the crisis squarely on the autocratic form of government. "It is one of the penalties of the refusal of political liberty to the subject," the writer explained, "that almost any dispute is liable to assume a political character."⁴⁸ Noting the significance of Williams's observation that the movement was not connected to the socialists, the writer observed:

The general strike in St. Petersburg is not the "general strike" of the more extreme Continental Socialists who have dreamt of a revolution by folded arms. It is not governed by abstract theory. It is a spontaneous movement

⁴⁶ "Second Edition: The Great Strike/Father Gapon's Declaration," *Manchester Guardian*, 21 January 1905, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Russian Upheaval," unsigned editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 January 1905, p. 8.

on behalf of elementary political rights which has probably no fixed programme that extends beyond next Sunday. Its history after that will mainly depend on the political tact or folly of the Tsar's advisers.⁴⁹

On Monday, January 23rd, the *Guardian* reported the outcome of the demonstration.⁵⁰ The strikers had taken their wives and children with them on their march to the Winter Palace. The editorial leader described them as “hostages for good conduct,” wanting only to see their tsar and guaranteeing his safety. Instead of taking advantage of an opportunity to reconcile himself with the people, the tsar had, in the view of the writer, “taken the unwise of all possible courses. He simply absented himself.” The Russian government, the leader further declared, “has now crowned its follies by going to war with its own people.”⁵¹ Reports were still coming in. The sequence of events, although unclear, had ended in bloodshed. Had the crowds been warned that they would be fired upon if they refused to stop their demonstration? Had orders been given to the police to fire or had the crowds provoked the attacks? How many were actually dead and injured? Early estimates gave figures ranging from 200 to 1,500. The paper quoted an “official” police report of 2,000 dead and 5,000 wounded. Among the wounded was the strikers’ leader, Father Gapon. The writer noted that the “evil work” was done mainly by Cossacks. Significantly, some of the soldiers from the Russian army had refused to fire on the crowd, causing the *Guardian* editorial writer to speculate that the soldiers felt a sense of brotherhood with the people. The Russian army was, after all, a conscript army and not a “pretorian” army like those that had put down the uprisings in Europe during 1848. It was also not necessary for a majority of the army to rebel in order

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ “The Rising in St. Petersburg,” *Manchester Guardian*, 23 January 1905, p. 6.

⁵¹ Ibid.

to create a general feeling of insecurity within the government. "Here must lie the main hopes of English sympathisers with the Russian revolution. And who is there in England whose sympathies, on its record up to the present, are not wholly on the side of the rising?"⁵²

The *Manchester Guardian* provided extensive coverage of the previous day's events by including a number of telegrams from Reuters, Laffans, Dillon, and their own correspondent, Harold Williams. Williams had begun telegraphing early Sunday morning noting the last minute efforts by Gapon and a group of literary men including Maxim Gorky (1868-1936) to assure the government of the inviolability of the tsar and the peaceful intentions of the marchers. These efforts to insure the safety of the marchers and prevent bloodshed proved fruitless. Prince Sviatopolk-Mirsky had refused to see them. In a telegram sent later that evening, Williams noted that "the power of the priest Gapon over the workers is unlimited" and described briefly what he himself had witnessed.⁵³

To-day, with Dr. Dillon, I saw the Cossacks fire on a peaceful procession. I saw, too, a student with his brains blown out carried along the Nefski Prospect, followed by shouting workmen. Father Gapon was wounded this morning. The action of the authorities has provoked a terrible crisis. The revolt has begun.⁵⁴

The short and stark quality of Williams's telegram provided sharp contrast to the unflappable reporting of Dr. Dillon. Williams was obviously still in shock when he wrote it. He had never before witnessed war or violent death, much less a massacre of innocent

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ "The Workers and Their Tsar," dispatch dated St. Petersburg, Sunday, 8:55 p.m., *Manchester Guardian*, 23 January 1905, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

people. He knew that the march could end in disaster but somehow, like so many others, he did not believe the tsar would allow his troops to fire on Russians. Also, the massacre had not occurred in some remote part of the empire or involved revolutionaries intent on bringing down the monarchy. Until Sunday, many of the workers had clung to the image of the tsar as the “Little Father” who had become isolated from his children by a hated bureaucracy. As Gapon told Dillon, the tsar “does not know our needs.” The workers truly had gone as children to ask a remote but still loving father for help.

The theme of betrayal by trusted authority figures is prominent in several articles written by Williams both before and after what would later become known as Bloody Sunday.⁵⁵ Williams was still very new to telegraphing his dispatches and three significant long articles were delayed. Unfortunately, all his dispatches dated before January 21, 1905 were mailed. Yet even if Williams had tried to telegraph he would have run into trouble. Overworked telegraphists would be arguing about length, cost, and urgency with eager journalists from Russia and abroad. Consequently, Williams’s articles on Gapon arrived after the world knew the outcome of the planned demonstration.⁵⁶ His insights were striking nonetheless.

The first of the articles, “Interview with Father Gapon – A Remarkable Career,” was dated Thursday, January 19, 1905.⁵⁷ In it Williams gave a detailed biography of Gapon in an effort to unravel the “riddle” that stood at the center of the strike movement. Williams began with a recapitulation of the rumors surrounding the priest. He noted a

⁵⁵ In his autobiographic account of his career in Russia, Dillon claimed he had actually coined the expression “Bloody Sunday.” He also failed to mention that Williams had spent the day riding around the city with him. Dillon had clearly mentioned his companion in the published dispatches. [Emile Joseph Dillon, *The Eclipse of Russia* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1918).]

⁵⁶ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 32.

⁵⁷ “Interview with Father Gapon/A Remarkable Career,” dispatch dated St. Petersburg, Thursday, *Manchester Guardian*, 24 January 1905, p. 6.

strong tendency to suspect Gapon's organization, the Saint Petersburg Working Men's Association, of collusion with the police. Gapon's background was little known and "the mere fact that he was a priest was sufficient to condemn his work in the eyes of many."⁵⁸

The interview was a huge break for Williams and it just so happened that Gapon was "very willing" to speak to the young journalist.

He [Gapon] produced a most favourable impression. His manner was simple, he was evidently thoroughly sincere and his conversation showed that he was far from having any sympathy for supporters of the existing order....His is perhaps not a commanding personality, but one could easily imagine in him a power to win the affections of the working men to whom he has devoted his life.⁵⁹

It did not immediately occur to a perhaps naive Williams that Gapon might be using this interview with an inexperienced journalist as an opportunity to promote himself and his cause. Williams's initially sympathetic portrayal of Gapon featured the priest as a man of the people. He came from a peasant family but was himself educated for the priesthood. While working as a statistician for his local zemstvo in Poltava province, Gapon met a young woman activist who had "enlightened" him about the plight of the working class. After coming to St. Petersburg to study at the Academy of Divinity, Gapon became heavily involved with various philanthropic organizations and published a pamphlet on "The Means of Combating Destitution." He eventually became a prison chaplain. Williams may have been identifying with his subject when he wrote:

His experience showed him that something more than temperance societies and societies of charitable aid was needed in order to elevate the condition of the working classes, and he therefore asked, last April, for permission to form the Association that has now suddenly become conspicuous under the name of the St. Petersburg Working Men's Association. According to the statutes as approved of by the Government

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the object of the Society is simply the promotion of enlightenment and mutual aid amongst working men, and special measures were taken to ensure that the police should not interfere with its progress. But the real object, says Father Gapon, is to organise the working men so as to enable them to secure their economic and political rights. For, he declares, under the existing regime it is impossible for the working men to secure the satisfaction of their economic demands.⁶⁰

Gapon's movement had no connection with the Russian Orthodox Church and in fact, Williams noted, Father Gapon spoke very strongly against the church. If the Holy Synod decided to remove him from his station as prison chaplain, Gapon was not concerned. He said that the church was doomed because it had failed to perform its duty and had become "the chief impediment to the progress of the people. It is the servant of Government officials, and Government officials are scoundrels."⁶¹ Williams came away from the interview with a deep respect for Gapon.

One forgets that this man is a priest. There is no trace of the ecclesiastic in his manner, and as little of the demagogue. His sincerity and devotion to his cause are evident. Events have yet to prove whether he has the skill requisite to guide this great movement to a successful issue.⁶²

Williams's positive feelings, however, changed dramatically after he attended a strike meeting where Gapon was speaking. In the leader for the January 27th issue, the editor drew special attention to Williams's article that appeared prominently on the editorial page. The article was dated for both the Friday and Saturday night before Bloody Sunday and as the editor noted "no one knew then exactly what was going to happen the following day, but our correspondent knew enough to make him certain that a

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

crime would be committed.... Read with the knowledge of what was to happen, our correspondent's account of the workmen's meeting is, to our mind, deeply affecting."⁶³

Before the interview, Williams had not yet encountered Gapon's public persona. After seeing Gapon before his followers, Williams admitted that the favorable impression he had formed of the strike's leader from the interview of the previous day had been "considerably modified."⁶⁴ During an agitated speech filled with catch phrases, Gapon informed the workers that they were being "exploited and downtrodden" and that the factory inspectors were "in the pockets of the capitalists." Williams described the scene with a mixture of fascination and horror:

His sentences were punctuated by shouts of approval from the crowd, which frequently repeated, parrot-like, the speaker's phrases. He declaimed against the Government officials, saying that these were withholding from the people their freedom. "Freedom" shouted the crowd with tremendous enthusiasm. "If," he continued, always in the same hurried unimpressive way, "if the Tsar does not satisfy our demands there will be no Tsar." "No Tsar," cried the crowd.⁶⁵

Gapon then urged the workers to join the demonstration on Sunday and read to them the address he would be presenting to the tsar. Williams described it as "a strange mixture of the well-known Liberal demands with others of the most naïve and impracticable character." Gapon tried vainly to explain the unfamiliar terms that appeared in the petition, but to Williams it was apparent that many in the crowd did not understand the significance of the document. Williams described the crowd's enthusiasm as "almost painful: they seemed like men under a hypnotic spell." The petition left the impression that there was no compromise to be made with the authorities, whether it be the factory

⁶³ "Father Gapon," *Manchester Guardian*, 27 January 1905, p. 6.

⁶⁴ "Before the Massacre/Father Gapon as a Strike Leader/An Unfavourable Estimate," dispatch dated St. Petersburg, Friday, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 January 1905, p. 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

owners or the tsar. "If they touch us," Williams quoted the priest, "if they hurt any of us we shall fight to the death." "We'll die!" shouted the crowd joyfully, "we'll die!"

It was a strangely exciting meeting, yet there was something terrible in the thought that this crowd of ignorant, unintelligent men were ready to fling themselves upon almost certain death at the bidding of this priest, who talked so lightly about wringing concessions from the Tsar.⁶⁶

Having been a minister himself, Williams was particularly sensitive to what he saw happening. He felt that Gapon as a priest was acting irresponsibly with the souls entrusted to him. Nevertheless, Williams reiterated in the article that he still was not convinced that Gapon was working for the police. He believed instead that the priest was "a man of average intellect and slight education" whose influence over the workers came from his ability to manipulate emotions. Gapon had taken advantage of circumstances and was about to take a terrible risk with the lives of innocent people.

The ambiguity surrounding Gapon's intentions and influence persists. According to historian Sidney Harcave (1916-), Gapon was deeply interested in the conditions of labor, affected by injustice, and sincerely dedicated to its correction. His influence was unparalleled but his tactics were deplored by all. Attempting to serve the authorities while still maintaining the confidence of the revolutionaries, he ultimately failed with both.⁶⁷

An example of his failure with the revolutionaries is provided by Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) in his account of 1905. Trotsky took a very different approach than Williams in his analysis of Gapon's significance:

The inner significance of January 9 (O.S.) goes far beyond the symbolism of the procession to the Winter Palace. Gapon's priestly robe was only a

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Sidney Harcave, *The Russian Revolution of 1905* (1964; reprint, London: Collier Books/Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1970), 66 and 95.

prop in that drama; the protagonist was the proletariat. The proletariat began with a strike, united itself, advanced political demands, came out into the streets, drew to itself the enthusiastic sympathy of the entire population, clashed with troops and set off the Russian revolution. Gapon did not create the revolutionary energy of the workers of St. Petersburg; he merely released it, to his own surprise.... We all undoubtedly overestimated his personality. With his halo of holy anger, with a pastor's curses on his lips, he seemed from afar almost to be a Biblical figure.... When the lights burned low, Gapon was seen by everyone to be the utter political and moral nonentity he really was.⁶⁸

In the weeks following Bloody Sunday, the revolt spread. Uprisings occurred in Moscow and throughout the empire. Gradually the government reasserted itself. In St. Petersburg where the revolt began, the tsar appointed General Dmitri Trepov (1855-1906) as governor-general to restore order through what amounted to a military dictatorship.⁶⁹ Curfews and censorship became a part of the city's landscape once again. But this time was different. Harold Williams's editor at the *Manchester Guardian* drew a distinction between a "physical" revolution – the actual removal and replacement of the government in power – and a "moral" revolution.

If the rising shows signs of failure, they are merely, as we said, signs that the real revolution is just beginning. The Tsar has done the one thing which could effectually shatter the Russian ideal of Tsardom. He has shown himself powerless for good. His refusal to meet the populace on Sunday was, in effect, an act of moral abdication which is completed by the remarkable proclamation appointing a military dictator in St. Petersburg.⁷⁰

With Bloody Sunday, Williams had completed his apprenticeship as a journalist in Russia. The idealist had received his initiation to reality.

⁶⁸ Leon Trotsky, *1905*, trans. Anya Bostock (1908-1909; reprint, New York: Vintage Books/Random House Press, 1972), 75-77.

⁶⁹ Trepov had been the chief of Moscow police since 1896.

⁷⁰ "Russia's Troubles", unsigned editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 26 January 1905, p. 6.

CHAPTER THREE: WILLIAMS AND THE AFTERMATH OF BLOODY SUNDAY

*"The Constitutional movement is a noisy movement, and this is not in its favour. God's work is wrought in stillness. To Elijah the prophet God spoke not in the earthquake, not in the wind, but in the still small voice. – Count Leo Tolstoy"*¹

Late in January of 1905, Harold Williams left behind the violence and confusion of St. Petersburg and journeyed to the countryside. His destination was Yasnaya Polyana, the home of Leo Tolstoy. It is not strange that Williams decided in the days following Bloody Sunday to make this long-planned pilgrimage. Back in New Zealand, he and his friends had discussed Tolstoy and Christian socialism. Together they had joined the crusade for a world where violence would be unnecessary and government by force obsolete. In the years since leaving home, Williams had maintained his interest in Tolstoyanism through constant reading and visiting various Tolstoyan communities in England and Europe.² As time passed, he saw his heroes within the movement fall victim to their own human frailties of jealousy, greed, lust, and ego. He lamented this decline in letters to Macie Lovell-Smith, but at the same time acknowledged that Tolstoy had

¹ Quoted by Harold Williams in "A Visit to Count Tolstoy/Views on the Crisis/Some Interesting Table-Talk," undated dispatch, *Manchester Guardian*, 9 February 1905, p. 7.

² Upon his arrival in England in 1900, Williams had visited the Tolstoyan John Kenworthy and his community at Purleigh. In 1901, he went to Holland to meet with the Christian anarchist and Tolstoyan Felix Ortt who ran a community near The Hague and published the pacifist journal *Vrede* (Peace). While in Germany, Williams sought out Dr. Eugen Schmitt, a Tolstoyan disciple who had published *Ohne Staat* (One State) until it was closed down by the authorities in 1897. Williams mentioned all three men and their work to Macie Lovell-Smith, particularly in letters dated 22 July 1902, 22 March 1903, and 24 June 1904. [See Irene Zohrab, "Leo Tolstoy from the Perspective of the New Zealand-Born Linguist and Writer Harold W. Williams (with the publication of a forgotten interview between them on 20 January 1905)", *Melbourne Slavonic Studies* 19 (1985): 14-48.]

awakened and inspired his disciples.³ Williams had matured enough to know that no one teacher or philosophy could easily solve the age-old problems of the distribution of wealth or the persistence of violence in government and society in general. Nevertheless, Tolstoy was responsible for drawing Williams to Russia by sparking his early interest in Christian socialism and Russian society.

His visit with Tolstoy took place on January 20, 1905 and was recorded not only in a published article for the *Manchester Guardian*, but also in the diary of Tolstoy's doctor, D. P. Makovitsky (1866-1921), who was present.⁴ The article did not cover the interview in its entirety because of space constraints and the journalist's own editing. Williams later told his wife about the meeting and her account is in *Cheerful Giver*.⁵

Harold Williams actually spent the entire day with the writer, discussing many topics and finding himself being interviewed by Tolstoy.⁶ The seventy-six-year-old Russian icon was fascinated with the New Zealander. Once he pried out of Williams an accounting of all the languages he knew, Tolstoy put him to work translating some foreign mail from Europe that had piled up. As the day wore on, Tolstoy also gathered enough information from Williams to chastise him for abandoning the loftier work of a missionary and philologist and settling for journalism. Tolstoy had strong opinions on the subject, and Williams quoted them in his article:

“Journalism” he assured me, “is a bad business. A newspaper is compelled to stand for a certain party, while the essence of thought is that it should be independent. And then journalism is bad because it forces a

³ HWW to MLS, 24 June 1904, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

⁴ “У Толстого 1904-1910. Яснополянские записки Д. П. Маковитского,” *Литературное наследство* (Moscow, 1979), cited in Irene Zohrab, “Leo Tolstoy”: 14 and 37.

⁵ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 37-40.

⁶ Tolstoy apparently had a tendency to do this with journalists who came to talk politics with him. He often would try to keep the conversation on them and their interests or on spiritual matters. In Williams's case, this approach would have been natural given the latter's background in theology and Christian socialism. [Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy: Volume II*, 350-353.]

man to work hastily and makes him eager to forestall others. It has good points, it is true, and one is that it provides men with a means of communication." "The most Christian knowledge," he added, "is the knowledge of languages, because it draws men closer together."⁷

According to Tyrkova's account of the interview, Tolstoy spoke with "the passion of an apostle" in his attempt to persuade Williams to return to the ministry.⁸ Williams, however, was conscious of his duties to the *Manchester Guardian* and managed somehow to steer the conversation away from himself and back to the events that had brought him to Yasnaya Polyana.

Williams felt it necessary to explain to his readers why he chose to seek an interview with Tolstoy, who seemed so remote from the events of the previous weeks. "Tolstoy," he wrote, "rests secure above all winds that shake the reputations of the hour, and this very security seems to raise him to a kind of Olympian detachment from the hopes and fears of those who are struggling for political liberty." Williams sensed a difference in the way foreigners and Russians perceived Tolstoy's importance. He found the Russians of his day respectful of Tolstoy's literary greatness, but not followers of his Christian socialist philosophy. Williams credited the repressive measures following the death of Alexander II with forcing "high-hearted Russians to seek comfort in doctrines of abstinence and non-resistance" advocated by Tolstoy. Yet a new atmosphere of political activism had permeated Russia in recent years. Tolstoy nevertheless continued to stress the uselessness of political agitation and revolution and taught instead the need for the religious and moral perfection of all individuals. To Russians, Williams suggested,

⁷ "A Visit to Count Tolstoy," *Manchester Guardian*, 9 February 1905, pp. 6-7.

⁸ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 39. Tolstoy was also an advocate of vegetarianism, an erstwhile passion of Williams who had abandoned that passion once he realized that the food would be so inedible. At Tolstoy's home he saw vegetarian dishes that almost made him regret his choice.

Tolstoy seemed out of step with his compatriots, clinging to unrealistic and utopian beliefs. "Tolstoy has become a voice crying in the wilderness," he wrote. In contrast, foreigners like himself would find it natural to appeal to the "greatest living Russian" during a time of crisis.⁹

Williams's article for the *Guardian* provided his readers with a succinct summary of Tolstoy's positions. He asked Tolstoy what he thought of the constitutional movement:

"It is dangerous," he declared, "and useless because it diverts men's activities from the true path. A Constitution cannot improve matters; it cannot bring freedom. All Governments are maintained by violence or the threat of violence and violence is opposed to freedom. A man is only free when no one can force him to do that which he believes to be wrong, and the right course of action for every man is to abstain from all participation in the acts of the Government, to refuse to serve in the army, to refuse to accept a position under the Government, and every day and always to do good. The agitation for a Constitution can only lead to false results.... The people does not want a Constitution, and those who are agitating for it do not know the people. With all their professions of love for the people, they have no real care for it; they simply despise it. The people only wants one thing – that is, land."¹⁰

Tolstoy could easily have come across in the article as an uncompromising anarchist, but Williams was too good a reporter to allow that to happen. Tolstoy had not rejected political reform entirely and had even written to the tsar on several occasions about the need for land reform and political accommodation with a Russia that had grown beyond autocracy. His greatest fear, of which he had warned the tsar, was a violent revolution and the false hopes it offered the people. To Tolstoy, all governments were ultimately despotic and there was no point in changing one for the other.¹¹ To avoid

⁹ "A Visit to Count Tolstoy," *Manchester Guardian*, 9 February 1905, p. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ernest J. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy: Vol. II*, 363-364.

violence, Tolstoy would make compromises. Williams noted for his readers this “apparently irreconcilable inconsistency between the theoretical and practical sides of his [Tolstoy’s] nature.”¹² In another exchange with Williams, Tolstoy spoke favorably of a plan to convene an assembly of the representatives of the *zemstvos* (which he termed a *zemsky sobor*). Williams asked Tolstoy how he could reconcile a *zemsky sobor* with his negative feelings regarding all political systems. “Oh,” Tolstoy replied, “I simply mean that the Emperor is foolish, from the point of view of his own interests, not to convoke a Zemsky Sobor.”¹³

Williams made an effort to abandon “the thorny ground of politics” and instead discussed with Tolstoy a number of topics of mutual interest including literature, philosophy, and the progress of Christian socialism in New Zealand. In his account, Dr. Makovitsky concluded “that the New Zealander was very close ideologically to Tolstoy.”¹⁴ Actually, Williams found himself challenging the very same anarchistic beliefs that had captured his imagination in New Zealand. If he had come to Tolstoy hoping to find an ally for the revolution, he was going to be disappointed.¹⁵ Williams expected that Tolstoy would be remote from the conflict with the autocracy but hoped that remoteness would yield objectivity and reason. Instead he met an artist who placed little faith in political activity.

¹² “A Visit to Count Tolstoy,” *Manchester Guardian*, 9 February 1905, p. 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Quoted by Irene Zohrab in “Leo Tolstoy” : 16.

¹⁵ Tyrkova wrote: “Harold went to him blazing with indignation, and Tolstoy obstinately produced non-resistance and aloofness from politics as a basis for individual and social life, as if there were no unbreakable bond between politics and morals. He was amazed to discover that Tolstoy, who had mastered his imagination from afar, had now lost his ascendancy over him.... Later, when speaking of this meeting, he would say with his gentle smile: ‘It was awkward and unpleasant, as if I had outgrown Tolstoy. It was an odd feeling. But I know now that everybody has to find his own way for himself.’” [Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 39.]

I left him at midnight, and next morning was back in Moscow, hearing of agitation in the Nobles' Assembly, the radical resolutions of a meeting of lawyers, and excited discussions as to the probability of a conflict between the terror from above and the terror from beneath. Involuntarily I thought of Tolstoy's words -- "The Constitutional movement is a noisy movement, and this is not in its favour. God's work is wrought in stillness. To Elijah the prophet God spoke not in the earthquake, not in the wind, but in the still small voice." And yet it is in the stormy life of the cities that the battle of Russian freedom is now being fought out, and not, though one would like to believe it were, in the happy, peaceful haven of Yasnaya Polyana.¹⁶

From this last comment, it is apparent that Williams's recent experiences, particularly that of witnessing Bloody Sunday, had badly shaken his faith in pacifism. The visit to Tolstoy was at least in part an attempt to reaffirm that faith. Instead, he found his abstract idealism evolving into realistic appraisal. He had not been aware until the Tolstoy interview of how much he himself had changed.

Williams returned to Moscow and then Saint Petersburg to observe and record the day-to-day struggle between the tsarist government and the opposition. During 1905 alone, Tyrkova estimated that he sent over one hundred and fifty telegrams to the *Manchester Guardian*. Many were published but some were delayed in transmission or deemed inappropriate for publication by his editors. It was a year during which Williams became a full-fledged foreign correspondent. He described the time in a revealing letter to Macie Lovell-Smith:

I rather envy you your quiet life, your opportunities for steady work....But I am caught in the midst of a revolution, and it is wonderful to watch its growth. My life is restless. In the summer I was in Odessa and Kiev, then to Stettin to report on the visit of the British fleet, from there to Manchester for consultation with the editor....Afterwards I was in Moscow at the Zemstvo Congress. Then I went to Helsingfors...and got back here just a short time before the big strike, out of which the Constitutional Manifesto emerged. Since then the country has been

¹⁶ "A Visit to Count Tolstoy," *Manchester Guardian*, 9 February 1905, p. 7.

shaken by all kinds of violent movements, and just at this moment seems to be drifting on into hopeless anarchy. The revolutionary parties are raising forces which they themselves in the long-run will be unable to control. You speak of the enthusiasms of 21, comrade. I often wish I had them again, but one inevitably grows politically with the years, and the raging of the Russian revolutionaries is enough to make one moderate for life. I can understand now as I could not understand before the value of our English caution and strict sense of order and justice that comes out of the slow growth of centuries.¹⁷

Harold Williams had progressed considerably from his beginnings as a young visionary with a leaning toward Christian anarchism. He had sensed this transition in himself earlier, but his visit with Tolstoy was the illuminating moment for him. He had tried and failed at the ministry, rejected the life of a scholar, and had instead seized the opportunity to work with Struve and the Russian exiles. He had wanted a life with purpose and found it when he accepted Russia's quest for freedom from oppressive government as a cause to believe in. During his first year in Russia, Williams began to understand the price of that freedom and the obstacles in Russia's path. With Tolstoy, Williams shared an intense aversion to violence of all kinds and mistrusted anyone who could put the lives of his followers in danger for the sake of abstract gains. While Gapon was the first and most dramatic example of this type of personality, Williams would come across other revolutionaries who would accept the loss of human life almost casually as part of the revolutionary process. It gradually became apparent to him, in contrast to his earlier beliefs, that the government was not the only enemy to Russian freedom. His inherent conservatism caused him to begin to see things from a more balanced perspective and to recognize the problem of maintaining order in Russia. The autocracy was failing at the job and the revolutionaries seemed unable to control their followers. The dream of freedom was not lost, but it had lost its romantic aspects.

¹⁷ HWW to MLS, 28 November 1905, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

When the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* hired Harold Williams as a special correspondent in Russia, he did not want him to write the same articles that could be obtained through a news service. Williams had to do more than just gather the facts: he had to explain events and interpret their implications. In a sense, he was expected to speculate on Russia's future. As he moved from reporting facts to analysis and opinion, Williams would begin to recognize the extent of his role as special correspondent. Using his British wit and experience as a minister, Williams was able to convey his approval or skepticism. His sense of justice and morality became a keynote in his articles as the revolution wore on. The experience with the *Guardian* gave him a taste of how he wanted to write, allowing his own enthusiasms and disappointments to come across. Soon, he would expand this experience to scholarly journals and then to a book, always seeking a forum for his own point of view.

In October of 1905, Williams attended a zemstvo congress in Moscow. It was at this congress that years of work by Russian liberals culminated in the formation of a political party. Officially known as the Constitutional Democratic Party or Kadets, it also called itself the Party of People's Freedom. This duality was just a surface indication of deeper issues. Composed of Western words and concepts, the name "Constitutional Democratic Party" indicated an origin that many Russian liberals were uneasy with. National pride and a desire to broaden their appeal to the Russian masses caused the simultaneous use of the name "Party of People's Freedom". This name echoed historically for Russians connecting themselves, if not in methods at least in spirit, to earlier groups that had fought autocracy during the nineteenth century.

The Kadet party was in part an outgrowth of the Union of Liberation, which Williams had been in contact with through Struve in Stuttgart, and the zemstvo movement. The constituency included mainly professionals and liberal landowners. Despite their efforts to appeal to a broader spectrum of the Russian population, the Kadets would never attract the industrial workers or peasants as did the Social Democrats and Social Revolutionaries. They would, however, gain the attention and respect of the West, in part because of the positive press they received from journalists like Harold Williams.¹⁸

As Russia's first liberal party, the Kadets provided Williams with ample material of interest for his readers of the liberal *Manchester Guardian*. The Kadet platform set out during the October 1905 congress called for a democratic system of government with a constitution insuring basic civil rights, the rule of law, a progressive system of taxation, an eight-hour day for workers, and an agrarian program that was especially impressive.¹⁹ Williams noted that the congress declared itself for the principle of land purchase for the benefit of landless peasants:

It may seem surprising that a Congress composed chiefly of large landowners should have declared itself in favour of expropriation, but Russian landowners differ in many respects from landowners in the West of Europe, and not least in their democratic tendencies, and in the fact that the sense of private ownership does not seem as yet to have got into their blood.²⁰

¹⁸ The Kadets had extensive connections to the Russian press as well. Kadet writers were welcome to such papers and journals as *Pravo*, *Birzhevye vedomosti*, *Narodnoe pravo*, and *Russkie vedomosti*. The newspaper *Rech*, founded in 1906, would be regarded as the party's official organ along with *Vestnik partii narodnoi svobody*. [Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray*, 235.]

¹⁹ While the Kadets shared similar intermediate goals with the Social Democrats and Social Revolutionaries regarding the establishment of a democratic republic, they were less militant. The Kadet agrarian program, for example, proposed governmental purchase of land for the peasants; the Social Revolutionaries and Social Democrats advocated expropriation of the land for the peasantry without compensation to current landowners.

²⁰ "Moscow Congress/Rights of Non-Russian Nationalities/The Land Question," "undated dispatch from Moscow, *Manchester Guardian*, 10 October 1905, p. 8.

Williams could not resist pointing out this contrast between Russia and the West. It became even more dramatic when he returned to St. Petersburg in time for the general strike.

In the West, strikes had become a familiar feature of industrialized countries. Most often, though, the grievances were economic and the strikes limited to a single factory or industry. In October of 1905, a strike began in Moscow involving the railway workers on the Moscow-Kazan railway.²¹ In a matter of days, this strike had spread to lines throughout the country and to auxiliary industries and services, paralyzing the Russian economy and with it the government itself. Telegraphists and postal employees joined to complete a virtual communication blackout, supplies of food and staples for stores in Moscow and St. Petersburg were stalled on trains outside the cities, and students and professors at the universities turned over their classrooms to spontaneous political meetings involving thousands of participants. The dimensions of the strike were staggering to outside observers like Harold Williams, and the *Guardian* conveyed the story to its readers with considerable analysis and all its drama intact.

“To the English mind it may seem odd that political discontent should take the form of a strike,” the *Guardian* editor wrote in his column for October 26, 1905. He explained:

The confusion is enhanced by the fact that the men mingle economic with political demands as though they hardly realised that the pay-desk and the ballot-box belong to different spheres. Economically, too, they complain of grievances which seem to have little bearing on franchises or Constitutions.... A paternal Government which meddles in every detail of individual, scholastic, and industrial life must expect to suffer politically from any reaction against the conditions which it has tolerated or

²¹ The background to the strike was covered by Williams in an article published in the October 28th issue of the *Manchester Guardian*.

created.... These strikes are the fruit of Socialist activity. At first the Social Democrats cared only for economic questions, but of late years the agitation they aroused has swept them from their Marxian pedestal. They are now working for political liberty as a step to economic reform.... As usual, it is the beginning of improvement which has fostered revolt. The Zemstvo Congresses and the Duma law have authorised the masses to hope, and the stimulus of a hope has given them the courage to rise.²²

The Russians, the editor noted, were in the process of staging a revolution that differed dramatically from the earlier parliamentary struggles of England or the French Revolution. For this he credited modern economic and military conditions and the Slav character. "There is some reason," he wrote, "for thinking that a hatred of violence and bloodshed and a faith in passive resistance is really the best and most fundamental feature of the Slav mind.... It may be, then, that this pacific revolt by means of a general strike is really in accordance with the instincts of the race."²³

In Russia, Williams shared in both the enthusiasms and the hardships of the Russian populace.²⁴ "It is a revolution at last," he proclaimed in one article. "The General Strike has been acclaimed as a great discovery for which all Russia has been longing. One is amazed at the simplicity and spontaneity of the movement. No one has organized it. No one a fortnight ago dreamed of its possibility. Once more it seems as though the foundations of society are being shaken."²⁵

Events were moving very quickly and Williams had to scramble to keep up with the impromptu political meetings that were being held in the streets and the universities. At one meeting, run by students who supported the Social Democrats, Williams finally

²² "The Russian Railway Strike," unsigned editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, 26 October 1905, p. 6.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Not surprisingly, a number of his articles were delayed because of the strike and were consequently published out of sequence.

²⁵ *Manchester Guardian* article cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 42-43. This article is one of several not found in the microfilm edition of the *Manchester Guardian* for the dates Tyrkova cited.

observed the socialists in action. While in Stuttgart he had familiarized himself with the programs of the various revolutionary groups, but since arriving in Russia he had focused his attention primarily on the liberals rather than the radicals. What he saw and heard intrigued him, but the impressions he wrote of in his resulting article were ambiguous. He described the variety of listeners who were attracted to the meeting, from intelligent and eager young women to workmen with no apparent education or sense. He wrote of the revolutionary songs they sang and the responses of the crowd to the speeches. As in the crowd scene in his account of Gapon's rally of the workers in January 1905, Williams stressed the tendency of the audience to mimic the speakers without always understanding the implications of their words:

All this was not politics. It was much more like religion. The speeches were sometimes illogical, comparisons halted, and things were said that would have shocked many sober politicians. As to whether the insurrection is within the sphere of probability it would be rash to venture an assertion.... There is naturally a good deal of talking in the air at such meetings, but criticism cannot be severe in the presence of such enthusiasm. There is life and the glow of energy and hope, and for this the Liberals may well envy the Social Democrats. For the Socialists are giving the lives of the working men fresh interest; they are giving them an account of the totality of things that seems to explain the mysteries of their dreary existence and to guarantee to them a happier future. They are giving them an object of faith which for the present serves the purposes of religion. Such a meeting opens up fresh perspectives, and one wonders whither the movement will lead.²⁶

Without agreeing with the methods or economic philosophy of the Social Democrats, Williams understood their appeal. During the 1905 Revolution, the various political groups who had previously worked clandestinely were now able to make open appeals to the Russian masses they had supposedly been fighting for all along. With the Kadet

²⁶“Russian Socialism/The Development of the Agitation/A Typical Meeting,” undated dispatch from St. Petersburg, *Manchester Guardian*, 28 October 1905, p. 10.

party, other parties emerged to express the beliefs of their constituencies including, ironically, a party to defend the autocracy.

Amidst this clamor for reform the autocracy seemed paralyzed. Divided within itself, the government was also under attack from almost every sector of the society. Even the army could not be counted on to fight the Russian rebels. Troops were still trying to return home from the war front and many were stranded during the railway strike. It was also unclear how many of them would be more sympathetic to the rebels than loyal to the tsar. Faced with the option of compromising the autocracy or further repression, Nicholas finally decided to appoint a military dictator to put down the rebellion; but his choice, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich (1856-1929), came to him with a revolver in hand and threatened to shoot himself in the tsar's presence if he refused to grant reforms. Nicholas thought it best to reconsider.²⁷

"The Russian autocracy is apparently bankrupt in strong men," Williams wrote, adding that its performance within the last year had been "spasmodic, like the movements of a dying man."²⁸ He felt that Russia needed a man with a policy, someone able to adapt to the new circumstances and still salvage some measure of dignity for the government. In Russia at this time the one name that kept coming up in both public discussions and the court was that of Count Sergei Witte (1849-1915). Witte had recently returned from the negotiations at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to conclude the Russo-Japanese war.

²⁷ Howard D. Mehlinger and John M. Thompson, *Count Witte and the Tsarist Government in the 1905 Revolution* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1972), 43-44. The grand duke was the tsar's cousin and a reactionary who opposed a constitution for Russia. Nevertheless, in order to save the dynasty he decided to back Count Sergei Witte. According to Mehlinger and Thompson, the grand duke had met with a labor leader named M. A. Ushakov and discussed the workers' demands. Ushakov claimed that the workers were still loyal to Russia but they wanted a constitution and a greater share in the public life of the country. Ushakov told the grand duke that the only man who could bring this about was Witte.

²⁸ "Reform in Russia/The Attitude of Count Witte/What Will His Policy Be?" undated dispatch from St. Petersburg, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 October 1905, pp. 7-8.

By managing to obtain for Russia a peace without large reparations or undue loss of important territory, he had succeeded in winning the respect of the educated Russian public and the gratefulness of the tsar.

Witte was not an ideologue. While an advocate of progressive autocracy, he did not believe in absolutism but rather that the tsar, like his subjects, should be answerable to law. His model for an ideal tsar came from Alexander II and, to an extent, Alexander III.²⁹ Witte had been appointed minister of finance by Alexander III and had served in that post until 1903. During that time he was able to formulate and implement the so-called “Witte system” which used the government to stimulate the growth of business and industry in Russia. Compared to his father, Nicholas II could not live up to Witte’s expectations of an autocrat. Nicholas, for his part, did not trust Witte who came across as too ambitious.

The *Manchester Guardian* had published an article by Williams written shortly before Witte’s appointment as prime minister.³⁰ The article is significant because it anticipates with surprising accuracy not only Witte’s appointment but also his ultimate failure to appease the country. Williams wrote:

If he [Witte] does come into power he will probably act on moderately Liberal lines....Perhaps he hopes by conceding freedom of speech, freedom of the press and of assembly to conciliate the moderate elements, to restore a semblance of order and to render industrial and economic development once more possible. Then, once having won over the moderate elements by a series of semi-liberal concessions judiciously applied, he will perhaps attempt to crush the revolutionary movement. Now Count Witte is skilful; he understands the political situation as no

²⁹ Witte had once told the journalist Dr. Emile Joseph Dillon that “you must first find a monarch with wisdom, enterprise and resource, or with discrimination and modesty enough to select a statesman who possesses them and to maintain him in office. Alexander III was such a monarch, and I shall never cease to lament his death.” [Emile Dillon, *The Eclipse of Russia*, 150-151.]

³⁰ “Reform in Russia/The Attitude of Count Witte/What Will His Policy Be?” undated dispatch from St. Petersburg, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 October 1905, pp. 7-8.

one else in the Government does; he realises the nature of the distinctions between various parties; he may, if he will, combine and manipulate in a way that will deprive some elements of the emancipatory movement of force and point. He may turn off part of the forces of the opposition into a blind alley and use them against the rest....Such a plan as this might have been adopted long ago. But no one had the wit to think of it or the courage to put it into practice. If Count Witte does attempt to put it into execution it will be a very great pity on every ground, and from the point of view of his own interests very bad policy indeed. It will be fatal for him to lend his services to help bolster up a Government that is condemned utterly to fall. And to attempt to set moderates against extremists is to evoke the spectre of a fierce class war. Only honest and thoroughgoing reform can restore order now, and such honest and thoroughgoing reform is not to be expected from the present Government.³¹

Williams did admit in his article that he might be misjudging Witte and that the new prime minister could be a “convinced” liberal. But he feared that a policy of “quasi-Liberalism would only evoke a social revolution, the elements of which are most abundantly manifest.”³² His doubts about Witte’s intentions reflect Williams’s antipathy for political compromise with the current government. These doubts also reflect those of the Russian liberals who soon found themselves having to decide whether to cooperate with a government that had not proved itself trustworthy or maintain their alliance with the more radical elements of the opposition movement.

Five days after Williams’s article on Witte, the Russian government issued what became known as the October Manifesto. This document, though limited in scope, represented a hard-won victory over the autocracy. In it, the tsar directed the government to grant to the Russian people the rights that they had more or less seized during the strike such as personal inviolability, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly, and union. He extended the franchise for the upcoming elections for the State Duma but stopped

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

short of granting universal suffrage³³. That issue would be left to the Duma. Under the new order, no law was to become effective without the approval of the Duma and the legality of the actions of government officials was to be supervised in part by elected representatives of the people. The manifesto was not, strictly speaking, a constitution, but it did include the promise of reforms that effectively amounted to the transformation of Russia from an autocracy into a constitutional monarchy.³⁴

The government's response to the strikers went beyond their expectations but definitely fell short of their dreams. It seemed almost unthinkable that the same tsar who had answered Gapon's followers with Cossacks and cannons less than a year ago would now renege on his pledge to uphold the powers of the autocracy. Even in part, it was too good to believe. Nicholas was pressured into issuing the manifesto by circumstances and he would never reconcile himself with its promises. He had been advised by his family and ministers that repression at this point would be a temporary measure at best and even then might not succeed in pacifying the country. Nor was the tsar alone in his misgivings about the manifesto; many in the bureaucracy entrusted with implementing these reforms didn't believe in them.³⁵

³³ The so-called Bulygin Duma was originally announced in February of 1905 and was supposed to be a consultative assembly participating in the preliminary discussion of legislative bills. The law of August 1905 governing elections to the Duma was weighted to ensure a large representation of the peasantry, on the assumption of its loyalty to the autocracy. At the same time, the law practically disenfranchised the urban population by means of a high property qualification severely limiting representation for the cities.

³⁴ For a full account of the genesis of the manifesto see Howard D. Mehlinger and John M. Thompson, *Count Witte and the Tsarist Government*, 29-46. The manifesto itself was based on a report that Witte had submitted to the tsar when the strikes began. Witte had wanted the tsar to endorse the report and let his (Witte's) name be associated with the reforms. Any success or failure could then be credited to Witte. Nicholas, however, insisted on the manifesto format that would be signed by him.

³⁵ In a letter to his mother, Dowager Empress Marie Fedorovna, the Tsar explained his decision: My dearest Mama, I do not know how to begin this letter....It makes me sick to read the news! Nothing but new strikes in schools and factories, murdered policemen, Cossacks and soldiers, riots, disorder, mutinies....When at various "meetings" – that is the fashionable word nowadays-, it was openly decided to proclaim an armed rising....So the ominous quiet days began, quiet indeed, because there was complete order in the streets;

In the streets, Williams reported public reaction to the manifesto in Saint Petersburg. "Everywhere red flags, everywhere excited revolutionary speeches, everywhere the workers' 'Marseillaise'....The general feeling is one of relief at the opportunity to think, speak, and move in freedom."³⁶ Williams also noted with surprise that "there is little enthusiasm for Count Witte; hardly a sign of thankfulness to the government." According to his account, the government staged demonstrations to show the people's gratefulness to the tsar:

By chance I came on an artificial patriotic demonstration this afternoon. A band played to a crowd, consisting chiefly of soldiers, "God Save the Emperor." The crowd cheered, small boys threw caps into the air. The hooligan element mingles with the big crowds and creates confusion; as when this afternoon someone fired a shot in a crowd before the Kazan Square.³⁷

It soon became apparent that the police authorities were ill-informed about the manifesto and its implications. After the midnight publication, spontaneous

but at the same time everybody knew that something was going to happen – the troops were waiting for the signal, but the other side would not begin....Through all those horrible days, I constantly met with Witte.... There were only two ways open: to find an energetic soldier and crush the rebellion by sheer force. There would be time to breathe then but, as likely as not, one would have to use force again in a few months; and that would mean rivers of blood, and in the end we should be where we started....The other way out would be to give to the people their civil rights, freedom of speech and press, also to have all laws confirmed by a State Duma – that, of course, would be a constitution. Witte defends this very energetically. He says that, while it is not without risk, it's the only way out at the present moment....From all over Russia they cried for it, they begged for it, and around me many – very many – held the same views.... There was no other way out than to cross oneself and give what everyone was asking for. My only consolation is that such is the will of God, and this grave decision will lead my dear Russia out of the intolerable chaos she has been in for nearly a year....May God save and give peace to Russia. Yours with all my heart, Nicky. [Tsar Nicholas II to Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna, 1 November 1905 in *The Letters of Tsar Nicholas and the Empress Marie; being the confidential correspondence between Nicholas II, last of the tsars, and his mother, Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna*, edited by Edward J. Bing (London: I. Nicholson and Watson Limited, 1937), 185-189.]

³⁶ "Russia's Joy/Strange Scenes in the Capital/Socialist Discontent/Fierce Fighting in the Provinces/Universal Excitement/The Continuance of the Strikes/Amnesty to be Issued," dispatch dated St. Petersburg, Tuesday night, *Manchester Guardian*, 1 November 1905, p. 7.

³⁷ Ibid.

demonstrations that took place were sometimes interrupted by police who were unaware that such activities were no longer illegal. Williams reported their mixed reactions to the news; some had joined in the celebration while others were disgusted by what seemed a betrayal by the government. One officer Williams quoted commented, "It gives you the creeps to hear them shout so, but there's nothing to be done."³⁸ In spite of acknowledging an improvement in the country's morale, Williams's account of both public and police reaction shows his skepticism about the ultimate success of the manifesto's implementation.

It took no time at all for speeches to be made from socialists and liberals alike complaining that the manifesto had not gone far enough. Nothing short of universal suffrage, amnesty for political prisoners, and a wholesale cleanup of the bureaucracy would have satisfied the liberals, and nothing short of the complete collapse of the regime would have satisfied the more revolutionary socialists. The reaction to this apparent overture of the government to listen to its citizens needed to be carefully thought out, but in the excitement of the moment few would take that time. Williams had been correct in his article about Witte: the government would attempt to separate the moderate elements of its citizenry from the revolutionary ones by offering some liberal concessions. Also as Williams had predicted, Witte tried to draw a number of leading moderates into a newly formed cabinet, but he ultimately failed.³⁹ The main obstacle to Witte's strategy was the liberals' mistrust of the government and of Witte personally. Probably sincere in wanting to implement the reforms he had recommended in his report, Witte knew that he

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Witte approached several prominent zemstvo leaders to accept posts in his cabinet, including Dmitri Shipov for state-comptroller and Alexander Guchkov for minister of commerce. [See Howard D. Mehlinger and John M. Thompson, *Count Witte and the Tsarist Government*, 76-84.]

needed public support. The best way to gain that support was to give the government a new image reflecting the reform movement by using new faces in the ministries. Even if the liberals had believed that Witte was sincere, they might have turned him down anyway because it soon became clear that he did not have much support at court. Witte was in an unenviable position. Along with the manifesto, the council of ministers was supposed to be reorganized with the prime minister, the newly appointed Witte, as its head. The prime minister alone was to report to the tsar after coordinating the ministers' activities. The tsar, however, immediately began to undermine the new setup by continuing to work with ministers without the knowledge of Witte. It was one of the tragedies of his short-lived ministry that Witte could not find a secure base for support either inside or outside the government he supposedly led.

In one of his early attempts to win public support for the "New" Russia, Witte managed to convince the tsar to approve an amnesty for political prisoners. An ukase was issued within four days of the October Manifesto freeing various categories of political prisoners in Russia and allowing the return of political exiles. This gesture of goodwill toward the government's former enemies managed to swell the ranks of the revolutionaries as well as the moderates.

The returning exiles included a number of old friends and acquaintances from Williams's days in Stuttgart. Significant among them was Ariadna Tyrkova, a divorcée with two small children.⁴⁰ Since his arrival in Russia, Williams and she had kept in touch intermittently by a few letters. Tyrkova returned in November 1905 accompanied by her children and would later recall how Williams had welcomed them back with the greeting,

⁴⁰ Ariadna Tyrkova was married to Alfred Borman in 1890 and had two children, Arkady and Sofia. She divorced Borman in 1897.

“Good to have you here. Splendid. We have a wonderful life and quite a mad one.”⁴¹

Tyrkova was eager to get back into the thick of the lively political debates and struggles of her homeland. She had recently become the Russian correspondent for the Parisian journal, *L'Européen*, and was eager for a big story.

Williams himself was covering a developing story. The authorities had arrested George Khrustalev-Nosar (1879-1918), chairman of the St. Petersburg Soviet. The presidium which replaced him responded vehemently. On December 18th, Williams reported that a number of Russian newspapers in St. Petersburg had printed an appeal – some papers called it a manifesto – “to all and sundry” not to pay taxes, to withdraw money from the banks, and demand payment in gold. The appeal also declared that the people should not be responsible for repaying any new debts incurred by the government. The Council of Workmen’s Deputies, the Peasants’ League, the Social Democratic and Socialist Revolutionary parties, and the Polish Socialist party signed the appeal. It represented to Williams a “most daring attempt” to break up the financial system of the country. “Never yet,” he wrote, “ have the revolutionaries made such a deliberate effort to put into practice their current theory that the object of the whole movement must be, first and foremost, to create disorder.”⁴²

In response to this direct threat, the government confiscated the offending newspapers and shut down their operations until the charges against the publishers were resolved. While the appeal’s words were similar to the speeches heard in St. Petersburg meetings, the government now had the written proof it needed to prosecute the offenders.

⁴¹ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 47.

⁴² “Under Arrest/The Seizure of Workmen’s Leaders/An Englishman’s Experience,” dispatch dated St. Petersburg, December 23rd, *Manchester Guardian*, 30 December 1905, p. 9.

Subsequently, the capital was without its most popular papers the next day. A meeting was arranged by the Council of Workmen's Deputies to be held that evening at the building housing the Imperial Economic Society. Among the items on the agenda was a possible plan for another general strike. Tyrkova persuaded Williams against his better judgment to take her to the meeting. He admired the daring of Russian dissidents like Tyrkova, but getting arrested and deported wasn't his idea of being a responsible journalist.

As it was, they saw little in the way of a political meeting. Upon their arrival, they found the building already surrounded by mounted policemen, prison vans, and "sergeants and constables lurking suspiciously around the entrance...."⁴³ They were not stopped from entering the building, but were cordially invited in. With "bows and smiles" the police escorted them into a hall that held about two hundred and fifty other "guests". When Williams and Tyrkova tried to exit through the same door they had entered, bayonets were held up to their faces. It became apparent that they were under arrest. Fortunately, Williams had the presence of mind to warn Tyrkova to speak only French, not Russian, while they were detained. He then identified himself and Tyrkova as foreign correspondents to a police officer who led them to a separate room where they joined their colleagues. For over two hours, the correspondents bemoaned their circumstances. "Finally," Williams later wrote, "came a police master, who showered upon us polite phrases in French and offered a thousand apologies. 'Exceedingly sorry, but duty, you know! Our Government! And then the Russian ways, you know!'"⁴⁴

As always, Williams gave his readers a full analysis:

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

The amorphous Government which was supposed to have no clearly defined policy and to be entirely at the mercy of the circumstances of the moment has come out boldly against the revolutionaries. And it has acted with much more energy than anyone had deemed it capable of. In the capital, in spite of certain restrictions, the revolutionaries have had things very much their own way. The freedom of the press frequently bordered on licence; to revolutionary propaganda among the working men hardly any limits were set; and it was not found insuperably difficult to carry on a propaganda among the troops. No mass meetings could be held, but every night there took place numbers of small meetings, in many of which the question of an armed insurrection was freely discussed. There was liberty indeed – a liberty which, after the long period of repression, was intoxicating, and the revolutionary spirit grew apace, until in the minds of many there seemed to be no limits to the possible.⁴⁵

Williams was chiding both the public and the government for their lack of moderation. The government had abused its power, the public its freedom. When it came to suppression of undesirable activities, Williams insightfully notes, the government was capable of swift and efficient action. The revolutionaries had lulled themselves into a false sense of euphoria.

Williams managed to convey the tension of the situation in his account by alternating his narrative with short exchanges of dialogue. In one he is asked by another detainee, a “fair-haired young working man,” to hold his revolver for him until later. The young man was under the impression that foreigners were allowed to carry guns. Williams politely refused and suggested that he hide the gun in the room somewhere. “Oh, that would be a pity!” murmured the workman ruefully. “No one would have the use of it then!”

While in the room with the other foreign correspondents, Williams overheard the phone calls of a police officer responsible for organizing the transfer of prisoners. In one call, he was heard shouting into the telephone, “There are 250 or 300 of them, your

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Excellency! It's a long business, have to search them all. Our success, your Excellency, surpasses all expectations! We have sent the 20 members of the Executive Committee to the Preventive Prison; the rest must go to the police stations!"

Williams placed the blame for these arrests on both the government and the revolutionaries themselves. By repressing the legal means of critical expression for the populace, the government had fostered the necessity for secretive and conspiratorial methods among its opponents. The early success of the revolutionaries in pressuring the government to issue the October Manifesto had only made the revolutionaries bolder. Their lack of caution, particularly at the meeting held in the Imperial Economic Society building, seems almost illogical. They had grossly underestimated the government's determination to restore its control. And they had paid a price. As Williams concluded, "The Council that yesterday seemed to have almost dictatorial powers is now in the hands of the Government. Will the rank and file of the workmen be able to carry on the warfare now that the leaders are removed?"⁴⁶

Though Williams and Tyrkova had escaped arrest, it was clear to both of them that the so-called "Days of Liberty" that had begun with the issuance of the October Manifesto were coming to an end. For nearly two months the government had either tolerated or been unable to control the forces unleashed by its concessions. With the October Manifesto, Williams had written that "the situation is full of varied possibilities, from the restoration of tranquillity to revolutionary developments."⁴⁷ Russia had been anything but tranquil. Within a day, clashes between defenders and opponents of the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "Russia's Joy/Strange Scenes in the Capital/Socialist Discontent/Fierce Fighting in the Provinces/Universal Excitement/The Continuance of the Strikes/Amnesty to be Issued," dispatch dated St. Petersburg, Tuesday night, *Manchester Guardian*, 1 November 1905, p. 7.

regime became commonplace – and violent. Initially, the newspapers reported incidents of street fights, looting, vandalism, and drunken brawling by “hooligans.” Williams believed that “an upheaval of the hooligan element is just the thing the supporters of the old *régime* desire, and it was to be expected.”⁴⁸ Emotions were running very high on both sides of the conflict and within ten days after the issuance of the manifesto, the tsar would write to his mother of another development:

The impertinence of the socialists and revolutionaries had angered the people once more; and because nine-tenths of the trouble-makers are Jews, the people's whole anger turned against them. That's how the pogroms happened. It is amazing how they took place simultaneously in all the towns of Russia and Siberia....Cases as far apart as in Tomsk, Simferopol, Tver and Odessa show clearly what an infuriated mob can do: they surrounded the houses where revolutionaries had taken refuge, set fire to them and killed everybody trying to escape.⁴⁹

The tsar, while perhaps overestimating how much the pogroms actually reflected support for the regime rather than outright anti-Semitism, nevertheless accurately conveyed the perception of many of the traditionalists who resented the manifesto.

Autocracy, Russian Orthodoxy, and Russian nationality were the ostensible pillars of the old regime and the manifesto had shattered that foundation. The extreme right, which supported these ideals, may have been slower than the extreme left in organizing itself, but it lost little time in expressing its hatred of the liberals, Witte, the revolutionaries, and most especially the Jews, whom they saw as the source of Russia's troubles.⁵⁰ While the government may not have been directly behind the pogroms,

⁴⁸Ibid. Orlando Figes has made a case for the behavior described by contemporaries as “hooliganism” as revolutionary acts. [Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924* (1996; reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 188-189.]

⁴⁹ Tsar Nicholas II to Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna, 9 November 1905. [*The Letters of Tsar Nicholas and the Empress Marie*, 190-191.]

⁵⁰ Williams's article on the pogroms is entitled “Russian Atrocities/The Strike as a Cause of the Massacres/Guilt of the Church,” *Manchester Guardian*, 13 November 1905, pp. 7-8.

tolerant attitudes like those of the tsar toward the violence were commonplace. In addition to pogroms and “hooliganism”, uprisings occurred in the army and navy. From the countryside there were reports of peasants, believing that the manifesto had actually given them the land they so craved, destroying their landlord’s property, killing and looting just as Tolstoy had feared. This had been a time of unprecedented freedom of expression but it was also the beginning of a time when turbulent events unleashed Russia’s suppressed hatred.⁵¹

⁵¹ The *Guardian* editor commented in his column of November 9, 1905:

The present state of Russia is but little removed from sheer anarchy, while either a backward or a forward move might result in something indistinguishable from civil war. There has seldom been in any European country a situation so full of hope and yet so overshadowed with fear. Liberty must be the end of it, but who will survive to enjoy it and in what shape Russia will emerge from this melting-pot of passions and aspirations no man can predict.

CHAPTER FOUR: WITNESSING THE END OF AN ERA

Like many foreign observers, Williams was distressed at the turn of events in Russia by the end of 1905, but he still had some hope that Russia could become a stable constitutional democracy. With the October Manifesto and the establishment of the Duma, Russia had taken major steps toward transforming its government from an autocracy into a constitutional monarchy. Williams's main object during the pre-World War I period would be to write articles that would help create a bridge for understanding between his English readers and the Russian enigma. So long despised or simply dismissed because of its "backward" form of government, Russia was still relatively unknown to the West. Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace (1841-1919) had published his groundbreaking book *Russia* in 1877, but Russian scholarship in the English language was still in its infancy.¹ Williams had been writing about many people and concepts that were entirely new to his readers.² As the pace of change in Russia seemed to slow down, Williams decided to cut back on his commitments to newspapers and instead concentrate on scholarly writings.³ In part, this shift was influenced by Bernard Pares, another scholar who shared his concern and love for Russia.

¹ An updated edition of Mackenzie Wallace's work was published in 1905 including an additional volume by Luigi Villari entitled *Russia Today: Russia Under the Great Shadow*.

² Williams eventually began to publish some scholarly articles on Russia's various nationalities including "The Russian National Problem," *Russian Review* I (1912): 32-40; "The Case of the Letts," *Russian Review* II (1913): 122-137; "The Russian Mohammedans" *Russian Review* III (1914): 100-119. According to Tyrkova, he was working on a book about the subject when the war broke out.

³ Williams had worked for the *Manchester Guardian* at first on a salary of £300 a year, and then from the summer of 1906 on space. The change was made at his own request on the ground that Russia was no longer prominently in the news. In 1908 he joined the London *Morning Post*. Tyrkova aptly described Williams's attitude toward the two papers when she wrote: "As the correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in Russia, he did not merely describe the struggle for liberation, he was inspired by it. The *Morning Post* expected more formal telegrams, and wanted information chiefly about Russian foreign policy." One significant article from the *Post* dealing with Russian home news was his article on the death of Tolstoy. The article outraged the owner of the *Post*, Lady Bathurst, who believed Williams had

Like Williams, Pares came from a large family. His father was an ardent English liberal and admirer of Prime Minister William Gladstone (1809-1898). He took an active interest in the education of his son, whom he sent first to Harrow and then to Trinity College, Cambridge. There Bernard Pares studied classics, only later turning to history. Between 1894 and 1897, he began to travel abroad and studied in France, Italy, and Germany. In 1898, he made the first of his many trips to Russia where he studied Russian language, history, and culture, attending the lectures of the historians Vasily Kliuchevsky (1841-1911) and Paul Vinogradov (1854-1925) at the University of Moscow. In 1899, after student protests against the tsarist regime prompted the government to make arrests, Vinogradov resigned in protest, and Pares returned to England.⁴ He would not return to Russia for five years, during which time he became a traveling lecturer for the University of Liverpool.⁵

When Bernard Pares came back to Russia in 1904, the situation had already drastically changed. He was soon caught up in the Russian people's struggle with the autocracy. For the next ten years, he would make yearly visits to Russia, usually staying about three months at a time. Pares first met Williams in July of 1905 at a zemstvo conference in Moscow. The two men had much in common and the meeting began what would become a lifelong friendship and collaboration. Pares described this first meeting:

minimized Tolstoy's irresponsibility in abandoning his wife and told her correspondent so in a letter. The incident was typical of his uneasy relations with the paper. Williams remained "nonplussed" but he was all the more appreciative when he later joined the *Daily Chronicle* and regained his journalistic freedom. [See David Ayerst, *Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper* (London: William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., 1971), 357 and Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 82.]

⁴ Bernard Pares, *A Wandering Student: The Story of A Purpose* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press in cooperation with Howell, Soskin, Publishers, 1948), 79-81.

⁵ When in England, Bernard Pares became a pioneer of Russian studies at the university level. At first he was a reader in Russian history at the University of Liverpool (1906-1908) and was then promoted to professor of Russian history, language, and literature (1908-1917). From 1919 to 1939, he worked with

This was arranged by Madame Petrunkevich, wife of the veteran leader of Russian liberalism. "We have got Mr. Williams," she said, and he and I sat together on the floor behind the speakers. We came out together and did not part company till the early hours of the next morning. We stood all the night on the terrace of the Kremlin discussing the morality of terrorism in politics. The difference between our views was not one of principle, but of the measure and direction of human sympathies. Williams was heart and soul with the Russian intelligentsia. From that day onwards to the end of his life we were in the closest intimacy of friends and fellow-workers in a cause which was far too great for our united powers – that of trying to interpret Russia in general, and Russian liberalism in particular, to our own country, which almost took it for granted that no one counted in Russia except officials and Nihilists. Later this intimacy became such that, whatever distance apart, each of us could instinctively anticipate the judgment of the other on any new turn of affairs. In success and in failure we fought all our battles together.⁶

Pares makes it clear that he and Williams differed little when it came to sympathetically reporting Russia to an uninformed British public. If they differed at all, it was in the extent of the role that Russian liberalism might play in transforming the Russian autocracy into a stable constitutional democracy. Pares had the benefit of more experience with the ebb and flow of tsarist reforms and repressive actions, and he was more measured in his projections for Russian development. Williams, relatively new on the scene and nine years younger, was impatient for change.

Pares often joined Williams and Tyrkova when the Russian Duma was in session, observing the proceedings and making copious notes resulting in his first book, *Russia and Reform*, which was published in 1907. He also worked from time to time as a foreign correspondent for the *London Spectator* and the *Westminster Gazette* and wrote articles that appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Manchester Guardian*. Ironically, Pares had been offered the position of Russian correspondent for the *Guardian* in 1904.

Robert Seton-Watson to build up the reputation of the School of Slavonic Studies at the University of London. [Ibid., 274-286.]

⁶ Bernard Pares, "Harold Williams," *Slavonic Review* VII (January 1929): 327-333.

When he turned down the position, owner C. P. E. Scott (1846-1932) offered it to Harold Williams. Pares later wrote that the *Guardian* had gotten the better man.⁷

Though sharing an interest in educating the British public about Russia, the two men were of different temperaments. According to Tyrkova, Pares was always on the move, his pockets were full of notebooks containing his observations, and he was a planner. “He was the very opposite of Harold,” she wrote, “who never hurried, seldom wrote anything down, could not endure planning the future, arranging a programme, persuading people and generally pushing things on. Harold’s pockets were also stuffed, but usually with grammars.”⁸

As early as July 1907, Williams lamented Russia’s past and anticipated its future. “During the late years,” he wrote, “so much blood has been shed, such a multitude of human lives have been wantonly cut short, that at times even compassion grows weary, and reports of fresh suffering seem like the cruel and pointless repetition of an old and well-worn tale of woe. The whole body of the nation is sick.”⁹ This deeply pessimistic sentiment – the result of having viewed endless dissension, obstinacy, and misunderstanding – belies Williams’s basic idealism. In spite of everything, he was convinced of Russia’s vast potential. Writing in the *Russian Review* several years later, he described the Russian empire as a “broad and rich conception” that included not only

⁷ Bernard Pares, *A Wandering Student*, 123. By 1905, Pares was already a well-known authority on Russian affairs. At a lecture in Altrincham, England on October 9, 1905, he lamented the quality of the newspaper reports coming out of Russia at the time. A *Guardian* reporter covering the lecture wrote: Mr. Pares did not, however, pronounce a ban on all newspapers. There were, he said, some most admirable exceptions. He could recommend his listeners to no better guides amongst newspaper correspondents than the present correspondents of the “Standard” and the “Daily Telegraph”, and in his opinion the special correspondent of the “Manchester Guardian”, although the youngest, was probably the most capable and reliable of all.” [“Russia’s Future/Address by Mr. B. Pares,” *Manchester Guardian*, 10 October 1905, p. 4.]

⁸ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 71.

⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 4 July 1907, as cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 68.

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) and Tolstoy but “all kinds of charming products of the young literatures of peoples who are just learning to express themselves” and “the treasures of the Mohammedan civilization of Central Asia, and a new energy and an awakening spirit of inquiry amongst the descendants of nomads, and the slow subjection of northerly Siberian wastes to human wills and desires. These are only the beginnings, the mere suggestion of the wealth that may come to Russia with the liberation of all her powers. These are the realities that underlie the discussion of autonomies and *zemstva*, Russification and Polonization, language-rights and schools.”¹⁰

In 1914, Williams’s interest in Russian history and culture resulted in a major scholarly work entitled *Russia of the Russians*.¹¹ The book traces the origins of the country and its early history but focusses on contemporary culture, society, and politics. It describes the growing struggle between autocracy and constitutionalism and covers the press, the intelligentsia, the church, the economy, and the arts. At the time, it provided an authoritative guide to pre-Bolshevik Russia.

Williams’s book is part history, part journalism, and part memoir. He briefly delineates the growth of Russia from the time of the early Slav tribes through the consolidation of the autocracy to the granting of the October Manifesto. When he moves to his discussion of the tensions between the bureaucracy and the reform movement, the tone of his writing takes on the characteristics of a memoir as he describes scenes from

¹⁰ Harold Williams, “The Russian National Problem,” *Russian Review* I (1912): 40. The *Russian Review* was edited by Bernard Pares, Maurice Baring, and Samuel Harper and published by the School of Russian Studies in the University of Liverpool. This study appeared in the inaugural issue. Williams was a co-editor with Pares on a number of subsequent issues. Pares managed to attract an incredible array of members and correspondents for his School of Russian Studies including the historian Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, Russian professors and politicians such as Peter Struve and Paul Miliukov, Duma President Alexander Guchkov, and British scholars of Russian literature such as Alymer Maude and Constance Garnett.

¹¹ Harold Whitmore Williams, *Russia of the Russians* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914).

the 1905 Revolution and reformers like Peter Struve. His analysis of the setbacks to constitutionalism is multifaceted. The key obstacle, Williams suggests, was not the autocratic tsar but a deeply embedded state bureaucracy supported by a police force and the army. From the time of the reform movement in the 1860s the bureaucracy was responsible for devising a system of checks that would “render its own reforms innocuous [and] set bureaucratic safeguards on its own judicial system....The maintenance of order interpreted as the prevention of movement became the bureaucracy’s prime care.”¹²

It was in this atmosphere of stifling regulations that the intelligentsia emerged. Williams differentiated between the educated and professional classes of other countries and the Russian intelligentsia. What characterized Russia’s educated classes was that their lives were “a constant protest against the existing order.”¹³

Ethical fervour, constant devotion, even in the darkest days of oppression, to an ideal of political and social redemption, immense personal sacrifices, contempt for the goods of this world – these were the noble qualities that gave the intelligentsia its power and constitutes its claim to profound respect. These were the qualities which, together with a genuine and unflagging thirst for knowledge, a delight in ideas for their own sake, a restless and widely-ranging mental activity, and a desire to impart enlightenment to the weakest and the humblest, made the intelligentsia the pioneers of Russian development during the last century....¹⁴

Williams pointed out that the 1905 Revolution had subjected the dogmas and doctrines of the intelligentsia to a critical test. Their instincts had “been dulled by an inveterate habit of generalisation” and they failed to respond adequately to the situation. Williams blamed the government for isolating the intelligentsia by limiting their opportunities for

¹² Ibid., 61.

¹³ Ibid., 127.

¹⁴ Ibid.

practical political action. Only the zemstvos and municipal councils gave the intelligentsia administrative experience. "It is significant," Williams noted, "that it is the Zemstvos that have given [to the nation] some of the most capable and practical workers in the broad field of Imperial politics."¹⁵

In his chapter on the Russian Orthodox Church, Williams's own experiences as a country preacher helped to shape his account of the lives of village priests. It would have been easy for him to simply describe the lazy, drunken, ignorant, and greedy stereotype of a stock character from literature. He did not deny that such individuals existed, but in a detailed account of the day-to-day life and responsibilities of these men he painted a much more complex picture. Torn between responsibilities to parishioners, their own families, and an oppressive hierarchy of superiors, local priests were sorely tried. As the conflicts between the government and its citizenry became more critical, the government tried to use priests to spy on their own flock and report on the activities of reformers. This brought the clerics into direct conflict with people who were often doing the very charity work that their religion encouraged. "Many simply obey orders," Williams wrote, "become informers and zealous members of the reactionary parties, and try to secure their position within the parish by arousing fanatical reactionary feeling among the peasantry. The better men suffer bitterly in a perpetual conflict between conscience and administrative compulsion."¹⁶

Williams then turned to the history of Russian religious dissent, the consequence, as he saw it, of a highly structured church that had been absorbed into the state. He traced the recent developments in Christian anarchism, as manifested in the works of

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 150.

Tolstoy, back to the *Raskol'niki* (schismatics or Old Believers) who seceded from the official church in the seventeenth century. As a linguist, he was particularly critical of the Old Believers who “preferred misprints and mistranslations” when the official church tried to make its ritual and texts conform to the Greek originals. The movement against these reforms, however, took on social and political aspects:

It assumed a democratic character, it became a protest against arrogant authority, a protest against those representatives of the State who persecuted “traditional Christianity,” and openly supported heretics, in the long run a protest against the State itself, involving a belief that the Tsar was antichrist. The movement was ennobled by suffering, details of ritual unimportance in themselves gathered far-reaching heroic associations and became symbols of profound emotions. The old books, the old ikons, the old prayers and words and forms became the more precious because worldly powers denied them, and because their retention involved a continual sacrifice of comfort, ease, and physical security.¹⁷

Williams saw a common pattern in religious dissent in Russia that led often to refusals to take oaths or to an abstention from military service. Doctrines of non-resistance and Christian anarchism would from time to time gain ground, but their origins were difficult to trace. Some could be linked to the Old Believers, some to Protestantism. Williams believed “it is possible that a certain anarchist strain in the Russian nature, a reaction against the excessive pressure of the authority of the Church and State may account for the spread of non-resistance teachings.”¹⁸

The final chapter of the book entitled “In the Chief City” looks at St. Petersburg from both cultural and social viewpoints. Williams made it clear that he preferred the old capital of Moscow. St. Petersburg was a city that was forced into existence by the

¹⁷ Ibid., 159.

¹⁸ Ibid., 170.

imperial will of Peter the Great. Everything about it, even the architectural styles used, represented to him the presence of the bureaucracy and the tsar.

Whereas Moscow...had once represented a hard, shrewd, and calculating despotism it now embodies far more than St. Petersburg public initiative and civil liberty. Of those two figures who by their conflict and cooperation have determined the course of Russian history, the full-blooded, broad-chested, roving *bogatyr*, and the diak or Government clerk, the former may now be said to have his seat in Moscow, the latter in St. Petersburg.¹⁹

To Williams, the new capital of St. Petersburg was “a sketch, an outline, a general statement.” In its capacity as the new seat of power, the city exemplified the highest degree of centralization and abstraction without the spirituality, intimacy, and human sympathy of Moscow.²⁰ His reaction to St. Petersburg seems unusual for a Westerner. He did not deny the city’s role as a “window on the West,” but he had misgivings about the imposition of Western architecture and culture in general on Russian folk styles. By Russian, Williams meant all the cultures in the empire. He sensed a homogenization of life in St. Petersburg and it deeply disturbed him. His outlook was strongly shaped by his upbringing in New Zealand where the indigenous Maori culture seemed to be dying out in respond to Europeanization.

Williams was not alone in his sentiments about St. Petersburg; the tsars since Alexander II had at least privately favored Moscow. Historian Richard Wortman (1938-) noted the consequences for the autocracy of this rejection of St. Petersburg.²¹ During the reigns of Alexander III and his son Nicholas II, both monarchs sought to

¹⁹ Ibid., 389-390. A *bogatyr* (champion or knight of Holy Russia), according to legend, was a demigod who fought demons and other evil beings sent by the Devil.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 399.

²¹ Richard Wortman, “Moscow and Petersburg: The Problem of Political Center in Tsarist Russia, 1881-1914,” in *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics Since the Middle Ages*, edited by Sean Wilentz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985): 244-271.

reassert their traditional bonds with the people through ceremonies recalling seventeenth century Muscovy and the founding of the dynasty. The tsars shared Williams's distaste for the St. Petersburg bureaucracy and found its administration encroaching on autocratic power:

Petersburg, "the basic symbol" of imperial Russia, had lost the favor of the tsar, and with it, its aura of preeminence. Moscow radiated the charisma of the political heritage cherished by the tsar, but had no tsar. The very glorification of Moscow had insurgent implications, casting doubt on the institutions in Petersburg that governed the empire. Upholding values and pursuing goals at variance with those of the ruling elite, the tsar himself became a force for disorder in the final years of political crisis. His vision of the past precluded a unified effort by monarchists and conservatives to preserve the old regime, leaving the field to the opponents of autocracy.²²

One of the weaknesses of Williams's account of the Russia of his day is the lack of material on the labor movement and such revolutionary parties as the Social Democrats and the Social Revolutionaries. His focus remained instead with the liberal movement. He was convinced that the liberals were the constructive force in Russian politics and this may have caused him to see the parties of the extreme left as fringe elements. In the chapter on the Russian press, he gave detailed descriptions of liberal and reactionary publications but dismissed those of the left with the observation that they were shut down as quickly as they appeared. He was slow to recognize the importance of the soviets during the 1905 Revolution, and he compounded this with a continued lack of coverage in his book. In the chapter on trade and industry there is little discussion of the labor movement. Nevertheless, he did not dismiss the role of the working class during the revolution and provided a portent of this class's capacity for revolutionary activity.

This is not the place to describe that extremely interesting process by which side by side with the development of industry there grew up a labour movement. This movement under the conditions prevailing in

²² Ibid., 268.

Russia inevitably assumed a political and revolutionary character. And this fact has given the labour movement in Russia an intensity, a passion, and a persistent importance which would be otherwise inexplicable considering the comparative backwardness of Russian industrial development. It was the strikes of the workmen in 1905 which disorganised the machinery of public life and led to the standstill on the railways and the great general strike which terminated on the promulgation of the constitution. The workmen have suffered severely from the repression of the following years, and the trade unions which had been successfully organised have been the object of especially severe measures. One effect of the bitter and turbulent experiences of the last decade has been very considerably to raise the level of intelligence amongst the working men, and in spite of administrative restrictions a serious educational and economic movement persists among them.²³

Williams avoided any discussion of the role of political agitators among the working class, particularly Social Democrats and Social Revolutionaries, preferring to keep his comments general. The Kadet party, favored by Williams, did not play a leading role in the development of the labor movement and its shortcoming in this regard was something that he played down.

Williams is far from alone in his depiction of the Russia he knew at the beginning of the twentieth century. Other writers, however, have taken different approaches. Henri Troyat (1911-), a biographer of Tolstoy, created a fictional character of an Englishman visiting Russia in 1903.²⁴ Basing his book on his own childhood memories of Russia as well as tales told by his parents, he concentrated on many aspects of Moscow life covered by Williams but gave added emphasis to the life of factory workers. Troyat, who was writing in 1959, had access to published memoirs and studies unavailable to Williams.

Richard Pipes in *Russia under the Old Regime* preferred to limit his scope to a study of Russian political institutions prior to the twentieth century, seeing in them a

²³ Harold Whitmore Williams, *Russia of the Russians*, 386-387.

²⁴ Henri Troyat, *Daily Life in Russia under the Last Tsar* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962).

basis for the bureaucracy of the police state which followed.²⁵ Bernard Pares, Williams's colleague, contributed one of the numerous surveys of Russian history, a copious compilation detailing the Russian people from prehistoric times through the end of World War II.²⁶ In his work, published posthumously, Pares was less concerned than Williams with the social and cultural aspects of early twentieth-century Russia.

Harold Williams, although no longer unique in his quest to define Russian institutions and the Russian people, had the virtue of being one of the first to do so in the English language for the period prior to World War I.

Williams had finished his book in March of 1914. In a matter of months, Archduke Francis Ferdinand (1863-1914), heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian empire, would be assassinated and the world plunged into a war that H. G. Wells described as "the war to end war."²⁷ Williams's life and the direction of his work would change dramatically.

With no regular work as a journalist since leaving an unfulfilling free-lance job with the *Morning Post* in 1912, Williams realized his finances would not hold out much longer. He returned to England in early June of 1914 in an attempt to secure a new job. Instead of a newspaper assignment, he received an advance for yet another book on Russia, this time concentrating on historical rather than contemporary life. He also began a different book on the various nationalities in the Russian empire. Neither work was

²⁵ Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974).

²⁶ Bernard Pares, *A History of Russia* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1953).

²⁷ Herbert George Wells, *The War That Will End War* (New York: Duffield & Company, 1914). This is a collection of essays, some of which appeared as articles in the *Daily Chronicle* beginning in August 1914. Wells later took a great interest in Russia and the revolution. He and the Williams family became friends even though their political differences eventually put them on opposite sides of the struggle over Bolshevism. Irene Zohrab has published an admirable study that covers the relationship between Williams and Wells. [See Irene Zohrab, "From New Zealand to Russia to Britain: A Comment on the Work of Harold W. Williams and his Relations with English Writers," *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1985): 3-15.]

ever completed.²⁸ In July, after Williams returned to Russia, the *Daily Chronicle* editor Robert Donald (1860-1933) decided he could use a correspondent of Williams's stature. Nearly ten years after his first dispatch, Williams would henceforth see his by-line with his dispatches. It is ironic that at the very time *Russia of the Russians* marked Williams's return to scholarship, the war revived his career as a journalist.²⁹

For a man who had spent most of his life as an ardent pacifist, Williams reacted to the outbreak of the war with uncharacteristic optimism. He was by no means alone in his feelings that this war was somehow a righteous war against German aggression. He would have agreed with H. G. Wells, who, in a series of articles for the *Daily Chronicle*, wrote: "Every sword that is drawn against Germany now is a sword drawn for peace."³⁰ Williams and Tyrkova were in the throng outside the Winter Palace on August 2nd when the tsar announced Russia's entry into the war to his people. As Williams wrote:

Half the throng, moved by a strange impulse, fell on their knees before him whom but yesterday they had accused as the enemy of his people. Hardened radicals watched the sight with tears in their eyes. The throng sang with deep emotion the National Anthem and the Psalm, "Lord save thy people and bless thine inheritance." The very thought of revolution was forgotten, the past was forgiven in one of those swift outbursts of generosity to which the Russian people are so susceptible. For at that moment at least the nation was at one with its rulers.³¹

Once Britain had joined Russia in the war, all barriers between the two countries seemed to have suddenly fallen. Williams's task as a journalist became

²⁸ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 145-146.

²⁹ Five of his six brothers volunteered immediately for the army and the sixth commanded a transport. At first Williams, too, considered military service, but as Tyrkova later wrote: "His service was on the Eastern and not the Western Front, with the pen instead of a rifle, and war correspondents were liaison officers, a living bond between the Allies." [Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 163.]

³⁰ *Daily Chronicle*, 4 August 1914, as cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 151.

³¹ *Daily Chronicle* article, date not given but probably around August 2-5, 1914, as cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 149.

at once easier yet more complex as he moved from educator to propagandist.

This transition was very subtle and never fully complete in Williams's case, but it was not unusual for journalists of the period. For Williams, the war paradoxically eased the tension brought on by the love he had for Russia, his adopted country, and the British Commonwealth of his birth. His relief that the war did not put Russia and England on opposite sides is apparent in numerous cables. His style of writing, sometimes characterized by classic British understatement, was lyrical and passionate at other times. As early as August 12, 1914, he wrote:

Russia is unrecognizable, or rather that haunting beauty of Russia which those of us who lived here gropingly, and often sadly, feel and love, has suddenly shone forth radiantly from out of the heavy clouds of failure and defeat that had hidden it for so many years. Russia is full of moral energy that she has never displayed with the same vigour at any period of her history. Her rulers did not want war. To all outward appearances Russia was utterly unprepared for war. The nationalities were embittered by oppression. Discontent was deep and strong.... And then it was a strange happiness and brotherhood.³²

Tyrkova later wrote that "mobilization of the armies demanded a mobilization of the spirit. We were concerned not to justify war but to assert its heroic reality, to recognize its spiritual essence."³³ In telegram after telegram, Williams assured the *Daily Chronicle* readers of Russia's commitment to the war and of the Russian soldier's forbearance in the face of overwhelming German military technical superiority. He accompanied the Russian army as a war correspondent to Warsaw, which was serving as the center of Russian military operations during the first year of the war. He was joined there by Tyrkova who had helped to organize the Petrograd Town Council medical

³² *Daily Chronicle*, 12 August 1914, as cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 150.

³³ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 151.

division. With forty-five railroad cars and over one hundred medical personnel, the train was a mobile hospital unit for the front. In February 1915, Williams witnessed the attempt by the German army to take Warsaw at the Battle of Wolya Szydłowska.

Tyrkova had to cope with its aftermath. In a typical dispatch appearing in the *Daily Chronicle* on February 9, 1915, a different Harold Williams emerges. A former pacifist who hated war, he now stresses the heroic aspects of the conflict. Implicit in his observations is a feeling of Allied pride:

One of the fiercest and most sanguinary battles of the war is now being fought along the Ravka within a small distance of the small town of Zhirardovo. On February 4 the tide began to turn in favour of the Russians. Heroic peasants from Siberia, Tambov, Voronezh, Yaroslavl and Vladimir advanced to a task that was like forcing the gates of hell, so terrible was the fire that rained on them. They suffered – God knows how they suffered. But the fortitude of these men is marvelous.³⁴

Tykova was sent with a doctor and three nurses to the battle site to try to provide aid. In her book, *Cheerful Giver*, she is more graphic than romantic:

Blood was everywhere, precious human blood. Fresh and bright red or dark and congealed. It was on the floor, on the machines and on the men's overcoats, on their hands, their eyes, their faces. The reek of blood and decay seemed to enter one's brain. I walked in a nightmare. The wounded watched me with the set expression familiar to those who have seen soldiers after a battle.

From all sides came whispers:

‘Sister, water....’

‘Sister, there is a dead man next to me, tell them to take him away.’

‘Sister, do see to me quick, I am bleeding something dreadfully.’

‘Sister, there is a lad groaning pitifully, behind that machine. Have a look at him.’

‘Sister, sister....’³⁵

Dispatches from the front were only one phase of Williams's involvement

³⁴ *Daily Chronicle*, 9 February 1915, as cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 154.

³⁵ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 155.

with the war. In February 1916, he was asked by the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Sir George William Buchanan (1854-1924), to help coordinate British propaganda in Russia. An agency was to be formed and run primarily by journalists. Its intention was to foster friendship and understanding between the two allies. Though sponsored by the British government, the Anglo-Russian bureau worked only informally with the British embassy. According to Bernard Pares, who was later associated with the bureau, this was one of the weaknesses of the project. The purpose, and consequently the activities of the bureau, were vague. Tyrkova also noted that the budget for the bureau wouldn't have paid for propaganda in Albania much less a country of Russia's size.³⁶ Initially the enterprise was to be a modest and undercover operation with a very small staff. The writer Hugh Walpole headed the Anglo-Russian bureau but his biographer, Rupert Hart-Davis (1907-1999), has written:

Hugh's knowledge of Russian, for all his efforts, remained elementary to the end, and he would never have been able to make even a show of efficiency had it not been for the tact, experience, and kindness of Williams. This quiet, modest man was the only member of the party who ever knew what was happening anywhere, or what was likely to happen, though he never once attempted to usurp Hugh's position as titular head of the enterprise, and relations between them were unclouded.³⁷

Hart-Davis captured the essence of Harold Williams's personality, but it was Walpole's which shaped the character of the bureau. He was a witty bon vivant, but a clumsy one. Tamara Karsavina (1885-1978), the celebrated ballerina of the Imperial Russian Opera House in St. Petersburg, wrote of a conversation she had with Walpole while walking to a friend's house. Although he slipped and fell in the snow no fewer

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

³⁷ Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole: A Biography* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1952), 151.

than fourteen times, he never missed a beat in the conversation. He was busy trying to write several short stories and novels, keeping apace of the theatre, restaurant, and social scene in St. Petersburg, and at the same time run the bureau. His command of the Russian language was dismal and while many of his Russian acquaintances knew French, his was poor. Walpole's attempts at communication were comical and his Russian friends, who apparently had a fondness for Dickens, nicknamed him Pickwick.³⁸

His lack of foreign language proficiency notwithstanding, Walpole did have some things in common with Williams. He, too, was born in New Zealand, his father was a minister, and he had a Cornish mother. Like Williams, he had initially studied to become a minister but after six months became convinced that he had neither the vocation nor the ability for the priesthood. He had initially come to Russia in 1914 and wrote occasional articles for the *Daily Mail*, but he had the humility to realize that his writing skills lent themselves more to fiction than journalism. In a letter to Henry James (1843-1916), he wrote:

I've given up absolutely any idea of journalism for the present. It's all far too new, too deep, too interesting for me to splash my ignorance upon. My idea now is to learn Russian as hard as I can and then after Christmas to get off on a hospital-train, as a stretcher-bearer on the front.³⁹

Walpole did eventually get to the Galician front as a medical orderly. Two of his novels, *The Dark Forest* (1916) and *The Secret City* (1919), would deal with the Russian revolution, but when it came to journalism and government reports he invariably deferred to Williams.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

³⁹ Hugh Walpole to Henry James, dated Moscow, 12 November 1914, cited in Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole: A Biography*, 126.

Williams's involvement in the Anglo-Russian bureau raises an additional question. Tyrkova insists in *Cheerful Giver* that Williams accepted no payment for his services to the bureau because he did not want to lose his freedom as a journalist.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, according to her account, Williams was dutifully going to the bureau office every afternoon that he was in St. Petersburg and his articles for the *Daily Chronicle* during 1916 show the effects of his new commitment. The articles are primarily related to the progress of the Russian army, and from September to December 1916 few articles appeared that addressed problems on the Russian home front. Yet Tyrkova, Pares, and an assistant to Buchanan, Samuel Hoare (1880-1959), all have left accounts saying that Williams was on the phone almost daily with Buchanan, keeping the ambassador informed of the growing instability of the government in the eyes of the Russian people.⁴¹

Tyrkova wrote:

During the winter of 1916-1917 Harold was insistently reporting to the Ambassador that discontent was growing, that if the Tsar did not appoint a popular cabinet the consequence would be fatal. Overlooking diplomatic conventions, rules of the protocol, his personal distaste for interfering in the affairs of the Emperor, Sir George Buchanan twice spoke to Nicholas

⁴⁰ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 168.

⁴¹ Samuel Hoare's account of the relations between Buchanan and Williams is striking, particularly when one notes that in his book, *My Mission to Russia*, Buchanan scarcely mentions Williams. Hoare wrote:

The man who chiefly influenced him [Buchanan] to look beyond the conventional path of routine diplomacy was Harold Williams, the most brilliant foreign correspondent that our generation has known. Of all the British intellectuals Williams most intimately understood the mentality of Russia. Indeed, his knowledge of Russia penetrated further, for he had entered into the very soul of the country.... Every one in Petrograd knew Williams. When some detail about the local life or language of a remote tribe was required, Williams was the one man who could instantly give it. With 1915 came the dark days that forced every serious student of Russian affairs to think of the internal front, and it was then that Buchanan turned instinctively to him for political advice. At first their relations were reserved and somewhat suspicious. But, as time went on, scarcely an evening passed without a telephone conversation between the Ambassador and the correspondent. When a closer contact was essential between the Embassy and the non-official classes, it was Williams who provided the bridge between them. Buchanan disliked leaving his own entourage, and was ill at ease in the presence of strangers. It was Williams who succeeded in bringing Buchanan into touch with the outer world. [Sir Samuel Hoare (Viscount Templewood), *The Fourth Seal* (London: William Heinemann, 1930), 239-242.]

II about the internal position. His efforts led to nothing. The Tsar failed to seek support in the only organization which Russia still trusted – the Duma.⁴²

Williams, who was usually reticent about interfering in the events he reported, was concerned enough to urge Buchanan to personally warn the tsar of the impending trouble. Why did he downplay it in the articles to the *Daily Chronicle*?

As Phillip Knightley in his book *The First Casualty* has shown, World War I was one of the first conflicts where propaganda for mass consumption became a potent weapon.⁴³ With few exceptions, journalists and their editors were very conscious of their ability to influence public opinion and were therefore reluctant to report news that would harm their country's war effort. In a sense they helped the government's censors by not writing items that would discourage potential new military recruits. Henry Wickham Steed (1871-1956), the foreign editor of the *Times*, refused to print the November 1916 articles of Robert Wilton, that newspaper's Petrograd correspondent.⁴⁴ Wilton warned of the vulnerability of the tsarist regime and cited as key factors the food crisis, the waning patriotism and general war weariness of the Russian public, and the underlying hatred for the Romanov ruling family. The *Times* did not convey to its readers the gravity of the Russian crisis until the tsar's abdication in March 1917.⁴⁵

⁴² Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 176.

⁴³ Philip Knightley also wrote: "Propaganda dates back 2,400 years, to Sun-Tzu's *The Art of War*, but the First World War saw its first use in an organized, scientific manner." [Philip Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 81.]

⁴⁴ Robert Wilton's birth and death dates are unavailable.

⁴⁵ Wilton, whom Steed described as "temperamentally pessimistic," spent ten years in Russia but had not investigated the revolutionary movement; he and the editorial office of the *Times* never really moved beyond seeing the Bolsheviks as madmen and German-paid saboteurs of the Allied war effort. [See *Times* (London), *History of the Times: The 150th Anniversary and Beyond 1912-1948. Part I: 1912-1920* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), 254.]

Through articles by editors and journalists alike, including Williams, the Russian autocracy had been transformed from a menace to human freedom to its champion in the face of German imperialism. The tsar was united with his country now in the war effort with the British government and public. Any threat to the tsar at this particular juncture in time implied the possibility that Russia would have to abandon its allies and make a separate peace with Germany. In the winter of 1916, it was by no means certain that America would give up its neutral status and join the Allies. Russia's withdrawal would have been seen as a disaster in Britain.

Williams was fixated on the idea that Russia had to be on the winning side of the war with the Allies in order for democratic reforms to occur in Russia. He knew that the government could not conduct both a successful military campaign and an implementation of the land reforms demanded by the peasants, as well as the political reforms desired by the intelligentsia. Tsar or no tsar, it would be immaterial if the Germans won the war. Williams intentionally took a patriotic stance and wrote articles that would not threaten Russia's stability. When it became apparent that the tsar himself was becoming a liability to Russia's war effort, Williams wrote articles critical of his policies but he would not advocate revolutionary change during the war.

Several of Williams's articles from November 1916 to March 1917 do refer to the instability of the government and its consequences to Russia's contribution to the war. This instability was manifested in the constant turnover of ministers and the resulting tensions between the government and the Duma.⁴⁶ Williams related the critical stance

⁴⁶ In the fourth Duma, very few representatives of the radical left were present because of changes in 1907 to the electoral law. The problem of ministerial changes had become acute enough by January 1917 to cause Williams to write that "fallen Ministers are now as plentiful as once-worn gloves in the litter of a fop's abandoned wardrobe." [*Daily Chronicle*, 23 January 1917, p. 6.]

that the Duma delegates had taken against the government. In particular, he cites a nationalist leader who echoed the frustrations of many supporters of the traditional regime in Russia when he came close to accusing the government of treason by incompetence in a speech to the Duma:

“Constant change of personnel, publication of ill-considered and inconsistent measures, insufficient use of local government organs and a wholly impermissible conflict of authority have created a situation very dangerous for further work behind the fighting line, and extremely favourable to a display of predatory instincts.” In a very weighty declaration the Progressive Bloc pointed out that the action of the Government during the last year had created serious impediments to the successful prosecution of the struggle.⁴⁷

Williams did not quote from the speech given by the leader of the Kadet Party and the Progressive Bloc, Paul Miliukov (1859-1943), because it had not been published. He did note, however, that “things were said yesterday that cannot be forgotten or lightly passed over, and the further development of relations between the Government and the Duma is a matter of the highest interest, not only to Russia, but to all the Allies.”⁴⁸

Tyrkova, who accompanied Williams to the Duma, gives a more vivid description of that session. She described Miliukov’s speech as “fatal.”⁴⁹

The Tsar was again blamed for everything – for military failures, for having taken on the Supreme Command, for rumours of a separate peace....He (Miliukov) did not want a Revolution; he and those in whose name he spoke wanted to carry on and win the war, yet every word he uttered dealt a deadly blow not only to the autocracy but to the Army as well.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Harold Williams, “Russia for Fight to a Finish/Historic Reassembly of the Duma/All Parties Demand More War Measures,” *Daily Chronicle*, 16 November 1916, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Miliukov’s speech was actually banned by the censors.

⁴⁹ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 174.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Williams could have reported more details from Miliukov's speech but two factors made him hesitate. With the speech itself banned, he might face expulsion if its details were published under his name. More importantly Williams, as an outside observer, did not share Miliukov's bitterness toward tsarism and had no desire to widen the gap between the tsar and his people. Williams still hoped that some compromise could be found and unity reestablished, at least long enough for Russia to win the war.

Among the rumors circulating against the regime was one that Empress Alexandra (1872-1918), under the influence of the monk Rasputin, was pro-German. The character of Gregory Rasputin (1869-1916) was a journalist's dream – if he or she enjoyed writing sensational stories that grabbed headlines. For former Methodist minister Harold Williams, however, and anyone else who cared about the stability of Russia, Rasputin was a nightmare. His surname came from the Russian word *rasputnyi*, meaning dissolute, and was probably applied to him by the villagers in his native Siberia. He was a drunkard, a lecher, and a thief who eventually turned to mysticism for salvation and came to believe that the greater the sins the more complete the salvation of the sinner. Unfortunately, his interpretation of this concept only led him to sin more.⁵¹

It seems incredible that such an individual became so influential with the Russian royal family. Contemporaries such as Duma president Michael Rodzianko (1859-1924) would refer to the period preceding the collapse of the autocracy as “The Reign of Rasputin.”⁵² Yet the so-called “Mad Monk” was charismatic and managed to convince high-ranking Orthodox clergy that he was the archetypical peasant holy man, capable of

⁵¹His mysticism was probably influenced by the outlawed Khlysty sect of Russian Orthodoxy who were semi-pagan and engaged in group sex and flagellation. [Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 28-29.]

⁵² Rodzianko used the description as the title of his memoir of the period.

miracles – including healing the sick. When an opening occurred at court for the royal family's confessor, Rasputin entered its service.

Empress Alexandra was bitterly mistrustful of the Russian court and its surrounding society. Though a German-born princess, she had embraced her new country through her devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church and her idealization of the autocratic relationship between the tsar and his people. The Russian peasant, free from Western influence, represented Russia in her mind. The autocratic tsar was a kind but strict father of his people and his wife their nurturing mother. Rasputin endorsed this ideal and beyond the implicit political support of the royal family, he offered the empress release from her own personal tragedy. He alone seemed able through prayer and hypnosis to restore the health of her son, Tsarevitch Alexis, who suffered from hemophilia passed on to him through his mother.

In addition to advice on religious and health matters, Rasputin ventured into the political arena. Government ministers were appointed and dismissed on his advice, leading to severe criticism of the government in the Duma and even in the more conservative Council of the Empire. Covering a meeting of the council, Williams related sardonic comments of its members. He included the story of a respected gentleman in Petrograd, who, when asked if he would accept a ministerial post declared that it was not his custom to take employment as a day laborer. The council soon joined the Duma in its pleas for the removal of those "corrupt influences behind the scenes which paralysed the work of every Cabinet and made puppets of the Ministers."⁵³

⁵³"Intriguers Denounced/Corrupt Influences Behind The Scenes," dispatch dated 6 December 1916, *Daily Chronicle*, 8 December 1916, p. 1.

Support for the tsar and his immediate family had eroded on every level by December 1916. The public, the most conservative and traditional Duma to date, the aristocracy, and members of the royal family were united in their call for the removal of Rasputin and the empress from their interference in the government and its prosecution of the war. The tsar, who had become the supreme commander of the Russian army in August 1915, was urged to return from the front and dismiss Rasputin. When he failed to do so, members of the nobility took matters into their own hands and provided the nation and the world with a story so bizarre that it read like a tale from medieval and not twentieth-century Russia.

On January 2, 1917, the *Daily Chronicle* first reported the murder of Rasputin. Wishful thinking had led to reports of his death two previous times within a year, but as the writer noted, "there is no doubt that on this occasion he has been finally done away with."⁵⁴ Williams sent his readers the grisly details over the next few days. Rasputin's assassins included Prince Felix Yusupov Sumarokov Elsten (1887-1967), Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich (1891-1942), and a member of the Duma, Vladimir Purishkevich (1870-1920).⁵⁵ Rumors had it that Rasputin had been brought to the home of Prince Yusupov and poisoned during a meal of heavy eating and drinking. When he failed to succumb as expected, he was reportedly ordered to shoot himself and given a revolver to accomplish the task. Not surprisingly, Rasputin turned the gun on his foes but he missed, killing a hapless wolfhound instead. More shots were fired and Rasputin was finally

⁵⁴ "Russian Monk Who Ruled A Court/Dramatic Assassination of Rasputin/Leading Noble's Part in the Murder," unsigned dispatch from Petrograd dated 31 December 1916, *Daily Chronicle*, 2 January 1917, p. 1. Details of the story were sensationalized. Later accounts had Yusupov shooting Rasputin while the latter inspected a crystal crucifix on a commode. [Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 290.]

⁵⁵ Prince Felix Yusupov was married to the tsar's niece, Grand Duchess Irina Alexandrovna; Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich was a cousin of the tsar.

brought down. The commotion drew the Petrograd police to the scene but they were turned away with assurances that everything was fine, just some horseplay among friends. Still suspicious, the police watched as the culprits removed the body from the home to a waiting car. They found a trail of blood in the garden near the house. Only later would it be revealed that neither gunshots nor poison had killed Rasputin. He had still been able to drag himself from the room to the garden, and he died after being dumped in the frozen Neva River. His body had to be thawed before the coroner could perform an autopsy.⁵⁶

The incident made public the break between the tsar and other members of his family. Prince Dmitri was exiled to Persia for his part in the crime and his sister, Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna (1890-1958), was placed under house arrest for trying to say farewell to him at the train station. Protests from other family members were to no avail. Contrary to the intentions of the conspirators, the tsar's commitment to his wife and his resolve to resist reforms were only intensified. The isolation of the tsar was virtually complete.

On March 12, 1917, a phone call to the apartment where the Williams family resided brought the news.⁵⁷ That morning, soldiers from the Preobrazhensky Regiment, the pride of the Russian monarchy, had murdered their officers rather than obey orders to shoot at peaceful demonstrators. Troops sent to quell the mutiny had instead joined it. Before the day was over the opposition forces included about 25,000 troops, formerly the core of the tsarist army.

⁵⁶ "The Death of Rasputin/Details Emerge," dispatch dated Petrograd, January 5, *Daily Chronicle*, 8 January 1917, p. 1 and Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 289-290.

⁵⁷ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 178.

As Tyrkova related in her book, *From Liberty to Brest-Litovsk*, the winter of 1916-1917 “had passed in a state of nervous and oppressed expectancy.”⁵⁸ Even after Rasputin’s murder the complaints about ministerial changes, government inefficiency, inadequate supplies to the cities and the front, and a half-hearted war effort had continued to plague the tsarist government. Rasputin’s removal had solved nothing and, more importantly, had shifted the blame for the state of Russia from the “evil influences” at court to the tsar himself.

On March 15, 1917, the tsar abdicated on behalf of himself and his son, Alexis. He left the throne to his brother, Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich (1878-1918), who refused to accept it without the consent of the Russian people as represented by a constituent assembly elected through universal suffrage.⁵⁹ Suddenly the members of the Duma, so recently caught up in debates and endless arguments about food and army matters, were faced with the task of forming a government in Russia without a tsar.

Harold Williams had been an unknown reporter when he covered the events of 1905 for the *Manchester Guardian*, but by the time the March 1917 Revolution occurred he had become a leading expert on Russian affairs. He continued to report the news for the readers of the *Daily Chronicle* and the *New York Times*, but this time he was also involved in preparing the official report that the British embassy in Russia would dispatch back to London.

The days leading up to the tsar’s abdication had begun with peaceful protests

⁵⁸ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *From Liberty to Brest-Litovsk: The First Year of the Russian Revolution* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1919), 1.

⁵⁹ Grand Duke Michael was in part pressured by the Provisional Government to refuse the crown. His safety could not be guaranteed and the public seemed resolved to do away with the monarchy once and for all.

against the food shortages that were beginning to plague the capital at that time. In a dispatch dated March 10th, Williams expressed bewilderment that there were street demonstrations on March 8th and 9th. Long lines in front of bakeries were a familiar feature in Russian cities:

Unrest expresses itself in the form of street demonstrations of an unusually mild character, wholly unlike any demonstrations I have ever seen in Russia. Crowds wander about the streets, mostly women and boys, with a sprinkling of workmen. Here and there windows are broken and a few bakers' shops looted. But, on the whole, the crowds are remarkably good-tempered, again probably owing to the absence of vodka, and presently cheer the troops, who are patrolling the streets. Near Moscow station the crowd treated the Cossacks to white bread and cigarettes, and women pleasantly bantered the soldiers. Occasionally when the mobs on Nevsky grow too dense the troops gently disperse them. There is a curious placidity about the whole thing, a curious absence of excitement and alarm. At present the main current of movement is not revolutionary. There is nothing like a popular uprising. It is simply an unusually insistent demand for a vigorous solution of the food problem.⁶⁰

Williams's observations do not project revolution and are typical of his generally optimistic attitude. This slant on events may have left him unprepared for what was to follow. William Henry Chamberlin (1897-1969), journalist and historian, also notes that when the bread protests took place "there was still no general conviction of an impending crisis."⁶¹ Even Leon Trotsky in his account of the March Revolution admitted that it was a popular uprising unplanned at this time by the revolutionaries though not unforeseen.⁶²

Conversely, in the report he drafted for the British ambassador, Williams stressed

⁶⁰ "Food Problem in Petrograd/No Real Shortage, But Mismanagement/Mild Street Protests," dispatch dated Petrograd, March 10, *Daily Chronicle*, 13 March 1917, p.1.

⁶¹ William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921: Volume I* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), 76.

⁶² Leon Trotsky, *The Russian Revolution. The Overthrow of Tsarism & The Triumph of the Soviets*, translated by Max Eastman, selected and edited by F.W. Dupee from *The History of the Russian Revolution* by Leon Trotsky (1932; reprint, Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1958), 98.

the unusual attitude of the Cossacks toward the crowds. They were heard assuring the people that even though they were given orders by their officers, they would not shoot. "From the moment that the soldiers appeared to be on the side of the people the Government had every reason for serious alarm."⁶³ The new empathy between the people and the military, insightfully grasped by Williams, now threatened the government. Orlando Figes (1959-) noted that the Cossacks on duty at this time were mainly reserve troops without much experience in crowd control. They were inadequately armed as well which may have been a factor in their reluctance to tackle the crowds.⁶⁴ In contrast to the almost playful attitude of the crowd toward the soldiers and Cossacks, the police force in St. Petersburg became a target for the protesters. Incidents were reported involving bottle and stone throwing at policemen and scattered firing in the streets. The police arrested two workmen leaders, causing their comrades to try to free them. When a group of soldiers were ordered to fire on the crowd they only pointed their rifles at the people's feet. A group of Cossacks intervened and not only calmly dispersed the crowd but also freed the arrested leaders.⁶⁵

The protests early on were not focused on economic issues alone. As Williams had noted in previous writings, the autocratic government had fostered a blurring of political and economic spheres. Meetings were soon organized and by Saturday, March

⁶³ "Despatch From His Majesty's Ambassador At Petrograd Respecting The Russian Revolution of March 1917" (Sir George Buchanan to Mr. Balfour, dated Petrograd, March 20, 1917), reprinted by Robert Hart-Davis in *Hugh Walpole*, 454. There is some disagreement regarding the authorship of this document. Hart-Davis, who in the biography itself admitted that Walpole relied heavily on Williams for reports such as these, claimed that Walpole was the author. Irene Zohrab believed that Williams had drafted the document. The lines of argument regarding the causes of the March Revolution and its background are very similar to Williams's articles and his earlier book, *Russia of the Russians*. Zohrab's case is more convincing than that of Hart-Davis.

⁶⁴ Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 308.

⁶⁵ "Despatch From His Majesty's Ambassador At Petrograd," 454.

10th, St. Petersburg was again faced with a general strike. On Sunday, the military governor of St. Petersburg, Major-General Sergei Khabalov (1858-1924), exacerbated the situation by issuing a decree stating that workmen who failed to return to work the next day would immediately be sent to the front and that any lingering crowds would be dispersed using all available force.⁶⁶ Additional regiments were brought in to support the government and it seemed to Williams that this uprising would end like all the others. In the report for London, he wrote:

.... It cannot be too strongly emphasized that up to this moment the people had given no cause for complaint; they had, indeed, assembled in crowds, but their meetings and processions had been orderly, dignified, and restrained. They had simply requested that some assurances might be given them that practical and immediate steps be taken to deal with the terrible shortage of food, a shortage which, as every man, woman, and child in Petrograd knew, it was in the power of the Government to remedy.⁶⁷

Williams and Tyrkova spent most of their time during these days in the Tauride Palace where Duma president Rodzianko felt impelled to telegraph the tsar directly about the disintegration of order in the capital, describing the situation as “anarchy” and the government as “paralyzed.” He urged the tsar to appoint someone trusted by the people to form a new government warning that “any delay may be fatal. I pray God that at this hour the responsibility may not fall on the bearer of the crown.”⁶⁸

The government recognized that the Duma was likely to become a focal point of

⁶⁶ Although Williams did not note it at the time, Khabalov was actually carrying out orders from the tsar. [See William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921: Volume I*, 78.]

⁶⁷ “Despatch From His Majesty’s Ambassador At Petrograd,” 456-457.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 457. The content of this telegram was included in the report to London and in Williams’s dispatch to the *Daily Chronicle* dated March 16, 1917. Rodzianko had also sent it to the commanders-in-chief at the various fronts, requesting support for his action.

the opposition forces and decided to prorogue the elective body on Sunday evening. The members formally accepted the decision and moved out of their customary rooms used for meetings, but because of the immediate crisis they remained in the palace and continued to conduct their affairs. They also formed a temporary committee to try to establish order in the capital and re-establish relations with public organizations and institutions. This committee consisted of representatives from all parties except those of the extreme right and the extreme left, most notably the Bolsheviks.

Rodzianko and the other members of the Duma were in a difficult situation. The crowds outside, including soldiers who had joined the people in the clamor for a new government, were not going to back down. It grew apparent that the revolutionary mood was rapidly turning toward the radical left. Even as the Duma's last session under the old regime took place in one wing of the Tauride Palace, the socialist groups were in the other wing organizing and calling for the formation of a republic.

In the report for the ambassador, Williams elaborated his impressions of the tensions between the two groups:

In the Duma, meanwhile, the clearer it became that there was little opposition to be feared from outside, the sharper grew the division between the Duma Executive Committee and the Workmen's Social Democratic body. The former of these two bodies was determined on a Constitutional Government of some kind – the latter on a republic. The [Social] Democrats themselves were divided into the Moderates and the Extremists, but their own divisions did not at present appear very sharp. The Duma Committee had the weight and reputation of the Duma behind it, while the Social Democrats had on their side the revolutionary feeling of the masses and the power of democratic appeal to the soldiers. It became more and more obvious that this struggle for a form of government was to become the ultimate struggle of the revolution – a struggle that would not be decided, perhaps, until many more years of Russian history had passed.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Ibid., 462-463.

Although the timeliness of Williams's evaluation of the situation could not yet be judged, it is noteworthy that future events justified his observations. As a student of Russian history and an on-the-scene observer caught up in the immediate turmoil of current events, Williams discerned that a political quarrel could be the crystallization of a fundamental problem. The best form of government for Russia is an ongoing question debated even today.

Among the conservative Octobrists and liberal Kadets confusion reigned. Rodzianko and Kadet leader Miliukov were hoping to put a stop to the revolution by compromising with the old regime and offering to maintain the monarchy, even the dynasty. Not receiving an answer to the first telegram, Rodzianko sent a second reiterating to the tsar that immediate action needed to be taken. "The last hour has come," he telegraphed, "in which to decide the fate of the country and the dynasty."⁷⁰

The only response that the tsar sent was word that he would be returning to Petrograd very shortly with a large reserve of troops to quell the rioting. This moved Williams to write: "This was the first sign that the Czar had given since the beginning of the revolution, and it was not calculated to reassure the offenders."⁷¹

The tsar's train originally headed to his palace at Tsarskoe Selo where his wife was tending their children who were ill at the time. Revolutionaries occupied several of the railroad stations en route, so railroad officials proposed redirecting the train to Petrograd. Instead the tsar went to Pskov, the headquarters of the northern front, presumably to await reinforcements, but it was there that he became convinced that the situation was indeed as serious as Rodzianko had described. After receiving telegrams

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

from the Russian generals of the various fronts including one from Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevich, all urging him to abdicate if only to maintain army discipline, the tsar concurred.⁷² Meanwhile, the Octobrists and the Kadet leaders insisted on giving the monarchy one more chance. They hoped to convince the tsar to abdicate in favor of his son, with his younger brother Grand Duke Michael serving as regent. Although increasingly idealistic given the rage expressed by the public toward the dynasty, the plan was brought to a tsar who was already prepared to agree.

When the representatives of the Duma, Octobrist founder Alexander Guchkov (1862-1936) and Nationalist Vasily Shulgin (1878-1965), arrived in Pskov the tsar unexpectedly withdrew his consent to allow his son to become tsar. Conversations with the family doctor convinced him that his hemophiliac son would not live much longer and prompted a dual abdication instead. The plan to set up a constitutional monarchy was collapsing. The Duma representatives accepted a compromise that allowed them to offer the throne to Grand Duke Michael, but by Russian law his marriage to a divorced woman as well as his own divorce made his succession highly problematic. Back in Petrograd even Miliukov realized that the plan was risky, and when he could not guarantee the grand duke's safety, the duke refused the crown pending elections by a constituent assembly.

Russia without the Romanovs, Russia without a tsar: the turn of events over the past days was bewildering and what lay ahead was uncertain. Still, despite his unease with the increasing radicalization of the Russian public, Williams reassured his Western readers that what had happened was for the best:

⁷² Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich had become commander-in-chief of the Caucasian front after the tsar took over his position as commander-in-chief of the Russian army. [See Orlando Figes, *A People's*

Every man and woman in Russia is now able to speak and work freely. Russia has found her multitudinous voice. It is now possible in Russia to speak the truth about Russia. The old fear has vanished. There is room and space at last for honesty and for honest, straightforward work. The possibilities are magnificent. The only cloud on the horizon is the chaotic fanaticism of extremists.⁷³

In 1904 when Williams was working with Struve in Stuttgart, anyone who even whispered the idea that the tsar should be deposed would have been deemed an extremist. Mere opposition to the government could cause one to be branded a “revolutionary” by the Russian secret police. By March 1917, liberalism no longer represented radicalism in Russia. Williams, Tyrkova, and the Kadets had actually become the defenders of conservatism in the maelstrom that was coming.

Tragedy, 249.]

⁷³ “Russians Free to Speak and Work/Only Complication the Fanaticism of Socialist Extremists/ Brotherhood Helps Discipline,” dispatch dated Petrograd, March 18, *Daily Chronicle*, 21 March 1917, p.3.

CHAPTER FIVE: AMIDST WAR AND REVOLUTION: THE *DAILY CHRONICLE* DISPATCHES

Barely one year would pass between the abdication of the tsar and the necessity for Williams and his family to leave Russia. During that time he would witness the brief history of the Provisional Government, the ascendancy of Bolshevism, and Russia's withdrawal from the war. A contemporary of Williams offered the following evaluation of the journalist:

Williams began as an Englishman, a liberal and a lover of Russia with a fixed hypothesis: that the survival of free institutions in Europe depended on the victory of the Allies, and that the freedom of Russia depended on the establishment of Constitutional order. The two causes were bound together in the vigorous prosecution of the war by the Provisional Government with the Allies. He viewed with some amazement, some contempt and, I think, some indignation, the unstable attitude of the Allied Governments towards Russia: the long procession of delegations and special missions reproving the Provisional Government for its shortcomings, and flattering the Opposition on its sweet reasonableness, thereby impairing the authority of the one and exciting the pretensions of the other. The task was colossal; an exhausted Russia was asked to conduct a campaign on her western front, a Government without experience and prestige was asked to control a vast revolutionary propaganda.¹

With historical hindsight one might say that Williams's analysis of the task before the Provisional Government was insightful yet tragically flawed. As a British subject, Williams wanted a democratic Russia to remain in the war long enough to share victory with the Allies. He believed that this would bolster the reputation of the Provisional Government and the cause of democracy and constitutionalism in Russia. He assumed that for the Provisional Government to consolidate its hold over Russia and to put down the revolutionary opposition, it would have to continue fighting for the allied cause. It

¹ Cited from a letter to Tyrkova, who attributes the quote to an unnamed secretary to one of the chief British delegates recounting his meetings with Harold Williams during the summer of 1917. [Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 184-186.]

was not until after the Provisional Government had fallen that Williams would admit to his readers that Russia could no longer carry on a war effort.

Williams had expressed optimism for Russia's future in March 1917 but was concerned that extremists were a "cloud on the horizon."² In his report to Buchanan, Williams went much further and indicated the almost simultaneous emergence of two governments: the Provisional Government and the Soviet Council. Both represented diametrically opposed philosophies regarding Russia's future.³

During the time of uncertainty immediately preceding the tsar's abdication when both the Kadets and the socialists were expecting tsarist troops to crush the rebellion, Duma members formed a temporary committee to handle the crisis in the capital. It was out of this committee that the Provisional Government emerged. In a dispatch dated March 20, 1917, Williams applauded the effort of the Duma to create a government that included both liberals and moderate socialists. By doing so, he believed that the new government, though not elected, would nevertheless reflect public opinion and still be capable of constructive work.⁴ The government included Prince George Lvov (1861-1925) as prime minister, Kadet leader Paul Miliukov as minister of foreign affairs, Octobrist leader Alexander Guchkov as minister of war and navy, Michael Tereschenko (1884-1956) as minister of finance, and Labor leader Alexander Kerensky (1881-1970) as minister of justice. It soon became clear that Kerensky would be trying to use his position as a liaison with the Petrograd Soviet to make sure that no matter what happened

² "Russians Free to Speak and Work/Only Complication the Fanaticism of Socialist Extremists/Brotherliness Helps Discipline," dispatch dated Petrograd, March 18, *Daily Chronicle*, 21 March 1917, p. 3.

³ "Despatch From His Majesty's Ambassador At Petrograd," 462-463.

⁴ "Government Making in Russia," dispatch dated Petrograd, March 20, *Daily Chronicle*, 23 March 1917, p. 3.

he would be on the side of the victors in the revolution. Tyrkova bitterly recalled in *From Liberty to Brest-Litovsk* how Kerensky, speaking to soldiers outside the Tauride Palace, had exclaimed: "Now, then, the real masters will come with the Labour group!"⁵ Tyrkova and Williams both were familiar enough with socialist teaching to know that a constitutional democracy would be seen by someone like Kerensky as a mere phase on the path to a socialist republic. Yet the compromise to have him in the government was in part related to his position on the war. The socialists were by no means a unified body and to an extent tolerated differences of opinion within their ranks. It was important to have in the government a socialist who supported Russia's participation in the war, and Kerensky did. At the other end of the palace, however, his colleagues in the Soviet were composing what would become known as the infamous Order No. 1.⁶

The new government's main goals were the convocation of the long-awaited constituent assembly, the removal of restrictions on civil liberties, the democratization and strengthening of local government, and a broad political amnesty. Williams was impressed but not surprised at the character of the new government:

The wonderful new Russian Government is declaring the liberated will of the Russian people in a swift succession of startling edicts....It is right and magnanimous that when the Russian people came to its own and had its worst enemies in its power, it should abolish capital punishment, and thus put aside temptation to execute those who had wrought such infinite harm and suffering to the nation. It is a bold experiment, of course, and it may be foolish, but then the dangers of the opposite method have been tragically demonstrated. If you go on guillotining and guillotining without end and revolting the world with a reign of terror, you will be confronted

⁵ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *From Liberty to Brest-Litovsk*, 8.

⁶ Basically, Order No. 1 undermined the authority of the officers over their men by introducing the practice of democracy in the army by means of Soldiers' Soviets. The soldiers would recognize the authority of the Petrograd Soviet and would follow orders from the Provisional Government only if they did not contradict orders from the Soviet. When off duty, they would not salute officers and democratic forms of address such as "Mister General" replaced honorific titles for officers such as "Your Excellency". [See Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army: The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt (March-April 1917)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 187-188.]

with a strong reactionary and Royalist movement in no time. The new Russian and early Christian method of non-resistance gives you a strong moral authority that disarms opposition. The authority now being rapidly accumulated by the new Russian Government is absolutely distinct in quality from that wielded by the old. It is a moral authority, and makes its appeal in a peculiarly Russian way to the best moral instincts of the people.⁷

Williams proceeded to connect the Provisional Government's policies with "the spirit of the great classics of Russian literature – Turgenieff, Dostoievsky and Tolstoy."⁸ By doing so, he was once again returning to the romanticism and idealism that had first drawn him into the Russian conflict against despotism. He was convinced that the presence of tsarism had distorted the true character of the Russian people. Redemption through revolution, mercy to the enemy, the selfless refusal to seize power, and the determination to yield to the people's will expressed in a constituent assembly – all these appealed to Williams's sense of morality and democracy.

The Provisional Government's qualities were apparent to Williams but he quickly realized that its authority needed to be solidified in the face of the challenge offered by the Petrograd Soviet. To this end he wired his editor Robert Donald in London to ask British cultural and political leaders to write to the *Daily Chronicle* in support of the revolution and the new government. These letters would be simultaneously published in Russian newspapers to let the Russians know of the support they had from abroad. In addition, he asked Donald to look into the possibility of sending a delegation of British Labor leaders to the Soviet to show their solidarity with

⁷ "Liberated Russia/Capital Punishment Abolished/Criminals Who Appointed Their Own Militia," dispatch dated Petrograd, March 31, *Daily Chronicle*, 4 April 1917, p. 3.

⁸ Ibid.

the Russian socialists.⁹ In this way, Williams hoped to discourage the nationalist and isolationist tendencies that seemed to be gathering strength.

Robert Donald complied with the suggestions of his correspondent and published letters from such personalities as George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), and various members of parliament.¹⁰ Williams and Tyrkova translated them into Russian and had them published, but they provoked no response. Labor leaders from both Britain and France arrived in Russia by the end of April, but these efforts at shoring up allied friendship proved fruitless. By the time the Labor delegations arrived, they were greeted like “poor country cousins who understand nothing about revolutions.”¹¹ In Moscow, the delegates were actually reprimanded for their support of the war and the idea of “a fight to the finish.” Members of the Soviet in that city were already planning a meeting of international socialists in Stockholm to make peace over the heads of their governments.

Looking back years later, Tyrkova believed that the primary mistake of the Provisional Government was that it insisted on continuing the war but failed to disband the soviet councils and stop all talk about peace and the Stockholm conference.¹² The government chose instead to continue the war while being undermined at every turn by soviet propaganda. Tyrkova’s attitude contrasted greatly with her husband’s in 1917 and

⁹ Williams wired: “Private. Please urge Labour organizations of all kinds to telegraph Cheidze, Socialist leader of the Duma, also to the Soviet of Workmen’s and Soldiers’ Deputies, Petrograd, expressing enthusiastic sympathy and joy in freedom. Appeal for guarantees of freedom for Europe. Strongly support the new Government as having gained their own freedom in a furnace.” [Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 184.]

¹⁰ “Democracy’s Salute to Freed Russia/Striking Messages of Welcome from Well-Known Men and Women,” *Daily Chronicle*, 5 April 1917, p. 2.

¹¹ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 184

¹² The soviet councils during 1917 did not have a single party line but a variety of parties including Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, and anarchists. The strength of any one party varied

illustrates their two personalities. She did not have patience with politics. Though she was elected a member of the Kadet Central Committee, it was her husband, a foreigner, who was closer ideologically to the mainstream Kadets who dominated the Provisional Government and supported cooperation with the soviets. Yet, Tyrkova's proposal of disbanding the soviets was no more realistic than her husband's hope that somehow the righteousness of the Kadet's commitment to the Allies would sway Russian soldiers to remain in the battlefields despite soviet propaganda.

Harold Williams's faith in the Russian peasant soldier was probably reassuring to his readers, but other British journalists were more straightforward about the pending collapse of the Russian military machine. Any hope that the removal of the tsar would clear the path for the regeneration of the army was put to rest by Robert Wilton, Russian correspondent of the *London Times*. In an article published on March 19, 1917, Wilton described the Petrograd Soviet's "treasonable incendiary Order No. 1."¹³ Williams refrained from even mentioning the order in his telegrams until a week later when he could dismiss it as Kerensky reassured him that disorders in the army would soon end:

Last week's ridiculous manifesto, issued in the name of the Council of Workmen's Deputies, calling on the soldiers not to obey their officers, M. Kerensky sharply characterised as an act of provocation. There had been a few instances of grave disturbance of discipline, but the Minister was confident that this phase would soon pass, together with the other eccentricities. He declared: "The general effect of the liberation will, I am convinced, be to give an immense uplift to the spirit of the troops, and so to shorten the war. We are for iron discipline in working hours, but out of working hours we want the soldiers to feel they are also free men." British discipline is, in fact, the ideal.¹⁴

depending on local conditions. One unifying factor for the soviets was their mistrust and antagonism toward the moderate parties such as the Kadets.

¹³ Robert Wilton, "Difficulties of Duma Committee/Delay in Abdication," dispatch dated Petrograd, Thursday, 15 March 1917, *Times* (London), 19 March 1917, p. 9.

¹⁴ "An Interview with Kerensky," dispatch dated Petrograd, March 19, *Daily Chronicle*, 22 March 1917, p. 1.

Williams's reaction to Order No. 1 was simplistic and driven by emotions stirred in wartime. He minimized the validity of the grievances of the soldiers against their officers and did not note that the order contained a section specifically stating that while on duty military discipline was to be strictly observed. It was outside of duty that the soldiers were to enjoy all civil freedoms and not be required to salute or stand at attention for an officer.¹⁵

Williams was acutely sensitive to the volatile conditions in Russia, even if he wasn't always being candid about them in his telegrams to the *Daily Chronicle*. The compromise with the Soviet severely hindered the Provisional Government. No decision could be carried out without the consent of the Soviet but it was the Provisional Government and not the Soviet that was taking responsibility for its actions. Any mistake on the part of the Provisional Government played into the hands of the Soviet which saw itself as the true representative of the masses and defenders of the revolution.

The Provisional Government made the prosecution of the war the primary focus of its energies. It can be argued that under the circumstances it had little choice. The revolution was being threatened simultaneously from foreign and domestic forces. Like Williams, members of the Provisional Government hoped the foreign threat could serve as a rallying point for the nation. At first it appeared that their assessment was correct. There was support among many of the socialists, especially among the more moderate Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, for a continued prosecution of the war against Germany. This support was conditional and it would take a very skilled diplomat to handle the new government's foreign policy and still retain socialist support. That task

¹⁵ Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army, 182-188*.

fell to Miliukov as the new foreign minister, and Williams lost no time in trying to warn him about the dangers ahead. Williams knew Miliukov well enough to expect that he was not likely to abandon the old claims the tsars traditionally held on such foreign territory as Constantinople. An aggressive foreign policy so like that of the old regime would only prove to the socialists that the Provisional Government was made up of “imperialists” just like its predecessor. Bernard Pares described Williams’s visit to Miliukov which likely took place on March 17th when Williams interviewed the new foreign minister:

Almost as soon as Milyukov was in power, Harold Williams visited him and urged that at present he should not talk about Constantinople, the annexation of which to Russia was now among the official war aims of the Allies, and had been played as the last card of the Tsar’s Government just before the Revolution, when it was received with almost complete indifference. Milyukov quite agreed that this was unsuitable, but made a vigorous speech on the subject almost the next day.¹⁶

By trying to intervene, Williams was becoming, in spite of himself, a participant in Russian politics. It was to no avail. Miliukov failed to heed the warning and continued to provoke the Petrograd Soviet which had given support to the continued prosecution of the war only on the condition that it was being fought to defend the revolution. The Soviet had adopted and popularized the slogan “peace without annexations or indemnities.” In April the Provisional Government conceded to the Soviet’s demand for a clarification of war aims; it tentatively supported the Soviet’s stance, but Miliukov complicated the situation with two serious indiscretions. The *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, Morgan Philips Price (1885-1973), had an interview with the foreign

¹⁶ Bernard Pares, *My Russian Memoirs* (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 1931), 434-435.

minister during which Miliukov made it clear that Russia still coveted Constantinople and the Straits:

Asked how the declaration of the Provisional Government last week would affect the question of Constantinople and the Straits the Minister replied: 'If neutralisation means freedom for the trade of all nations through the Straits Russia will agree. She must, however, insist on the right to close the Straits to foreign warships, and this is not possible unless she possesses the Straits and fortifies them.'¹⁷

Price, who would later become a leading Labor member of Parliament, had been a correspondent for the *Guardian* from the outbreak of the war and shared with his editor a skepticism about the war aims of the Allies. He was already displaying in his articles a preference for the Petrograd Soviet over the Provisional Government. Price had hailed the Soviet for repudiating Russia's claims on foreign territories and successfully pressuring the government into doing the same. He was understandably shocked when Miliukov seemed to casually dismiss his government's previous statements and the compromise with the Soviet. Miliukov made matters worse by insisting that a note of explanation be sent to the Allies to assure them that Russia would fulfill its obligations and agreements previously made with the allied governments. The Provisional Government, including Kerensky, approved Miliukov's note which was made public on May 3rd and soon became symbolic of Russia's continuing determination to pursue imperialist goals.¹⁸

The Soviet's reaction was to organize supposedly peaceful protests against Miliukov. Before long there were over 25,000 soldiers and workers in the streets, not

¹⁷ Morgan Philips Price, "Russian Control of the Straits/Declaration by M. Milyukoff/Austria and Peace," dispatch dated Moscow, Sunday (probably 22 April 1917), *Manchester Guardian*, 26 April 1917, p. 5.

¹⁸ The note did not mention honoring any secret treaties the tsarist government had made, but this was presumably understood. [See Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 381.]

only calling for the resignation of Miliukov but for the overthrow of the Provisional Government itself. Leaders of the various socialist parties represented in the Soviet, including the Bolsheviks, were unprepared for the vehemence of the demonstrations and actually found themselves trying to dissuade the crowds from prematurely causing the collapse of a government they had characterized as “bourgeois” and “imperialistic”.

The controversy caused a reorganization of the Provisional Government and the resignation of both Miliukov as foreign minister and Guchkov as minister of war. After an impassioned plea from Kerensky, the Soviet revised its former ruling that no socialist should partake in the government alongside liberals and capitalists. A new coalition government was formed that included representatives of the moderate socialists from the Soviet and would be unofficially led by Kerensky who replaced Guchkov as minister of war.

Before the first cabinet of the Provisional Government left office, it issued a statement that expressed its bitterness, disappointment, and fears:

As the basis of political administration the Provisional Government has chosen not violence or compulsion, but the voluntary subordination of free citizens to the government they themselves created. It seeks support not in physical but in moral force. ... The elemental urge of individual groups and elements of the population, as represented by the politically least intelligent and least organized of these elements, to achieve their desires and obtain satisfaction of their demands by methods of direct action and seizure threatens to destroy internal unity and discipline and to create fertile ground for acts of violence stimulating hostility to the new order... There rises before Russia the terrible vision of civil war and anarchy which will destroy liberty.¹⁹

¹⁹ Quoted in William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921: Volume I*, 149. Chamberlin commented that the statement would also hold true for the coalition government that followed. “It would” he wrote, “indeed have held true for any government which was unwilling or unable to use ruthless repressive force in the country with the traditions of Ivan the Terrible and Emilian Pugachev.”

Harold Williams had left Petrograd before the Miliukov crisis, presumably for health reasons, and the *Chronicle* dispatches were assigned to a special correspondent (unidentified) until Williams returned to Petrograd at the end of May 1917. It was his replacement who reported Prime Minister Lvov's letter to Nicholas Chkheidze (1864-1926), the president of the Petrograd Soviet.²⁰ In the letter, Lvov urged Chkheidze to "consider the question of adding to the Government more representatives of the Socialist parties, and thus forming a Coalition Ministry."²¹

After much debate, the Soviet agreed to a coalition and the editor of the *Chronicle* welcomed the change:

Englishmen, and above all, English Liberals, have no idea of arrogating any claim to tell Russians how to settle their affairs. Our Allies must and will manage their own household in their own way. At the same time, since Russian liberty is the most recent in the world and English liberty the oldest, we may perhaps be allowed to recall certain lessons of English experience. We welcome the news that the Executive Committee of the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies has now decided to take part in the Government. That should end a dualism, whose prolongation

²⁰ The 17 May 1917 issue of the *Daily Chronicle* contains an interview with Chkheidze by a "Special Correspondent" who described him as "the most powerful man to-day in Russia." The writer warned:

It is a dangerous policy to dismiss the Russian Socialist as a dreamer, or to lament, as is done in some quarters here, that the people of Russia have fallen victims to the sentimental idealism of Tolstoy. We must be very careful how we speak of these Russian Socialists. Do not let us in our natural annoyance say one word which will make the Russian Socialist think that we are Prussian-minded. He is like to be the firmest ally in the future of all those who desire the lasting peace of the world. Let us at least try to perceive that it is a virtue in him that he should desire to achieve by conference that which others believe can only be achieved by slaughter. Rightly or wrongly (who shall say?) he trusts German democracy. He believes that the Germans themselves will destroy Kaiserism. He is not, believe me, false to our ideals in this war. The trouble that he causes springs only from the fact that he hungers and thirsts with all the force of his idealism to get what we want by reason and not by force. We may think him wrong. But do not let us cease to admire him. ["M. Tscheidze/The World Ideals of Russian Socialism," *Daily Chronicle*, 17 May 1917, p. 2.]

²¹ Unidentified correspondent, "Russians for Peace Conference/New Plan of Workmen and Soldiers/Grave Speeches in the Duma," dispatch dated Petrograd, May 11, *Daily Chronicle*, 12 May 1917, p. 3. In a later dispatch the correspondent wrote that the Petrograd Soviet had felt "it was impossible to work hand in hand with Ministers they were unable to trust....It is now realised, however, that the formation of a Coalition Government is the sole means of saving the situation. It is no longer admissible that those in whose hands power lies should not share the burden of responsibility." ["Saving the Situation/Trust in Statesmanship of New Ministers," dispatch dated Petrograd, May 15, *Daily Chronicle*, 17 May 1917, p. 3.]

could scarcely conduce either to the efficiency or to the responsibility of Russian statesmanship. We hope that a more effective unity of the nation will be reflected in the moral[sic] of the Army, which is the nation's mirror and counterpart, as well as the guardian of its honour and its future.²²

The new cabinet that emerged from the crisis retained Prince Lvov as prime minister and minister of the interior, but he refused to accept the additional burden of the foreign ministry portfolio saying that he did not feel qualified for the task. The cabinet ultimately contained six socialists and ten non-socialists, reflecting a more balanced cross section of Russian political life at the time than its predecessor.

The *Daily Chronicle* closely followed Kerensky as he began touring the front in an attempt to restore army discipline and morale. Numerous dispatches from both its own correspondent and Reuters news agency quoted Kerensky's rousing speeches and began to build his image as the savior of Russia and the revolution. In a dispatch following his return to Petrograd, Williams reported on the pessimistic speeches that the various socialist ministers gave when reporting on the tasks ahead of them. He believed this was a "hopeful sign" and that the inclusion of members of the Soviet in the government had "a sobering effect" on the parties of the left.²³ He observed:

The holiday of the revolution is over. Catchwords and facile panaceas are losing their power. Sheer facts – the bitter and obvious facts of disintegration and disorganisation – speak to the masses more loudly now than the most enticing promises of the headiest and most strong-lunged orators. The very fact that the state of the country is so confessedly and obviously bad is a pledge of improvement. M. Kerensky has gone to the front and is making impassioned appeals for an advance to the troops, who respond by enthusiastic cheers. The tide in the Army is turning in favour of discipline and effort. Members of the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies, who in the early stage of the revolution drew up orders

²² "Freedom and Discipline in Russia," editorial, *Daily Chronicle*, 16 May 1917, p.2.

²³ "The Tide Turning/Soldiers Hear Kerensky's Appeals with Enthusiasm," dispatch dated Petrograd, May 29, *Daily Chronicle*, 31 May 1917, p. 1.

threatening the complete destruction of discipline, have gone to the front to condemn fraternising with the Germans, and to screw the Army up to fighting pitch.²⁴

In this same dispatch, Williams mentioned the “extreme Socialists – Lenin, Trotsky, and their fellows....” The Bolsheviks (also known as Maximalists to contemporary Western observers) had voted against the idea of a coalition government while the more moderate socialists, including their former colleagues the Mensheviks, had agreed to work alongside the Kadets. Williams characterized Bolshevik behavior as “destructive” and reported that they “were now engaged in a violent campaign against the Socialist members of the Government.”²⁵ At issue were fundamental differences regarding the expected course of the revolution. The Mensheviks and most Bolsheviks believed that a “bourgeois stage” complete with parliamentary democracy and capitalism would necessarily precede the socialist revolution. Lenin [orig. Vladimir Ulianov (1870-1924), who had returned to Russia from exile in April, immediately began promoting his “April Theses” in which he theorized that in Russia the bourgeoisie was too weak to maintain control of the revolution.²⁶ Out of necessity, the revolution would have to be completed by the proletariat. He was already moving beyond the March Revolution to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Shortly after Lenin’s arrival, a meeting of Social Democrats convened with the intention of reuniting the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions. Lenin addressed the assembly putting forth his new theories and calling for a second revolution to put the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Yuli Martov, a left wing Menshevik leader, had arranged a deal with the Germans to secure safe passage back to Russia for Lenin and other Bolshevik exiles in exchange for German citizens interned in Russia. The Provisional Government was not in favor of negotiating with the Germans and especially not for the benefit of the Bolsheviks. The Germans agreed to send them anyway and to help finance their activities. [Orlando Figes, *A People’s Tragedy*, 385-387.]

soviets in power. The Mensheviks and many Bolsheviks were shocked by the proposal on both political and practical grounds and the meeting ended in pandemonium.

Afterwards, the Menshevik Skobelev had assured a concerned Prince Lvov that the returning exile was out of touch with the conditions in Russia and a “has-been.”²⁷

Miliukov, who had opposed vehemently the attempt to return Lenin to Russia by means of negotiating with the enemy and on political grounds, nevertheless had refused to have the man arrested for publicly advocating the overthrow of the Provisional Government.²⁸

Harold Williams took a wait-and-see attitude on the question. Tyrkova, on the other hand, had her own reasons for not trusting Lenin. The lives of Tyrkova and Lenin as revolutionaries were interwoven. Both had brothers who took part in the earlier revolutionary movement that glorified individual terrorism. Lenin’s older brother Alexander was arrested for conspiring to murder Tsar Alexander III and executed for his part in the plot; Tyrkova’s older brother Adya was implicated in the same plot and sentenced to twenty years of hard labor in Siberia. His life was spared only because his parents were influential enough to make a successful plea for mercy. He was twenty at the time and returned from exile disillusioned with the idealism that had led him to take part in the crime. He would stay out of politics except to make fun of the political speeches of the new revolutionaries, including those of his sister. Tyrkova and Lenin thus shared their hostility toward tsarism and were bitter at the impact it had on their

²⁷ Ibid., 388.

²⁸ At a meeting of the Kadets, Miliukov had to defend the government’s inaction with the explanation, “We cannot deal with our opponents by Tsarist methods.” A journalist Izgoev, himself a former Marxist, replied, “Well, then Lenin will show you that he will not boggle at methods. There will be bloodshed, great bloodshed.” In her account of the incident, Tyrkova noted that the others present thought the journalist “a clever man talking such nonsense.” [Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 183.]

respective families, but they developed very different solutions for Russia's political problems.

Tyrkova's family was of the landowning gentry who had owned serfs prior to the emancipation in 1861. She became connected to the revolutionary movement first through her older brother and later as a student at Princess Obolenskii's School for Women. It was there that she became friends with Lenin's future wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya (1869-1939). That friendship was strained when Krupskaya became a Marxist and married Lenin, who was then known as Vladimir Ulianov. The last time Tyrkova visited the Ulianovs was during their political exile in Geneva. An otherwise amicable social visit ended with Tyrkova and Lenin arguing and Lenin promising to hang liberal bourgeoisie like herself once the dictatorship of the proletariat had become a reality.²⁹

Lenin became an ardent Marxist, which by itself was enough to put him on opposite sides of the political debate with Russian liberals like Tyrkova. By 1917, imprisonment, exile, and the war had hardened his views, making the implementation of Marxist communism more urgent, even if it seemed unlikely to happen within his lifetime.³⁰

Like many revolutionaries who had struggled against autocracy in vain for years, Lenin did not foresee the success of the March Revolution. Once in Russia again, he found that the rising strength of the soviets compared with the fragility of the Provisional Government provided an opportunity that was tempting. His demand for the seizure of power by the soviets – though seemingly premature – was in line with the mood of the

²⁹ Ibid., 188-190.

³⁰ Williams mistrusted the Bolshevik leader in principle only until his own experiences after the fall of the Provisional Government would cause him to write vehemently against Lenin.

more radical workers and soldiers of Petrograd. Yet his own party had to be convinced of its feasibility and then the Soviet itself. In April the Bolsheviks were still a minority in the Petrograd Soviet. In May the Soviet was unwilling to topple the Provisional Government, but only with great reluctance were they willing to allow some of their members to form the coalition with the liberals. Mass agitation against the coalition and the war it was determined to continue was Lenin's solution for the time being. Lenin compromised his original position to the extent that he openly condemned the attempt to bring down the Provisional Government during the Miliukov crisis. As quoted, he actually seemed more disturbed that the violent demonstrations represented a breach in party discipline:

The slogan 'Down with the Provisional Government' was adventurous. To overthrow that government now was impermissible, therefore we gave out the slogan of peaceful demonstrations. We desired to carry out only a peaceful reconnaissance of the forces of the enemy, but not to give battle, and the Petrograd Party Committee took a position a little more to the left, which, under the circumstances, is a grave offense.³¹

The city and populace lacked the discipline that both Lenin and Williams prized as the key to effective action. Both craved a "New Russia." Early in June, Williams described Petrograd in one of his local color mood pieces, and the picture of the city that emerges is in striking contrast to the one he described in his pre-war book, *Russia of the Russians*:

It is difficult to grow accustomed to the new Petrograd. The character of the city has changed. Once stiff, taciturn, and rather morose, it has suddenly become loquacious and noisy. The hum of argument never ceases day or night. Hundred-tongued rumour is the field of a battle royal. Politics pursue one everywhere. You cannot buy a hat or a packet of cigarettes or ride in a cab without being enticed into a political discussion.

³¹ "Sketches of the History of the October Revolution," quoted in William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921: Volume I*, 146.

The servants and house porters demand advice as to which party they should vote for in the ward elections. Every wall in the town is placarded with notices of meetings, lectures, congresses, and electoral appeals, and announcements, not only in Russian, but in Polish, Lithuanian, Yiddish, and Hebrew. Meetings are crowded, and who does not speak at meetings now? There are ministers, workmen, returned exiles, soldiers, officers, students, escaped prisoners of war, cripples, sailors, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Serbs, Belgians, Italians, Americans. There is fierce argument between the parties, violent applause, violent hissing. The battle of the meetings flows over into the unceasing buzz and murmur and perpetual cut and thrust of the streets and the trams and the workshops and the barracks. Two men argue at a street corner and are at once surrounded by an excited crowd. Even at concerts now the music is diluted with political speeches by well-known orators....Newsboys used to carry papers in a bag. Now there are so many papers and such a demand for them that the hawkers have had to improvise stalls at the street-corners, and one may pause there and watch the play of political sympathies and antipathies as the hard-faced young workman buys the Maximalist "Pravda," or the dreamy student buys the Radical "Den," or some stout, elderly gentleman buys the "Novoe Vremya" with a melancholy air of resignation. I have been absent from Petrograd for a time, and listening to the talk in the streets I notice a change. The frank joy of the early state of the Revolution has given place to bitter party strife, and growing resentment against the extremists and disturbers of order. The desire for order is becoming a passion with the crowd, and the national instinct, at first baffled and stunned by the vehement outcry of preachers of immediate social revolution, is beginning to reassert itself. I sometimes begin to fear the reaction may be too violent.³²

Williams brilliantly sketched the stereotypical characters of the revolution, but his assessment of what the "crowd" wanted is questionable. Their various political stances as illustrated in this article would favor very different outcomes for the revolution. For some, like the workman, the revolution had not gone far enough to improve his life and working conditions. Such a person in the crowd would not want order to come too soon and under a government too closely resembling the old regime. The more conservative

³² "New Petrograd/Growing Desire for Order/Public Opinion in the Making," dispatch dated Petrograd, June 8, *Daily Chronicle*, 11 June 1917, p. 3.

elderly gentleman might be distressed by the uncertainty and the lawlessness that was taking place, but what price was he willing to pay for order? Williams clearly wanted the conservative element to prevail but feared its excesses.

The dispatches that Williams sent to the *Chronicle* in the weeks following his return constantly focused on issues of authority and order, a return to discipline, not just in the army but among the civilians in their everyday life. The new coalition government made him cautiously hopeful that the tide was turning in favor of a normalization of life, but the challenges were tremendous and Williams did not choose to minimize them for his readers.

One of the first crises facing the coalition government was the uprising of the sailors at Kronstadt. The Bolsheviks had been steadily gaining supporters on the naval base, but their control over the actions of their followers was far from complete. They had popularized the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" and their adherents were eager to bring about this transition. When the Bolshevik leaders, including Lenin, urged patience and restraint, the rank-and-file Bolsheviks tended to take matters into their own hands by staging public armed demonstrations without the permission of either the Petrograd Soviet or the Bolshevik leaders. This was the case in May during the Miliukov crisis and it happened again in June during the Kronstadt uprising. The local Kronstadt Soviet declared its independence and refused to acknowledge the authority of the Provisional Government.

Williams did not delve into the reasons for the Kronstadt revolt in his articles that appeared in the June 8th and June 12th editions of the *Chronicle*. If he had actually investigated the uprising further he might have recognized some of his early ideals and

thoughts on government in the demands of the mutineers. Their desire for a loosely formed government was much more in line with the thinking of the New Zealand Williams than the wartime Williams. Instead, using the incident to underscore the need for restraint and discipline, Williams wrote:

On Saturday morning the Provisional Government issued a strongly worded order for submission, and this firm display of authority, supported energetically and without reserve by the Petrograd Council, has had a greatly needed bracing effect here, whatever the result may be in Kronstadt. So far the country has hardly had an opportunity to realise that the humane and amiable men who form the Russian Executive are actually a Government. The Kronstadt incident is both stupid and dangerous, but it is a good test case, and if the government is able to act firmly here, it means that the principle of authority is beginning to take root in revolutionary Russia. The very fact that the Government feels itself able to adopt a stern tone, and that it received complete support from the Council of Delegates is a recognition of the definite trend of public opinion. Public sentiment, for all its chaotic character, does most obviously – apart from a small but noisy minority – demand one thing, and that is authority and order.³³

Williams here confirms his own desire for order. He shared this sentiment with the propertied classes and the foreign population. During the spring and summer of 1917, the peasants proved unwilling to wait for a constituent assembly to work out a reform bill that would redistribute the land. Constant reports came in to the Provisional Government of peasants seizing the manor houses and land of the gentry, workers seizing factories either to exert “workers’ control” or to wreck the equipment, and soldiers deserting the army. Slogans like “Peace, Land, Bread!” echoed rather than created the demands of the lower classes.

Increasingly the political revolution seemed to be degenerating into a violent social revolution that exacerbated class tensions. The Kadets, whose main support came

³³ “Kronstadt Comedy Not Played Out/Test of Authority in Russia/Sailors’ Threat to Sail Up the Neva,” dispatch dated Petrograd, June 10, *Daily Chronicle*, 12 June 1917, p. 3.

from small property owners, businessmen, and professionals, no longer were the moderates in the government. They became the party of Russian nationalism and tradition, supporting the war without reservation and trying to preserve the Russia they had known under the old regime in every way except tsarism. In revolutionary Russia, they were on the right. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries who were still holding on to their majorities in the Petrograd Soviet and most soviets throughout Russia assumed the unaccustomed role of moderates. On their left were Williams's "extremists" – the Bolsheviks and anarchists.

The moderate socialist ministers of the coalition cabinet were in the unenviable position of trying to tame the very forces that they had helped to awaken in the industrial workers, peasantry, and the army. Williams pointed out their ironic position in several articles, but he was always sympathetic to their plight. He continued to blame tsarism for the political inexperience of Russia's citizenry. The moderate socialists who were taking over responsibility for running the country in the areas of labor relations, agriculture, economic stability, and the state of the army, were putting their credibility and, in some cases, their lives in jeopardy.

Kerensky was making a valiant effort to reclaim the army from its malaise and to restore a sense of pride in the soldiers that would reflect well on the revolution. The government was already planning a dramatic offensive for the summer. If successful, a victory would create a new Russian nationalism based on the achievements of the Russian people, not the tsar. To that end, Kerensky needed soldiers and officers who welcomed the revolution rather than resented it. When General Michael Alexeev (1857-1918) resigned as commander-in-chief of the army out of frustration, Kerensky appointed

General Alexis Brusilov (1853-1926) primarily because he was one of the very few officers left who actually believed that the army could continue the war. Kerensky tried to win over the other officers by restoring their authority and revising the Soldier's Bill of Rights that had earlier undermined it. Members of the Petrograd Soviet including Nicholas Sokolov (1870-1928), the author of Order No. 1, went to the front to plead with the soldiers to respect their officers and work together to win the war.³⁴ They found themselves often facing hostile and extremely violent crowds.

Kerensky, at least, was usually well received and it was his success that Williams and the *Daily Chronicle* focused on. Yet, the rousing speeches of Kerensky were soon forgotten once the realities of war conditions were felt again. Despite efforts to better equip the army with supplies and ammunition, the Provisional Government failed to convince the common soldiers that they were fighting for the Russian Revolution and not for British, French, or by this time, American imperialism. Propaganda from the Bolsheviks, the half-hearted commitment of the moderate socialists to the war, and rumors that the land distribution had already begun all conspired to convince soldiers that it was time to go back home. The flood of deserters did not stop just because Kerensky and the rest of the Provisional Government wanted a major victorious offensive that would redeem the reputation of Russia's fighting power.

Williams was becoming increasingly concerned with the growth of the Bolshevik influence, not just in the army but in the cities, especially Petrograd. He used the expulsion from Russia of the Swiss socialist Robert Grimm as an opportunity to give his

³⁴ Allan K. Wildman described Sokolov's role as more scribe than author. Sokolov, who had some legal training, had drafted the document based on suggestions from numerous soldiers in a very heated meeting. [See Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, 182-188.]

readers an evaluation of the coming crisis between Russia's moderate and extremist socialists. Grimm had been instrumental in helping secure for Lenin the permission and means of returning to Russia.

The Russian ship of State is pitching and tossing in a heavy sea, and the band keep[s] a footing on the decks. Yet if only the wreckers are exposed and places feared along the coast are avoided, there is hope of the ship coming safely to port....Tseretelli and Skobeleff, the two Socialist Ministers, who took Grimm in hand and ordered his expulsion, will be virulently attacked for it by Lenin and his followers, but in any case a sharp conflict between the extremist and moderate Socialists had to come, and it is necessary that the issue should be made clear. It is an issue between destruction and reconstruction, whether in German interests or in the interests of an incredibly insane theory is a matter of individual character and temperament. Lenin himself probably does not consider himself a German agent. He loves neither Russia nor Germany, and there has never been a rumour that he loves anyone or anything. He is a man of peculiarly unpleasant character, and he considers no means immoral which conduce to his end, the end being the destruction of existing order in Europe and the dictatorial enforcement on the ruined and decrepit populations of what he conceives to be Socialism. Which country is the first ruined in realisation of this mad dream is apparently all one to Lenin, whether his own Russia, or England, or Germany. It is remarkable, considering the enormous activity of the Leninites and the ignorance of the Russian populace, that their influence is not greater than it is. But a violent reaction against them is growing, and the fact that the Government has taken a firm stand on the very sore question of Grimm is a sign that a crisis in the struggle with the Leninite German propaganda is close at hand.³⁵

Williams sent this dispatch only days before the Bolsheviks called for a huge street demonstration to take place on June 23rd. Even though the demonstration was intended to be a peaceful show of force, emotions in the streets were heightened and the soldiers were unlikely to be persuaded to leave their weapons behind. As always there was a potential for any demonstration to become violent. The Petrograd Soviet, still dominated by moderate socialists, learned of the demonstration the day before it was to take place

³⁵ "Grimm in Russia/ In Close Association with the Lenin Group," undated dispatch from Petrograd with note "Received yesterday", *Daily Chronicle*, 20 June 1917, p. 1.

and refused to permit it. Hoping to dissipate the tension, the All-Russian Soviet Congress which had convened in Petrograd on June 16th passed a resolution forbidding street demonstrations for three days and described any violator as “an enemy of the Revolution.”³⁶ Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks who were still committed to trying to work with the coalition Provisional Government dominated this congress which was based on elections conducted throughout Russia, not just in the powder-keg that the capital had become. Faced with such opposition, the Bolshevik leadership backed down from its original plans and retracted its call for the demonstration. Yet, before a month had passed, the crisis averted on June 22-23 would have to be faced by all involved.

In his analysis of the crisis, Williams wrote that “the air is still palpitating with bitter recrimination, and the Leninites, now angry, surly, and evasive, are driven into a corner.”³⁷ He described the efforts of the Council of Workmens’ and Soldiers’ Delegates to maintain order as “herculean” and the plans of the Bolsheviks and anarchists to seize power on behalf of the soviets as “pure undiluted mischief, an unscrupulous attempt to wreck the last hope of reconstruction in Russia.” Williams did his best to use the incident to describe the shifting currents in the Russian political world of 1917. Even though the first Provisional Government was closer ideologically to his own liberalism, the crisis solidified his belief that the coalition with the moderate socialists was for the best and that Lenin was not to be trusted.

The action of the Congress was a fine piece of work. The Council of Delegates rose splendidly to the occasion and displayed great courage and energy in support of order and good government. The experiment of including Socialists in the Government has been justified. The real Socialists have rapidly learned the lessons of responsibility, and not only

³⁶ William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921: Volume I*, 161-162.

³⁷ “Russia’s Time of Crisis/Unfailing Patience of the People/Leninite Coup that was Baulked,” dispatch dated Petrograd, June 23, *Daily Chronicle*, 28 June 1917, p. 3.

Kerensky but Tseretelli has proved a champion of democratic government against anarchy. The crisis has had this good effect, that it has created a wide chasm between the bulk of the Socialists and the Leninites, whose criminal action has placed them in the position of outlaws. The Russian people show miraculous patience in the face of trials that would have driven any other people in the world into frenzy. And in that patience, and all it implies, lies the one hope for the future.³⁸

Williams was sensitive to the dilemmas facing the moderate Russian socialists of the time. As with the Kadets, groups like the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks were making a transition between being a part of the opposition to becoming a part of the government. It was difficult for them to separate themselves from their former allies in the struggle against tsarism. Disagreements over theories that would not be put into practice for many years to come, if ever, were now defining firing lines in a battle to shape the course of the revolution.

Williams stressed for his readers the relevance of Russia's political leadership mainly in relation to the allied war effort. He described the Bolsheviks as "urging a fantastic separate revolutionary war" and advocating "the annulment of all annexations ever effected by any great Power."³⁹ In contrast, "Russian Socialists have grown more sensitive to realities, and while firmly maintaining their principles are taking a stand against fantastic and adventurous schemes."⁴⁰ Their desire for peace, Williams reassured his readers, was not to be misinterpreted as an excuse to relax Russia's war effort.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ "Russians Wish Peace, But Will Fight/Changed Attitude of Mass of Socialists/No Fantastic Schemes," dispatch dated Petrograd, June 26, *Daily Chronicle*, 29 June 1917, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Rumors of the timing of a major Russian offensive were already appearing in the *Chronicle* on June 29th directly below Williams's dispatch. The paper for July 3, 1917 ran the headline: BRUSILOFF'S MAGNIFICENT OPENING TO THE NEW OFFENSIVE. RUSSIANS TAKE OVER 10,000 PRISONERS. The offensive in Galicia, editor Robert Donald was proud to point out, had begun on July 1st of the Western calendar and marked "the anniversary of the Anglo-French offensive on the Somme."⁴¹ The offensive was the result of a formal agreement with the Allies but "none of us underrates the immense obstacles which the subsequent disorganisation of Russia put in the way of her redeeming her pledge this year." Donald applauded the efforts of the Russian people, the generals, and soldiers but mostly credited Kerensky for his "stirring appeal to the armies on the eve of the offensive...."⁴² The headlines hid the struggle that was taking place behind the lines. The dispatches from Williams, however, did not. He described the breaking story as "good news", but it is clear that his focus had shifted to the problem of the "Leninites":

During the past week there has been growing restiveness in Petrograd. The Leninites, as though determined to prevent a final return to stability, have developed a particularly violent agitation among the workers and soldiers. Their original plan of carrying out an armed demonstration was frustrated by the resolute efforts of the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates, but the Council, feeling it necessary to provide a safety valve for the heated feeling of the masses, decided to organise a peaceful demonstration, which came off yesterday, as already reported.... The demonstration was not so large as might have been expected, but there was some danger that the display of the increased influence of the Leninites over the masses might cause the Congress of Councils of Workmen and Soldiers, now in session here, to waver in its support of the Provisional Government. The news of the beginning of the successful

⁴¹ "Russia's Offensive," editorial, *Daily Chronicle*, 3 July 1917, p. 2.

⁴² Ibid.

offensive, however, has come in time, and it is to be expected that the tide will now turn.⁴³

In a later dispatch, Williams described the atmosphere in Petrograd as “suddenly changed.” His description of a meeting held in front of Kazan Cathedral contains haunting images that remind the reader of his original dispatch describing the city’s first reaction to the tsar’s war declaration:

Cheering crowds thronged the Nevsky and rapidly formed processions, which swelled in numbers and enthusiasm as they marched, to demonstrate admiration for the fighting army, loyalty to the Provisional Government, and loyalty to the Allies. A great meeting was held in the afternoon before the Kazan Cathedral. The Social Democrat leader Plekhanoff made a speech, calling for support for the army, and just as he had finished the doors of the cathedral opened and the clergy came out to bless the people and pray for victory. The people, who had at first been singing revolutionary songs, gave voice to the solemn music of a Psalm, and falling on their knees chanted eternal memory to the soldiers who had fallen in the first offensive of the revolutionary army.⁴⁴

Before the offensive, Williams had described Lenin and his followers as agents of Germany by circumstance but not intention.⁴⁵ Now as the army advanced, he began to see the influence of German propaganda and intrigue in a variety of issues facing the Provisional Government. His dispatches appearing in the *Chronicle* during this period contain his own answers to those he saw threatening Russia’s stability:

Galicia and Petrograd, the two battlefields are closely linked, and success in one determines success in the other. Russia now is fighting for existence on the two fronts, and connection between the two fronts is shown by the Austrians’ peculiar method of repelling the Russian advance by dropping from aeroplanes a shower of proclamations assuring the

⁴³ “Victory Changes Petrograd’s Tone,” dispatch dated Petrograd, July 2, *Daily Chronicle*, 4 July 1917, p. 1.

⁴⁴ “Russia’s Hour of Hope/Thrill of Patriotic Fervour in Petrograd and Along Front,” dispatch dated Petrograd, July 3, *Daily Chronicle*, 5 July 1917, p. 1.

⁴⁵ “Grimm in Russia/In Close Association with the Lenin Group,” undated dispatch from Petrograd with note “Received yesterday,” *Daily Chronicle*, 20 June 1917, p. 1.

Russian soldiers that Kerensky's call for an offensive is not authorised by the Provisional Government and the Workmen's and Soldiers' Council....Meanwhile German agents and their friends here are not slumbering. The Leninites, silenced for the moment by the first shock of the offensive, are rallying for a fresh attack. There is no need to fear. The offensive is a more powerful stimulant than the lying agitation of the Leninites. There may be disturbances, but the successful effort at the front is a guarantee of success in Petrograd.⁴⁶

The coalition government and its enemies sensed the connection between the two battlefields as well. Williams perceived the attacks on the government as coming from both the extremists and foreign forces. On its behalf, he grew impatient with those who seemed to be taking advantage of Russia at the very moment it was so valiantly trying to establish itself as a democracy and as a loyal ally. His criticism of foreign powers was not limited to Russia's wartime enemies. It included nationalities formerly a part of the tsarist empire who chose to assert their independence at this time. Of particular concern were Finland and the Ukraine.

Williams had always expressed sympathy for the plight of subjected nationalities under the tsarist regime. He wrote a series of articles on the Poles, Finns, and the Ukrainians while he was with the *Manchester Guardian*, but his attitude changed when the Provisional Government came into power. By July he felt compelled to write on the subject again:

The case of Finland is peculiarly regrettable to the friends of Finnish freedom. The generous action of the Revolutionary Government in making it its first care completely to restore Finnish constitutional liberties has not met in Finland with anything like adequate response. There are historical reasons for this. Finland throughout the period of her union with Russia has held aloof from the Russian people, and has resolutely turned her eyes to the West and ignored the East. This aloofness acquired a strong tinge of hostility during the last 20 years of oppression under the old régime. This hostility has not disappeared; it has become rather more

⁴⁶ "Galicia and Petrograd Battlefields," dispatch dated Petrograd, Wednesday (probably 4 July 1917), *Daily Chronicle*, 10 July 1917, p. 1.

insistent since the liberation of Finland. Inveterate ignorance of Russia, aggravated by indiscriminate hostility to Russia, is the chief explanation of the complete lack of wise generosity displayed by Finland in its dealings with the Provisional Government and the revolutionary Russian people.... The Finnish Socialist party has put forward a demand for the complete separation of Finland from Russia.... The Russian Government objects that it has no right to agree to such a radical change in the constitution without the authority of a Russian constituent Assembly, and in the meantime relations between the two peoples are growing more strained.... The whole position is extremely unfortunate, because the Finns, by their own shortsightedness, are damaging their own interests and harming the cause of the small nationalities. The Finns, however their Constitution may ultimately shape itself, will always be neighbours of the Russian people. A little patience, a little sympathy, a little generosity now would have proved directly profitable to the Finns in the long run, whereas their present policy is sowing seeds of bitterness and suspicion that will render the task of mutual adjustment far more difficult in future. Those who warmly sympathise with both peoples cannot but deeply regret the present misunderstanding.⁴⁷

While there were similarities between the cases of Finland and the Ukraine, Williams wrote another dispatch the next week regarding "Little Russia" that hinted at the troubles the nationality issue was causing within the coalition government:

There is probably a certain German tinge in the present Ukrainian movement in Russia, but this is not the predominant feature. The sudden increase in the movement is due mainly to economic reasons. The Ukraine is the richest part of Russia; the Ukrainians hold to the principle of private ownership, and are apparently afraid of their lands being "pooled" in the general national fund under some scheme of land nationalisation in the Constituent Assembly.... The Ukraine Council demanded that the Provisional Government should immediately recognise a far-reaching scheme of Ukrainian autonomy. This the Provisional Government refused to do, on the ground that it could not usurp the prerogatives of the Constituent Assembly.... Appeals from the Provisional Government had no effect, and defiance of the central authority reached a point that seemed likely to imperil the unity of the State, and Ministers Tereschenko and Tseretelli were sent last week to Kieff to negotiate with the Ukrainian leaders. The result of the negotiations is that the Ukrainians

⁴⁷ "Russia and Finland/Seeds of Bitterness and Suspicion/Relations Strained," dispatch dated Petrograd, July 7, *Daily Chronicle*, 9 July 1917, p. 4.

have modified the urgency of their demands. The Ministers returned to-day, and it seems possible that a compromise may be reached.⁴⁸

The compromises that the socialist ministers were willing to make with the Ukrainian radicals contributed to bringing an end to the coalition government. The Kadet ministers would not make concessions to the independence movements of the former subject nationalities. As Williams noted, they reasoned that any major changes in the Russian governmental system should be left to the constituent assembly. In his book, *A People's Tragedy*, Orlando Figes very clearly depicts the problems that faced the coalition members.⁴⁹ Circumstances hardened the Kadets who had formerly tried to remain above "class" issues and to work for the good of all Russia. As they saw their control of events slipping away, they became more intractable in their defense of property rights, army discipline, and Russian nationalism. Williams's articles reflect this same shift in his feelings. Along with the Kadets, he had been an avid advocate of the rights of the nationalities while the tsarist government was in power. When it became apparent that the ultimate result of the nationalist movements would be the breakup of the Russian empire, he hesitated.

The moderate socialists on the other hand were feeling pressure from the streets to remain true to their ideals and stay with the left. Williams had noted their gradual movement to the center of the political arena. The responsibilities of power had taught them something about practicality, but they were unsuccessful in convincing the mobs of soldiers, laborers, and peasants that their compromises with the Kadets were for the immediate good of war torn Russia and not just a sellout to the bourgeoisie. Their

⁴⁸ "Little Russia's Big Voice/Ukraine Demands that Imperial Unity/Federal Plan Favoured by Kerensky," dispatch dated Petrograd, July 15, *Daily Chronicle*, 17 July 1917, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 419-421.

flexibility regarding the nationalist movements put them at odds with the Kadet ministers. Prince Lvov, in his role as prime minister, grew increasingly disheartened by his inability to appeal to the spirit of compromise in his own cabinet. In four months in office, his hair had turned white from stress. By the end of June he was already thinking of resigning. His increasing impotence as a mediator between the forces of right and left became all too apparent during the Ukrainian crisis. He was disgusted with both sides and became convinced that Russia would soon be faced with a civil war that he had no power to prevent. Following the resignation of three Kadet ministers in July, Lvov decided to resign and told his secretary, "I have reached the end of the road and so, I'm afraid, has my sort of liberalism."⁵⁰ His resignation was not announced immediately, probably because the collapse of the coalition left open the question of who should assume power.

In Petrograd, that question was answered with the Bolshevik slogan, "All Power to the Soviets!" The slogan had been conceived while the Petrograd Soviet was at the height of its popularity with the masses, but by July even the Soviet members were suspect in the eyes of the soldiers and workers. Nevertheless, the slogan was a rallying point to bring out masses of demonstrators in one of the more confusing episodes of the revolution.

It was assumed by the press of the time, including Williams, that the Bolsheviks were the main instigators behind the demonstrations that turned into a failed coup d'état. Yet, Lenin was not even in the city when the disorders began and it is more than likely that the Bolsheviks tried to associate themselves with the movement only after it was well under way. The moderate socialists of the Petrograd Soviet insisted that they would not

⁵⁰ Ibid., 421.

be pressured into assuming power by an armed mob. Part of their hesitation came from their conviction that Petrograd did not represent the feelings of Russia as a whole, and they feared that a backlash to a premature seizure of power would result in counterrevolution. Rather than take the power that was being offered to them, the Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates very quickly condemned the demonstrators as "Traitors to the Revolution."

Williams wrote several significant articles about the "July Days" stressing mostly the total confusion in the streets. When the movement died down, primarily because of its lack of leadership, Williams wrote one of his more jarring articles. He began with a series of stream of consciousness impressions, continuing on to a brutally realistic account of the demise of the coalition government and his skepticism regarding the newly forming second coalition.

Rat-tat-tat, a sudden crackle, and then silence. It was a spectral night. A sullen gleam on the river, lights of trams gliding across the bridges, and beyond the grey shadowy mass of the quarters on the northern shore. Again rat-tat-tat, a crackle, and silence. Where are they shooting? Why are they shooting? Disarming the rebels, perhaps. There on the Viborg side are the barracks of a rebel regiment. But why that sudden angry spurt further down the river near the Basil Island? Who knows? Perhaps the scoundrels are shooting again from housetops, or firing round corners on the loyal troops, or sniping from swiftly-flying motors, just as they did in the days of the real Revolution. These Leninites copy the methods of the old police. Perhaps they are the old police under a new guise. Where can you draw the line? The night is still again, and gathers up wrath and vengeance.... The shadows glimmer and waver. There is something eerie in the night. When will this agony end? When will Russia be strong again? The thoughts of the night come, crowding, that suffocating mesh of diabolical German intrigue, the shifting combinations, the Ministerial crisis. Prince Lvoff has resigned; Kerensky is Premier. That must be good, because Kerensky has energy and fire, and will see that the traitors get their due. But the rest? ⁵¹

⁵¹ "Fall of Tarnopol/Amazing Story of Shameless Cowardice of Masses of Troops/Orders Given to Fire on Deserters/Traitors Must Get Their Deserts (sic.)," dispatch dated Petrograd, Sunday (probably 22 July 1917), *Daily Chronicle*, 24 July 1917, p. 1. Robert Donald was so impressed with Williams's dispatch that

Williams's analysis of the character and performance of the principal players in the fall of the coalition bears a close resemblance to that of Paul Miliukov in his memoirs written just prior to his death in 1943.⁵² As already noted, the two men knew each other well and it is probable that Williams got a great deal of his information on the inner workings of the coalition government from Miliukov. Though Miliukov was not formally a member of the coalition, as leader of the Kadet party he was kept informed by the Kadet ministers. Considering Williams's positive statements regarding the coalition in all of his previous dispatches, the vehemence of his comments after the collapse seems out of character:

So Prince Lvoff goes. He was not a strong man. He was essentially Tolstoyan in temperament, and believed that patience and moral suasion would see Russia through her troubles. He did not spare himself, he was a hard worker, but he in no sense took the lead. He tried to act as arbiter, to smooth down differences, but he was passive at a time when what was most needed was a man of vigorous action. In any case the conditions under which the Coalition Government worked were untenable. It was not independent. Throughout it was at the mercy of the Council of Delegates. Its inner construction was such as to give almost complete power to the Socialist minority. There was a sort of War Cabinet, a committee for military and foreign affairs, composed officially of Lvoff, Kerensky, and Tereshchenko. Unofficially Tseretelli and Nekrassoff took part in the committee. Kerensky latterly has been absent for the most part at the front, and the leader in general policy, the de facto Premier, was Tseretelli, who also led and was supported by the Council of Delegates....It was a Government of the Council of Delegates through its strongest member, Tseretelli, under the semblance of a Coalition Government, the non-Socialist Ministers being in the long run reduced to the position of mere technical advisers on administrative questions. Now an attempt is being made to patch up a new Coalition Government by tacking on to the existing Socialist combination a few pliable non-Socialists of the Nekrassoff type. The whole situation is far too dangerous for any such risky experiment, and if it is made it will be short-lived. The demand now

he let the front page run with the headline: RUSSIA'S AGONY: VIVID DISPATCH BY DR. HAROLD WILLIAMS.

⁵² Paul Miliukov, *Political Memoirs 1905-1917*, edited by Arthur P. Mendel, translated by Carl Goldberg (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 414-426.

is for a real Coalition Government of the best men in the country, with complete independence from external influences and with power to enforce its will.⁵³

Part of Williams's disillusionment is attributable to the July Days coinciding with news of the collapse of the Russian offensive. Despite all the positive press that had appeared during the first advances, the journalists could not cover up what was rapidly turning into a rout. The worst fears of the Russian generals were realized as their troops refused to fight and deserted in alarming numbers. In his articles, Williams reflected the sense of betrayal and bitterness that was becoming a part of his day-to-day existence:

In this hour of national disgrace and disaster, when the flower of the Russian army becomes a rabble that flees headlong from an enemy inferior in strength and equipment, when the results of years of toil and effort are thrown to the winds; when the very existence of Russia as a nation is jeopardised by blind infatuation, by a delirium of treason, only one thought burns in the minds of Russian patriots. They feel now that they ought to have protested more strongly, that they ought to have been far more active in organising their forces against the impudent lie, the gross falsification of the national will. They were too optimistic. They trusted in the power of moral suasion. They believed that in the unceasing strife of words there was educative value, that after trying all spirits the Russian people would choose that which was best. They failed to realise that an ignorant, illiterate people, just awakened to the sense of its power, could not safely be left at the mercy of servile flatterers and unscrupulous demagogues, more especially in time of war. But now disaster is driving home some cruel lessons, and the turning point has come. There is a resurgence of patriotism, the delusion has been frightfully exposed. The whole question now is whether strong and intelligent forces can be found to guide this new wave of elemental feeling.⁵⁴

Williams was candid in his appraisal of the situation. The determining factor, he noted, was "not military, but psychological. Its causes are not there in the south, but here

⁵³ "Fall of Tarnopol/Amazing Story of Shameless Cowardice of Masses of Troops/Orders Given to Fire on Deserters/Traitors Must Get Their Deserts (sic.)," dispatch dated Petrograd, Sunday (probably 22 July 1917), *Daily Chronicle*, 24 July 1917, p. 1.

⁵⁴ "Russia's Turning Point Has Come," dispatch dated from Petrograd, July 26, *The Daily Chronicle*, 27 July 1917, p. 1.

in Petrograd....The present rout is the measure of the crime of the Leninists and their accomplices.”⁵⁵ Williams was not alone in his conclusions. The Bolsheviks were denounced in the press as German agents. The minister of justice issued testimonies and documents to support the charge.⁵⁶ The timing of the “evidence” was particularly helpful to the government. Those Bolshevik leaders not arrested went into hiding, including Lenin. For the time being their threat seemed to be contained.

Though the government had managed to survive, it was again transformed. Williams still had faith in Kerensky but it was a newer figure on the horizon that was soon garnering his attention. In the wake of the failed offensive, General Brusilov was dismissed and replaced by General Lavr Kornilov (1870-1918). The son of a Siberian Cossack, Kornilov had experience fighting in Central Asia and the Far East. He had been taken prisoner by the Germans during the Galician campaign of 1915, but escaped. He commanded the Petrograd garrison briefly after the revolution, but did not tolerate the lack of discipline that the Soviet Council seemed to be encouraging. He requested a transfer to the southwestern front and was placed in charge of the Eighth Army. His troops were the most successful during the early days of the July offensive, but it was his apparently liberal attitude in not condemning the Soviet commissars and committees in the army that won him the respect of Kerensky. Most of the other tsarist generals were frustrated and adamantly opposed to the revolutionary innovations in the army. Kornilov actually had become friends with the commissar of the southwestern front, Social

⁵⁵ “Outlook More Hopeful/Kerensky Forming a National Ministry,” dispatch dated Petrograd, July 27, *Daily Chronicle*, 30 July 1917, p. 1

⁵⁶ William Henry Chamberlain, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921: Volume 1*, 180-181. Chamberlain found the documents and testimonies to be highly questionable.

Revolutionary Boris Savinkov (1879-1925). The appointment of Kornilov as commander-in-chief seemed logical given the turn of events.

Both Kerensky and Kornilov agreed on the need to restore discipline to the army and maintain Russia's commitment to its allies. Neither desired the return of a monarchy. Both wanted to give Russia stability to confront the conditions then present in the country. Williams outlined just some of the problems facing Kerensky and the new Provisional Government following the July Days:

The Government has its hands full. Few Governments have been faced with a more arduous task. The primary factor is the military situation, on which it is difficult at present to comment. General Korniloff's stringent terms have been in the main accepted, and this brave and capable General has assumed the chief command. The effect of the new disciplinary measures in bracing up the army cannot as yet be estimated, but the first steps of the Government show considerable determination, and not only at the front, but also in the training depots at the rear, there are signs of the birth of a new spirit. Almost as serious as the military débâcle is the economic havoc wrought as the result of a series of bungling and fantastic social experiments. Food supplies are precarious, prices are preposterously high, industry is disorganised by Labour troubles, and agriculture is hampered by continual disputes between peasants and proprietors. Add to this the rival claims and virulent antagonisms of the nationalities, and the state of Russia would appear to be one of hopeless chaos. But the root of the evil has been the absence of a central authority. If such an authority can be established now, if the Government can make a persistent effort to enforce discipline in the country, all these evils may be considerably mitigated. The psychological conditions are more favourable to the establishment of authority now than at any time since the Revolution. The temper of the people demands authority, demands firm guidance. If M. Kerensky and his Government can seize this opportunity there is hope for Russia.⁵⁷

Kerensky again tried to create some semblance of a coalition government, but after the July Days he found himself increasingly isolated from both the left and the right. Despite pressure from the Kadets, the government did not capitalize on its opportunity to

⁵⁷ "Kerensky's Great Opportunity/Signs of Birth of a New Spirit/Government Settling to Work," dispatch dated Petrograd, August 8, *Daily Chronicle*, 11 August 1917, p. 3.

crush the Bolsheviks. About 800 Bolsheviks were imprisoned, including Trotsky, Lev Kamenev (1883-1936), and Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875-1933), but all would survive to play their roles in the overthrow of the Provisional Government within three months.⁵⁸

The Soviet leaders, though they condemned the Bolsheviks for taking part in the uprising, refused to abandon them to the forces of counterrevolution that they believed were forming from the right-wing backlash. Understandably, they believed that the Bolsheviks would only be the first arrested, after which there would be a campaign against the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. Where would the governmental repression end?

The Kadets were calling for restrictions on public gatherings and the restoration of the death penalty (not just in the army but for civilians as well). Would they next demand the return of the tsar? Miliukov, still the leader of the Kadets even after losing his post as foreign minister, was rapidly returning to his earlier conviction that the Russian populace, so dominated by peasants and ill-educated workers, could not be entrusted with a democracy. The success of the Bolshevik demagogues had proven that to him and even to Williams who in 1905 had been optimistic for the political future of the Russian peasant and worker.⁵⁹ Kerensky would not go far enough in repressive measures to

⁵⁸ Trotsky was not yet formally a member of the Bolshevik party at this time, but his sympathies were well-known and his prominence during the July Days made his arrest all the more significant.

⁵⁹ Williams was frustrated but not surprised at the resilience of the Bolsheviks' political existence:

There is the extraordinary spectacle of the results of the municipal elections, with the Bolsheviks or Leninites second on the list with 88,000 votes, while the Social Revolutionaries are first with 120,000, and the Kadets third, with 52,000. It sounds too incredible, did not one know the ignorance and credulity of the masses, that at a time like this the Bolsheviks, who nearly wrecked Petrograd six weeks ago, should secure 88,000 votes in the city. Again and again I have heard soldiers saying, "We are dark and ignorant, and the educated people have always deceived us." It is painful to see these humble folk unprepared, untrained, and yet assured month after month that they are competent to solve complicated social and international problems. No wonder their instincts are confused, no wonder that in such a crisis so many of them are apathetic to all appeals save that of hunger. Among the crowds there is more talk of the food scarcity than of the German menace. The crisis is being reduced to its gaunt elements in Russia. ["Russia in Darkness: Riga in Flames/Petrograd's Babel of Voices in Hour of

satisfy the Kadets and he would go too far for the comfort of the soviets.⁶⁰

Kornilov did not seem to suffer from Kerensky's vacillations. Symbolically he was the simple soldier, not the politician. Both heroic and exotic, he captivated the imagination of the right wing including the Kadets, businessmen, army officers, and the propertied classes. His weakness was that he knew more about military history than contemporary Russian politics, and this led him to believe he could save Russia by becoming her Napoleon.

Kerensky did not anticipate the power rivalry that would develop between himself and Kornilov. As Figes noted, "It was, if you like, a question of two men and only one white horse."⁶¹ Kornilov was encouraged by his admirers to stage a military coup d'état to destroy the Soviet and possibly the Provisional Government itself. However, Kornilov's main quarrel with the Provisional Government and Kerensky was their lack of backbone in dealing with the Bolsheviks. He believed that the Provisional Government was the political hostage of the Soviet and needed to be rescued. Kornilov's coup d'état plan was to transform the Provisional Government into a collective dictatorship including Kerensky, Savinkov, and himself among others. Rumors of a Bolshevik uprising that was ostensibly scheduled for the end of August together with the fall of Riga to the Germans made the situation more urgent. In the confusion that followed, Kornilov believed that he had Kerensky's approval to deploy troops to defend the Provisional Government. Kornilov and Savinkov, then acting as Kerensky's under-secretary of war, had agreed on the transfer of troops to Petrograd. In panic, the Petrograd Soviet retreated

Crisis/Leninists Still Strong," dispatch dated Petrograd, Tuesday Evening, *Daily Chronicle*, 8 September 1917, p.1.]

⁶⁰ Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 441-443.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 445.

from the Tauride Palace and took over the Smolny Institute for Young Ladies instead. Kerensky, who seemed at first to have agreed with Kornilov's troop movements, suddenly withdrew his support and instead ordered the general's dismissal and arrest. Kornilov was so shocked that he assumed the premier had been captured and that the telegram informing him of his dismissal was either the result of Bolshevik coercion or a forgery.⁶²

Williams sent several dispatches dealing with the Kornilov affair. His friends and family had looked to Kornilov as the last hope to combat the anarchy of the Russian soldiers in the field and the workers in Petrograd.⁶³ Williams was immediately suspicious about the unfolding of events, but he nevertheless tried to convey to his readers what was happening:

The general sentiment is that Russia at the present is rather like a lunatic asylum. The tension is most strongly felt in the Winter Palace and in the Soviet. In the Winter Palace, the Government has gone through several metamorphoses, the net result of which is that Kerensky, in his own person, represents the Provisional Government, or, in other words, that at present there are two rival dictators in Russia, Kerensky and Korniloff. Alexeiff arrived here early this morning and did his utmost to effect a reconciliation between Kerensky and Korniloff. There was apparently room for reconciliation. Vladimir Lvoff seems to have played a very ambiguous part as intermediary between the Premier and the Commander-in-Chief. In his statement to Kerensky he went very much farther than Korniloff authorized him to go, and it is even a question whether Korniloff authorized him to give any message at all. Before the circumstances were finally cleared up Kerensky had issued a proclamation detailing Lvoff's statement and dismissing Korniloff from his post. Korniloff thereupon replied with a counter-proclamation in which he categorically denied Kerensky's version and declared that he had not sent Lvoff to the Premier, but that Kerensky had sent Lvoff to him. This led to a final break, and thereafter Korniloff moved his troops on Petrograd, and Kerensky

⁶² Ibid., 449-451.

⁶³ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 191-192.

prepared for defence. Korniloff is said to have been urged on in his enterprise by his Chief of Staff, Lukomsky.⁶⁴

The repercussions from the Kornilov affair were enormous, not just for Kornilov's future but also for Kerensky and Russia itself. Arthur Ransome (1884-1967) of the London *Daily News and Leader* later reviewed the power struggle and concluded:

It is just this irreconcilable conflict between differing and passionate sincerities that makes the tragedy of recent events in Russia. Extremists on the Right by the Korniloff affair, in the name of strengthening the army, have destroyed the work of months, and flung the mass of the soldiers into the hands of the Extremists on the Left. Extremists on the Left, after refusing coalition with the bourgeoisie, are beginning to prepare the ground for a refusal even of democratic coalition, demanding what amounts to Bolshevik dictatorship.⁶⁵

For contemporaries, the episode proved confusing and many suspected that Kerensky was at least partly to blame for the fiasco. His involvement severed whatever remaining ties he had with the Soviet, and he made matters worse with the imprisonment of Kornilov and several other of Russia's best generals. Even those generals who were not imprisoned after the Kornilov affair harbored deep resentment for Kerensky, and without leadership there was no hope left of rehabilitating the Russian army. The dreams of Prince Lvov and Kerensky for cooperation and coalition between the right and left in Russia proved to be totally unrealistic. Kornilov's sympathizers included many army generals who would later form the White Army during the civil war.

Kerensky's position was tenuous. His health had been under tremendous strain for months and he had begun taking narcotics to relieve his tension, but they only made

⁶⁴ "Korniloff in a Vice/Government Troops Before and Behind Him," dispatch dated Petrograd, Sept. 11, *Daily Chronicle*, 14 September 1917, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Arthur Ransome, dispatch dated October 2, *Daily News and Leader*, 4 October 1917, p. 3.

matters worse.⁶⁶ His public image, so carefully built to reflect a hero and martyr suffering for the sake of the revolution, could not withstand his decline. There was again a vacuum of power in Russia but this time only the Bolsheviks were ready to fill it.

Williams chronicled the last weeks of the Provisional Government with a mixture of desperate hope and fatalism. Tyrkova bitterly noted that the Germans placarded some of her husband's telegrams on their side of the war front to encourage their soldiers.⁶⁷ Williams was describing events bluntly and given his English wit tinged with sarcasm, her story is believable. His subjective reaction after years of experience living with the Russians and with their struggle for liberty becomes apparent in his last articles before the Bolsheviks seized power. As an observer, Williams was tired and frustrated. He was far removed from the man he had been when he first worked with Struve in Stuttgart. It was more than a matter of years that had passed. The world as he knew it had changed and not in any way that he could have imagined:

There are moments when one would prefer to be silent about what is happening in Russia. It is possible, perhaps, to cultivate an attitude of cool detachment, to observe events from a purely historical standpoint, to calculate that the calamities of to-day are a particularly stern form of discipline, and that Russia will be stronger in the end for what she is suffering to-day. Without some such outlook in the more vitalising form of active faith in the future, it would be impossible to endure the stress of the present. At times the atmosphere is suffocating, the stress is almost intolerable. Russian patriots of every shade of opinion are subjected to an almost unrelieved moral torture, and none living here, unless he has a heart of stone, can fail to share their suffering. The bright hopes of the revolution are darkened, the collective energy of the people is paralysed, the whole life of the nation is entangled in a network of almost insoluble contradictions, patience and hope are exhausted by a series of fruitless compromises between warring forces. If these forces were only positive instead of being negative, if they only displayed real energy and real organising power then the crisis might be short, sharp and decisive, but it is protracted by an extraordinary lassitude, born of the long war and the

⁶⁶ Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 456.

⁶⁷ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 193.

oppression of the old régime. This lassitude was concealed for a time by the excitement of the revolution, but the freshening impulses of the revolution were frittered away in words and too soon paralysed by bitter party strife. And now the general weariness is expressing itself in a profound moral reaction.⁶⁸

Williams found himself watching the death of the March Revolution. The Provisional Government had met challenges again and again, but in the end it seemed to be rotting away from within in a manner that was not unlike the death of the monarchy. Williams knew that there were tremendous economic, political, and social problems in Russia. Those alone were enough to crush the fledgling democracy. What made him despair even more was that the majority of Russians seemed to be apathetic to their nation's future:

I lived through the reaction that followed the last revolution, in 1906, and again I see the familiar signs – the chase after pleasure, the reckless gambling, the steady decline of interest in politics, the sudden demand for “penny dreadfuls” of the Nat Pinkerton type. The other evening, in a workmen’s quarter, I saw a ball going on next to a house where a Bolshevik meeting was being held, and, generally speaking, in the workmen’s quarters dances are more popular now than political meetings. At the same time, the difficulties of living in the towns, the steady rise in prices, the shortage of food, the impossibility of getting any satisfactory share of material goods in exchange for money, have increased the general discontent and established a general attitude of profound disillusionment. The Korniloff affair has intensified mutual distrust and completed the work of destruction. The Government is shadowy and unreal, and what personality it had has disappeared.... Whatever power there is is again concentrated in the hands of the Soviets, and, as always happens when the Soviets secure a monopoly of power, the influence of the Bolsheviks has increased enormously.... So we live from day to day amidst rumours and phantoms and a general depression that at times has the quality of a nightmare.⁶⁹

The extremists, who had once been only “a cloud on the horizon,” were now

⁶⁸ “Darkening Hopes in Russia/A “Profound Moral Reaction”/Extremists’ Power,” dispatch dated Petrograd, Sept. 26, *Daily Chronicle*, 29 September 1917, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

moving into center stage. The Bolsheviks were again going to try to seize power; it was not a question of if, but when. This time, however, it looked as if the moderate socialists would not be able to restrain them. The Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks had been losing control of the soviets, in part because their constituency was less politically active than that of the Bolsheviks. The central problem, Williams stressed, was apathy:

The Bolsheviks of the Petrograd Soviet have openly declared war on the Government, are mobilising their forces, and preparing for a struggle. The other Socialist groups are hesitating and debating, troubled and depressed by the sense of disunion and irresolution....The Bolsheviks think that they are gaining the upper hand among the masses. This is true and untrue. This is true so far as meetings, votes, and resolutions are concerned. It is untrue if it means that the great masses of the people sympathise with the Bolsheviks, or are prepared to support them actively. The prevailing feeling is one of apathy, weariness, disillusionment. In the workmen's committees the Bolsheviks are strong, but most of the workmen have ceased to attend meetings. In the villages the peasants ignore the elections and express disgust for all committees. Here and there the peasants have disbanded their committees, and have gone back to the old system of having simply an elder and clerk. A peasant, writing to the director of the Peasants' Banks, declares in obvious good faith that his village has decided not to pay taxes because there is no Government and no law. Here is the real key to the present situation. The masses of the people have lost faith in the new order. This does not mean as yet that they desire the restoration of the old regime. But they are baffled, depressed, and disappointed. They see no guiding hand. They have lost faith in extravagant promises. They cannot understand the perpetual strife of parties. Unaccustomed to consecutive thinking, governed all their lives by a few simple principles, they have given up in despair the attempt to grasp the complexities of revolutionary politics. They are tired and depressed. They are accustomed to authority, and they see no authority. They have been promised a new heaven and a new earth, and they see only increasing disorder....⁷⁰

If the apathy of the Russian people indicated to Williams the coming demise of the revolution, it ironically also convinced him that Russia would somehow survive. While governments could collapse, life would somehow go on:

⁷⁰ "Russians Weary of Irresolution/Dangers of Anarchy and Reaction/Wave of Disorders in Country Districts," dispatch dated Petrograd Oct. 11, *Daily Chronicle*, 15 October 1917, p. 1.

The disorders are serious. They are symptomatic of a very grave state of affairs, but their possible consequences must not be exaggerated. Russia is a very big country, and the proportion of disorder is still comparatively small. The marvel is, considering the complete absence of real and effective authority, that the country is as quiet as it is. In almost any other European country such an absence of authority would have led to universal rapine and a succession of violent and sanguinary disturbances. That this is not so in Russia is a tribute to the extraordinary placidity and patience of her people. It would be easy to fill a newspaper with a list of the cruel robberies and brutal murders that take place daily in various parts of Russia. Yet these are far less characteristic of the situation than the gloomy patience and the slow working passive instinct for self-preservation that now constitute the only guarantee of security in the country.⁷¹

Williams would leave Petrograd in late October to join Tyrkova in the Caucasus where she was recovering from an illness. His last dispatch prior to the Bolshevik seizure of power in early November contains this typical combination of grim reality and optimism:

The Bolsheviks will now work outside the Council to create disturbances. Lenin declares that the time is ripe. Naturally, the German menace affords an excellent opportunity. But the Bolshevik danger should not be very great if only other Socialist parties keep their heads. On the whole, the first sitting of the Republican Council was fairly promising.⁷²

John Reed (1887-1920), an American correspondent who wrote for the *New York Call* as well as the socialist newspaper *The Masses*, provides a striking contrast to Williams's dispatches. With no knowledge of the Russian language and no scholarly background in Russian history, Reed did not arrive in Russia until August 1917 when he took an on-the-spot crash course in Russian politics and society. During the months of November and December, only one tantalizing message was dispatched to his newspaper. It gave a graphic account of the overthrow of the Provisional Government and sent

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² "Russia's Republican Council/Extremists Bent on Mischief," undated dispatch from Petrograd (received yesterday), *Daily Chronicle*, 26 October 1917, p. 2.

greetings to American workers from the “first proletarian republic.”⁷³ The full story of Reed’s adventures would not reach the public until March 1919 with the publication of his book *Ten Days That Shook The World*.⁷⁴

As a journalist, John Reed was delinquent in his duties to his editor but with good reason: he was too busy taking part in the revolution to concern himself with sending regular dispatches about it. Subsequently, however, his conscientious depiction of events conveyed excitement and immediacy. According to Bertram D. Wolfe (1896-1977), “as literature Reed’s book is the finest piece of eyewitness reporting the revolution produced.”⁷⁵

Reed was openly sympathetic to the Bolsheviks and admitted as much in his preface.⁷⁶ While Williams constantly held out the hope that the moderates would prevail, Reed highlighted the chaos and revolutionary fervor. There is nothing restrained about his enthusiastic partiality:

So, Lenin and the Petrograd workers had decided on insurrection, the Petrograd Soviet had overthrown the Provisional Government, and thrust the *coup d'état* upon the Congress of Soviets. Now there was all great Russia to win – and then the world! Would Russia follow and rise? And the world – what of it? Would the peoples answer and rise, a red world-tide?⁷⁷

Unlike Williams’s total mistrust of the Bolsheviks, Reed could hardly contain his admiration:

⁷³ John Reed, “First Proletarian Republic Greet American Workers,” dispatch dated Petrograd, November 13, *New York Call*, 22 November 1917, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁴ John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook The World* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919).

⁷⁵ Bertram D. Wolfe, introduction to *Ten Days That Shook The World* by John Reed (1919; reprint, New York: Random House, 1960), xxxv-xxxvi.

⁷⁶ John Reed, preface to *Ten Days That Shook The World* (1919; reprint, New York: Random House, 1960), liii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

So plunged the Bolsheviki ahead, irresistible, over-riding hesitation and opposition – the only people in Russia who had a definite programme of action while the others talked for eight long months.⁷⁸

But it is in his portrait of Lenin that Reed displays particular depth of insight. Whereas Williams in his dispatches depicts Lenin almost simplistically as an evil force, Reed offers a more detailed analysis:

Unimpressive, to be the idol of a mob, loved and revered as perhaps few leaders in history have been. A strange popular leader – a leader purely by virtue of intellect; colourless, humourless, uncompromising and detached, without picturesque idiosyncrasies – but with the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms, of analysing a concrete situation. And combined with shrewdness, the greatest intellectual audacity.⁷⁹

Although far apart ideologically, Reed and Williams have similar styles: they are editorial writers rather than objective journalists, and each has a flair for expressing the dramatic in urgent and compelling language.

The strength of Williams's dispatches, as opposed to Reed's book, is in the day-to-day evaluation of the psychological shifts that Russia went through as it faced war, revolution, and experiments in democracy. The boundaries of convention and freedom were being redefined on all fronts by members of every sector of society. Williams captured the headiness and exhilaration of the early days of the March Revolution, the ideals of the first Provisional Government, the passions of the lower classes that both aroused his curiosity and frightened him, and the ultimate exhaustion and disappointment when promises to the population were put off or forgotten. His stress on political apathy

⁷⁸ Ibid., 184.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 170-171.

as instrumental in the downfall of a democratic government has been reiterated as recently as 1996 in Orlando Figes's *A People's Tragedy*.⁸⁰

Perhaps Williams's most enduring observation about these events, made over a month earlier, is less an evaluation of contemporary times than an idealistic prophecy:

Events in Russia are elusive, unreal, intangible. The dream life and the real life coalesce. Things are not what they seem. There are moments when one is tempted to believe in the unreality of all phenomena. The struggle and the turmoil are like the fighting of shadows on a screen. Catchwords and watchwords, persons and policies, are losing their power to attract or repel. Russia is in solution; she is passing through a deep formative process of which the Petrograd struggle for power is only a superficial symptom. Watching events here, judging them only at their surface value, one might easily become cynical. The faults of the old regime are mingled with the faults of the new regime; principles of right and wrong are subordinated to the interests of parties and cliques, and the result is chaotic and demoralising. The revolution is a fierce and cruel test of character and capacity. Reputations are made and lost in a month. Individuals and groups are tried in the furnace and found wanting, and are mercilessly flung onto the slagheap. But all this does not mean that the revolution has failed. It means that certain narrow and subjective conceptions of the revolution are inadequate, that the revolution is not an end but a beginning, that Russia, once set free, is only slowly and with great difficulty finding herself.... It can hardly be said that the men on top are guiding Russia, except in a very limited sense. They are rather guided by an inevitable and inexorable course of events. And for us Allies and friends faith in Russia is not so much faith in particular persons and parties as in that larger process, which with all its elements of suffering and tragedy is tending towards final liberation....⁸¹

Psychological analysis was Williams's strength. As a scholar, he grasped that Russia was "bigger than the formulas offered in explanation of her strange caprices." He wrote that "the process by which she is finding herself is broader and deeper than any of

⁸⁰ Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 466-469.

⁸¹ "Petrograd's Chaos/Soviet Still Swayed by the Extremists," dispatch dated Petrograd, Sept. 18, *Daily Chronicle*, 20 September 1917, p. 1.

us can quite understand.”⁸² What he failed to see was that the revolutionary forces awakened by the March Revolution could not be obliged to mirror the English form of constitutional democracy. Added to this was his inability, in his capacity as a journalist, to accept Russia’s desperate need to leave the war.

⁸² Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX: THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR: HAROLD WILLIAMS AND ALLIED INTERVENTION

"We are all balancing on a tightrope over an abyss....In the abyss below we see glimmering forms and dim outlines, and are learning that even an abyss is not a void."—Harold Williams¹

With the Bolshevik victory and the resulting suppression of the Kadet party, Harold Williams had reason to be deeply distressed. In addition to the direct threat to his family, his liberal democratic ideals caused him to reject any form of authoritarianism. In his dispatches from the winter of 1917-1918, Williams became less concerned with Russia's continuing role in the war than with the character of the Bolshevik regime. He condemned the imposition of censorship, the restrictions on freedom of assembly, the arrests of political opponents, and the closing of the constituent assembly. He would report that "the latest product of Bolshevik legislation is a decree abolishing all law courts and lawyers, and setting up in their place revolutionary tribunals. As [Leon] Trotsky has already hinted at the guillotine, there is not much left to learn from the French Revolution."² Furthermore, he wrote little more than a month later that if indeed the Bolsheviks wanted to conclude a war with Germany, it was only to begin a far more bloody war against the Russian people:

A snowstorm is raging as usual in this fiercest of all winters, and it seems as though all the powers and elements of darkness were rushing and roaring in the whirlwind that enwraps this city of gloom.... The Bolsheviks do not profess to encourage any illusions as to their real nature. They treat the bourgeois of all countries with equal contempt; they glory in all violence directed against the ruling classes, they despise laws and decencies that they consider effete, they trample on the arts and

¹ "Over the Abyss/Bolshevik Decrees that Nobody Heeds," dispatch dated Petrograd, Nov. 20, *Daily Chronicle*, 22 November 1917, p. 5.

² "Lenin's Chagrin at Enemy Attitude," dispatch dated Petrograd, Dec. 6, *Daily Chronicle*, 8 December 1917, p. 1.

refinements of life. It is nothing to them if in the throes of a great upheaval the world relapses into barbarism.³

With circumstances dictating their departure, Williams and Tyrkova left Russia for England in March 1918. He spent much of the next year writing and lecturing about the Bolshevik threat and campaigning for allied intervention in the Russian Civil War.

The Bolshevik seizure of power was not unexpected, but few believed Lenin and his followers would be able to form a functioning government and implement the radical changes they had envisioned for Russia's future. The expected transitory nature of the Bolshevik regime was a common theme for contemporary news reports. The dispatches made a Bolshevik collapse seem inevitable.

Most of the questionable reports came from unsigned wires from various overseas news agencies. Harold Williams's dispatches did not deny what was happening, but stressed the surreal environment he was living in at the time. The tone of many of his dispatches from the early months of Bolshevik rule is understandably one of shock, disbelief, and overall depression. Considering his background and his family's political affiliations this is entirely understandable. He was attempting to cover the news while Tyrkova and her son were taking an active part in the opposition movement forming against the Bolsheviks. The atmosphere was very tense and Tyrkova later wrote that she had never seen Williams, who was normally unflappable, "in such a state. He changed color if a motor-car drew up by our door, especially at night. He kept fancying it was the Cheka agents coming to arrest me. It was a cruel game of cat and mouse."⁴

³ "Murder of Cadet Leaders in Petrograd/Bolsheviks Anxious for Civil War as Means to 'Socialisation'/Germans Making Peace with Ukraine/Bolshevik Policy of Civil Strife", dispatch dated Petrograd, Jan. 20, *Daily Chronicle*, 22 January 1918, p. 1.

⁴ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 199.

While Trotsky was opening negotiations with the Germans for a separate peace, Williams was not speaking for Russia alone but also for himself when he cabled:

In this fantastic, topsy-turvy world, where logic has gone bankrupt, where boundaries are effaced between dreams and realities, between life and death, one involuntarily looks for signs and symbols. Men and women, helpless, hopeless, and bewildered, go to wizards and conjurers trying to read the books of fate. Who knows whether there is any hope for Russia, whose fate seems almost sealed? If you in England knew the suffering of Russia now, you would be merciful in spite of the great wrong. You may say it is the Russians' own fault. Perhaps it is, and they say so themselves. They repeat again and again, in bitter humiliation, "We have brought this on our own heads through our credulity and weakness." They believed with all their hearts in a free Russia, and now they see Russia and freedom crumbling together into ruin.⁵

The Kadets themselves were dealing with an enemy more ruthless than tsarism.

Williams G. Rosenberg, in a study of the Kadet party during the revolution and civil war, wrote of its struggle to maintain its faith in liberal ideals and legality itself during a time when none of the old rules of behavior seemed to apply.⁶ The Kadets could not agree, even during this period of crisis, on how to proceed against Bolshevism. Should they use only legal means? Should they form alliances with all anti-Bolshevik forces? Should they seek help from the non-Bolshevik socialists, the extreme right, or even the hated Germans? How should they urge the Russian populace to respond to Lenin and his party? Was the population so far under the spell of Lenin and Trotsky's promises that they could no longer listen to reason?

⁵ "Chaos of Government in Russia/Country Split into Factions/Korniloff Off to Ukraine," dispatch dated Petrograd, Dec. 4, *Daily Chronicle*, 6 December 1917, p. 5.

⁶ William G. Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution: The Constitutional Democratic Party, 1917-1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

In a broadsheet edited by Tyrkova and published on November 10th, there appeared a call to Russian citizens to join the struggle against Bolshevism.⁷ The advice given is ambiguous in that it asks the populace to take up arms against the usurpers of the Provisional Government's authority but seems at the same time to define these "arms" as the traditional non-violent weapons of intellectuals and pacifists:

Citizens! Bayonets, machine guns and bombs are the weapons of brigands.
 We have – only our bare hands.
 We have no lethal bayonets
 We have no Red Guards
 We have only the greatest weapon of any in the land. That is Faith. The
 faith of law, justice, freedom and the honor of men....
 The nation must acquire Reason immediately if it does not want to perish.
 Of all the Russian parties, only one can truly bring Reason to Russia:
The Party of People's Freedom!
 ...Let the Party stand as a shield for our state, our freedom, our civil order
 and peace.
 Long live Reason!
 It is our only salvation.
 The Struggle is beginning.
 To Arms, Citizens, to Arms!⁸

The pace of events soon convinced Kadets such as Tyrkova that the faith and reason of the Russian people could not be relied upon given the stress of war and the aftermath of centuries of tsarist oppression. Williams found one of the most compelling and yet disturbing accomplishments of the Bolsheviks during the early months of their rule to be their ability to fulfill their promise of removing Russia from the European war. He set about explaining this seeming betrayal of the Allies by Russia in an article

⁷ *Bor'ba*, November 10, 1917. The broadsheet was intended to be a daily newspaper, but only two issues appeared. A third issue was confiscated by the Bolsheviks. [Cited in William G. Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, 270.]

⁸ *Ibid.* Note that the Kadet party revived its older name, "The Party of People's Freedom", in an effort to reach the broader populace.

entitled, "Russia Out of the War/Truth that Allies Have to Face/Peace Longed for by the Russian Masses":

The peace question is much broader and more fundamental than that of Bolshevik authority. Bolsheviks may come or go, but the incontestable fact is that great masses of the Russian people ardently desire peace. They cannot be blamed if amidst confusion and anarchy, with famine staring them in the face, they clutch at the promise of a quick and easy peace. Russia is now reaping the bitter fruits of the old regime, which lingered on until it succeeded in penetrating with dry rot the whole political organism. But here now is a people athirst for peace, an army demoralised by the promise of immediate peace negotiations. For the present the negotiations deal only with an armistice, but no doubt feelers will be put forth as to peace terms, including terms for Russia's Allies.... This is a heavy blow for the Allies, but we should be playing into the German hands if we allowed our mortification to endanger permanently our relations with Russia. When a nation has lost political cohesion, it cannot intelligently express its national will. We cannot contemptuously abandon a whole great people because of a temporary fit of madness, the causes of which lie deep in the history of years of oppression.⁹

In January 1918, two events provided the Kadets with what Rosenberg described as "the shock of awareness."¹⁰ The Bolsheviks dispersed the one and only official meeting of the constituent assembly on January 5th and two days later Kadet leaders Fyodor Kokoshkin (1871-1918) and Andrew Shingarev (1860-1918), who had been detained by the Bolsheviks in Mariinsky Hospital, were murdered. Williams, though sympathetic to the Kadet faith in legality and constitutionalism, was not surprised by what happened nor did he accuse the Bolshevik leadership of political assassinations.

It had suddenly become more urgent to consider forming a coalition against the Bolsheviks and it was apparent that such a coalition could not be successful using peaceful means alone. From the time of the collapse of the Provisional Government, the

⁹ "Russia Out of the War/Truth that Allies Have to Face/Peace Longed for by the Russian Masses," dispatch dated Petrograd, Dec. 3, *Daily Chronicle*, 5 December 1917, p. 1.

¹⁰ William G. Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution*, 282.

remnants of the army had been reforming in southern Russia. Generals Alexeev, Kornilov, and Anton Denikin (1872-1947) were shaping what became known as the “Volunteer Army” or “White Army” that would oppose the Bolsheviks in the civil war.

Williams, acting on behalf of the British embassy and the *Daily Chronicle*, sent Tyrkova’s son, Arkady Borman, to meet with General Alexeev at the end of November 1917 to discuss the general’s intentions. Instead of going himself, Williams thought it better to send a young Russian like Borman, dressed as a soldier, through the Bolshevik-controlled transportation system. As a journalist, Williams wanted to go to the story in person, but at the time he was preoccupied with trying to assure the safety of Tyrkova and her daughter. Arkady sent back word that the general wanted to overthrow the Bolsheviks and resume fighting the Germans. What Alexeev needed were men and money.

For his part, Williams struggled to report the story of the peace talks and the activities of the Bolsheviks. He and his family traveled back and forth between Moscow and St. Petersburg. In February 1918, he met in Moscow with members of the anti-Bolshevik movement, including former members of the Duma and the Provisional Government, to ascertain what support they expected from the Allies. According to Tyrkova, the possibility of Allied intervention was discussed and the need for military aid, preferably from England, was requested. England and possibly America seemed the best possible sources for aid.

In her account, Tyrkova described the exchange between her husband and the anti-Bolsheviks:

‘We have defended the common cause,’ they said, ‘and longer than we could afford to do. Russia has broken down under the strain. The

Bolsheviks entered Russia as microbes enter an organism weakened by disease. Come and help us recover.'

Hardly able to control his feeling, Harold put the direct question: 'Do you mean you want me to go to England and ask for military assistance against the Bolsheviks and the Germans?'

The answer was as direct:

'Yes, we want the help of small but well-disciplined military detachments.'

Harold had no doubts left how to act.¹¹

It is not clear if Williams was again working at the embassy's request or if he was just following his journalistic instincts in pursuing this angle of the story, but it is during this period that he began to seriously compromise his impartiality by becoming an active participant in Russia's civil war. Since 1916 when he urged Buchanan to warn the tsar about the probability of revolution, Williams had become increasingly involved in the stories he would write about. When the Kadets came to power, he desperately wanted them to succeed. But was it Williams's place as a journalist to try to influence the outcome of history? After the Bolsheviks succeeded in overthrowing the Provisional Government, Williams began to work against them immediately. It would be easy to assume that he pursued this path solely because of Tyrkova, but his relationship to a woman who became a member of the Kadet Central Committee was less a cause than a symptom of his own political sympathies. In one of his last letters to Macie Lovell-Smith in New Zealand, Williams had declared that Russia's freedom was the cause to which he wanted to dedicate his life.¹² He conceived of that freedom in terms that were in line with his British liberal outlook. He had passed through his early Tolstoyan phase and his

¹¹ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 202.

¹² HWW to MLS, 6 September 1903, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 12, Bakhmeteff Archive.

flirtation with Christian anarchism and grown more conservative as he witnessed the breakdown of the Russian state. Tyrkova noted with irony that he had arrived in 1904 to seek Russia's freedom and left in 1918 with the same purpose in mind.¹³

Williams was unable to return immediately to England. His editor wanted him to continue following the story of Trotsky's negotiations with the Germans. These negotiations were not going well for the Bolsheviks and the British government still hoped that the Russians would rejoin the Allies. If the Bolsheviks stopped trying to make a separate peace, the British were willing to consider diplomatic recognition of their government. In the middle of a civil war, foreign recognition would strengthen Bolshevik legitimacy at home.

These developments frustrated and angered Williams. He could not understand why his own government would negotiate with Trotsky and the Bolsheviks after everything that had happened. He had written about their ruthlessness, their contempt for civil liberties, and their treacherous propaganda that undermined Russian army discipline. He wondered how his government had come to the conclusion that even the Bolsheviks deserved a chance.

Other factors were influential and Williams had hints of them earlier. He had known that his reports were only one version of the Russian story being read back home. Correspondents from his own newspaper, the *Daily Chronicle*, covering for his absences, were more fascinated by the vibrancy of left-wing politics than supportive of the floundering Provisional Government.

Williams and Bernard Pares had actually helped other British journalists get started on their Russian assignments. Two of these journalists, Morgan Philips Price of

¹³ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 205.

the *Manchester Guardian* and Arthur Ransome of the London *Daily News and Leader*, had approached the story from different perspectives. Price was enamored of the idea that the Bolsheviks had a vision for Russia's future that addressed the inequities of its economy and society. He had taken a tour of the Russian provinces when the Bolsheviks began to seize power. Price noted in his articles the growing sympathy with the Bolshevik slogan "Peace, Land, Bread" and concluded that "the Russian Revolution was nothing more than a revolt of the Russian people against the war."¹⁴ In a dispatch appearing on November 23rd, Price observed:

At present the Bolsheviks have immense influence because they are the only party which has all along fought for immediate peace negotiations, and has actually now proposed this to the European Governments and peoples. It is grossly untrue that the Bolsheviks are in German pay. I know many of their leaders have been in prison in Germany for preaching armed rebellion against the German government. Their official organ today, in an article, attacks the German Government as strongly as it attacks Allied Imperialists.¹⁵

Arthur Ransome, while not as sympathetic to the Bolsheviks as Price, contributed a frank assessment of the popularity of Bolshevism to the *Daily News and Leader*.¹⁶ In "What is Bolshevism?", Ransome separated the success of the movement from the personality of its leaders and their theories. The doctrines of Bolshevism, he noted, were conceived for

¹⁴ Morgan Philips Price, dispatch, *Manchester Guardian*, 11 December 1917, p. 5.

¹⁵ Morgan Philips Price, dispatch, *Manchester Guardian*, 23 November 1917, p. 8. [See also Morgan Philips Price, *Dispatches from the Revolution: Russia, 1915-18*, edited by Tania Rose (London: Pluto Press, 1997). Price's articles on the revolution in the Russian provinces and the growth of Bolshevism appeared in November and December 1917. His sympathetic account of the seizure of power can be found in his book *My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1921).]

¹⁶ Historian Bernard Pares, who worked at the British embassy during the Russian revolution wrote:

Among the correspondents there were two who wanted to give the Bolsheviks their chance. These were Arthur Ransome and M. Philips Price. There was a big difference between them. Price often came out for unpopular causes and never minded challenging the consequences. He had a very detailed knowledge of Russia. He took the virus of Bolshevism in the regulation way, suddenly and fanatically; Ransome himself described him as impossible. Price was absolutely wholehearted, and went all out. Ransome, on the other hand, seemed to me at this time to be intellectually interested and not very much more. [Bernard Pares, *My Russian Memoirs*, 428-429.]

an industrial country, not an “agricultural ocean dotted with industrial islands” like Russia. He also stressed that the Bolshevik attitude toward the war was consistent with its opposition to war in general and had not been “dictated by pro-Germanism.” He concluded:

Bolshevism in Russia is a state of mind. It is a state of being “fed up,” in this case with starvation and other material discomforts. Hence the success of the Bolshevik leaders when they made their final bid for power. Their success was not due to their views but to their discontent. They were the discontented party, and therefore won the support or the neutrality of the great masses who, without bothering their heads about Karl Marx or the International, were willing to think well of anybody who promised them anything different from the unbearable present. The Bolsheviks will eventually fail, because they will be unable to keep their promises, and because, just as in July, the difference in kind between their discontent and that of the people will become apparent.¹⁷

Ransome and Price both believed the Bolshevik regime should have a chance to develop and opposed allied intervention. Ransome, though initially critical of the Bolsheviks, interviewed Trotsky in December 1917 and was convinced that the new regime offered Russia a stable and efficient government at a troubled time.¹⁸

Williams felt that the Allies seemed to be taking a short-term quick fix approach. As a long-term resident and admirer of Russia, he saw his government’s position as a betrayal of the old Russia that had sacrificed itself in pursuing the European war. As far as he was concerned, the liberal democratic ideals of the first Provisional Government, and the Kadet party in particular, should have had the unqualified support of the English government. Williams saw the adversaries struggling for power in Russia in starker contrast than his superiors. He felt that it was literally a case of good versus evil, and for that very reason he was unable to grasp the political and diplomatic necessities of the

¹⁷ Arthur Ransome, “What is Bolshevism?”, *Daily News and Leader*, 23 November 1917, p. 2.

¹⁸ Arthur Ransome, “An Interview with Trotsky,” *Daily News and Leader*, 31 December 1917, p. 1.

situation from the viewpoint of the British government, a government still afraid that the withdrawal of Russia from the war would free German troops to fight in the West.

In his last dispatch before leaving Russia in March 1918, Williams began to publicly plead the case for foreign intervention in the Russian Civil War. The Brest-Litovsk treaty had been signed on March 3, 1918 and as victors the Germans were advancing on Petrograd:

Unexpectedly great opportunities are brought within reach of Germany.... In some way or other we must check the German advance in Russia, for Russia's sake, for our own sakes and for the sake of the peace of the world.... Allied assistance to Russia is an imperative necessity in the present stage of the war... When allied intervention was suggested in the form of Japanese occupation of Siberia it aroused great misgivings simply because of the past relations between Russia and Japan.... For the Russians and the Japanese are aliens with whom there is no mental and emotional contact such as subsists between Russians and Western Allies and America. But this does not imply that Russians in principle resent allied intervention at the present moment. On the contrary, in certain forms they would welcome it. So long as the allied intervention does not mean allied domination it will find joyful response in Russia.... But it must be undertaken in the name of the liberation of Russia.¹⁹

The theme of this dispatch – the need for allied intervention without allied domination – became the theme of Williams's lobbying efforts after he returned to England. The clerks at the passport office had instantly recognized Williams from his passport on his arrival. Tyrkova quoted one as saying, "You are Dr. Harold Williams? The correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*? We always read your telegrams. Frightfully good. Well, thank heavens, now you can tell us the whole truth about Russia."²⁰ The incident seemed to augur well for Williams. He had returned to England in a much better position than he had left it fifteen years earlier. He was now forty-two years old, a well-

¹⁹ *Daily Chronicle*, 17 March 1918, cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 205.

²⁰ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 208.

known journalist and scholar, and an acknowledged expert on Russian affairs. He had every hope that doors would open for him and they did. One of the very first people that his editor, Robert Donald, arranged for him to meet was the prime minister, David Lloyd George (1863-1945).

Lloyd George had been familiar with Williams's work in Russia for several years. In an interview with Bernard Pares in October 1917, Pares had mentioned Williams to Lloyd George and evoked the response: "Have you ever seen any letters from abroad as good as those of Harold Williams? One of the later ones contained a wonderful Dantesque (sic) description of the sacking of the cellars of the Winter Palace."²¹ Williams's literary style had caught the prime minister's attention but the content of the dispatches had not evoked the sympathy for Russia or an understanding of the internal struggle that Williams would have hoped for. In spite of Donald's efforts to orient him, he was not adequately prepared for what he would face in England. His own meeting with Lloyd George in May 1918 was less than encouraging.

They met at the prime minister's home in London. Williams, along with Tyrkova and her daughter, were invited for tea. After thanking Williams for his "brilliant" dispatches and asking him a number of questions about his time in Russia, Lloyd George embarked on a line of reasoning that at first amused and then shocked Williams and his family. The prime minister, it seems, had concluded that the Bolsheviks would restore the front in spite of the signed treaty with Germany and that the British government needed to come to an agreement with Trotsky, "the one real statesman in Russia."²² At

²¹ Bernard Pares, *My Russian Memoirs*, 479. Following his account of the interview, Pares wrote: "I have always wondered why they (Williams's articles) have not been republished, for they are among the sources of Russian history."

²² Tyrkova's account of the interview is in *Cheerful Giver*, 205-206.

this point, Williams smiled and remarked that he couldn't vouch for the statesmanship of Trotsky, but only that he knew Trotsky was an enemy of England. He informed the prime minister of Trotsky's and Lenin's hopes for world revolution. When Lloyd George asked Williams what he was basing his information on, Williams answered:

"From Trotsky himself. He told me that the social revolution in Russia is only a stepping-stone towards world revolution, which is what the Bolsheviks are aiming at. He told me England was the chief obstacle on their path, so she must be crushed. Besides, they make no secret of it, they keep shouting it out.... Trotsky's last words to me were: 'It will be the happiest day in my life when I see a revolution in England.' " ²³

After that remark, the prime minister took Williams into his study to talk with him privately and asked him to write a memorandum regarding the Allies' policy in Russia. A few days later, Williams had an interview with the English statesman Sir Arthur James Balfour (1848-1930) who also seemed surprised to hear that the Bolsheviks expected a revolution in England.

Williams was trying to present the case for intervention in Russia as a matter of England's self-interest rather than as a charity case for the anti-Bolsheviks. To him, the Bolsheviks were a threat to the world and not an isolated political problem for Russia. Their own propaganda made clear their international agenda and Williams was prepared to use it against them to the best of his ability. How seriously these threats were taken would be a determining factor in the aid that the anti-Bolsheviks might receive. Williams believed that it was critical to stop the Bolsheviks in Russia before they consolidated their hold over the country and began to spread their revolution worldwide. His biggest

²³ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 211-212.

problem was convincing bureaucrats, as well as the general public, that intervention was not just another way of sacrificing British soldiers in a war that had already cost too much in lives and money.

Williams's early frustrations and culture shock are apparent in an article he wrote in May 1918 for the journal *The New Europe*:

One comes back to England, where everything is so simple and orderly and clear. My friend remarks that the grounds of the golf-club are badly kept because it is so hard to get gardeners now. I am startled. It had seemed to me a marvel that a golf-club should exist at all, and the grounds had seemed to me almost oppressively spick-and-span. England is still England, and, looking at steady, determined England, one feels in a way abashed that one had lived through all that in Russia, as though one had committed an indiscretion. That is why it is so difficult to speak of Russia in England now. The range of perception is so different. The standard of judgment is adapted to an order of things that seems fundamentally stable. This war has shocked England, brought startling revelations and deep pain. But it has not yet thrown all values into the melting-pot.²⁴

Williams was also disturbed by the general lack of knowledge he encountered in London regarding Bolshevik doctrines and tactics. Tyrkova noted that "complete chaos reigned in British public opinion" with no one seeming to grasp the differences among the various socialists and liberals in Russia or even between the March and November revolutions.²⁵ Through lectures, private interviews, and articles, Williams tried to dispel some of the misconceptions that he encountered. His focus was on helping Russia, and he realized that to do so would require convincing both government officials and the public that it was in their best interest not to recognize the Bolsheviks or even negotiate with them. Like the prime minister, many expected that the Bolsheviks had just bought themselves some time with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and would soon resume fighting

²⁴ Harold Williams, "The Furnace of Democracy," *New Europe* VII, no. 85 (30 May 1918): 152-156.

²⁵ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 212.

the Germans. Williams was arguing that the Bolsheviks needed external peace in order to fight their internal enemies and consolidate power. In his opinion, the more likely allies of England were the anti-Bolsheviks who had never wavered in their commitment to the war effort. He told Lloyd George and Balfour directly that Kornilov and Alexeev were already reforming the Russian army in the Don region. They had never recognized the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and still considered themselves in the war against Germany. What they needed was help to defeat both the Bolsheviks and the Germans.

When England seemed to be slow in responding to his pleas, Williams cast a wider net. He seized an opportunity when America's president Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) told reporters: "I stand by Russia, as I stand by France."²⁶ Williams put his own interpretation to Wilson's words and wrote in the *Daily Chronicle*:

We would appeal especially to President Wilson to see whether in concert with the rest of the Allies he cannot sanction a more effective policy. We must get the bulk of the stablest opinion in Russia favourable to our intervention. But we must intervene with armed forces. Only round such a nucleus of discipline and order, as foreign troops, will the forces of recovery and reconstruction in Russia be able to rally. The matter is urgent and time presses.²⁷

The next day, a messenger from the *Chronicle*'s office delivered a telegram to Williams from Washington. It was from the secretary of state for foreign affairs, Robert Lansing (1864-1928), who asked on behalf of the president why Williams interpreted "to stand by Russia" as an approval of intervention. Williams was again thwarted, but he had succeeded in bringing the issue of intervention out into the open.²⁸

His articles in *The New Europe* reflect Williams's sensitivity to the controversial

²⁶ *Ibid.*, as quoted in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 215.

²⁷ *Daily Chronicle*, 21 May 1918, as quoted in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 215.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

nature of intervention. Not only did the Allies have to want to help the Russians, but the Russians would have to accept their help. As a linguist, Williams considered the word “intervention” symbolic of the bigger problem:

It is unfortunate, perhaps, that we have to use in reference to such action the term “intervention,” which, particularly in its Russian translation, carries with it a strong suggestion of “interference,” and so arouses inevitable objections and regrettable misunderstandings. These objections may be overcome in the long run, not by argument, but by the skillful execution of a wisely conceived plan – by success in fact. But it should certainly be made clear beforehand, at any rate on this side, that what is primarily intended is not interference in Russian internal affairs, not a violation of the rights and susceptibilities of the Russian people, but rather an exploring expedition for the rediscovery of Russia.... If we are spiritually sensitive, if we are thoroughly alert to the ideas for which we are fighting, and for which we must fight till their supremacy is secured, we shall not lose our way....²⁹

Williams’s desire for a moral justification of aid to an ally was soon lost as events and the necessities of war took precedence. Some intervention had actually begun before his arrival in London. The allies had stored munitions at Archangel and Murmansk and had launched a mission to recover them. British and Japanese troops were in Vladivostok on April 5, 1918; more British troops arrived at Murmansk on May 17, 1918. This mission was far from the intervention that Williams was working for. There were no noble ideals to inspire the troops, and the local population of the areas involved was too small to be recruited. The campaign had the character of an invasion rather than a mission of mercy. The plan to intervene in southern Russia to help Kornilov and Alexeev was still under consideration.

As early as May 18, 1918, Williams was asked to join a committee on Russian affairs headed by Sir George Buchanan. Other members included Bernard Pares and

²⁹ Harold Whitmore Williams, “The Search for Russia,” *New Europe* VII, no. 87 (13 June 1918): 195.

Hugh Walpole. Together they worked out a program for intervention, but the committee worked slowly and unsystematically.

Williams continued his campaign for intervention in the pages of *New Europe* which was devoted to the issues and problems arising from the war and what would be its aftermath. Henry Wickham Steed and historian Robert William Seton Watson (1879-1951) were the editors and they invited Williams, Pares, and later Tyrkova to contribute articles. When Williams began writing for the journal, there was already a debate going on within its pages between advocates of intervention and those who favored recognition of the Bolsheviks. Williams entered the debate on the side of intervention but used his articles to explore some of the problems that beset any decision on how to cope with Russia in its present state.

In "The Furnace of Democracy," Williams cautioned his readers not to assume that democracy, a political form almost taken for granted in Britain and America, could comfortably fit over the remnants of the old political systems of Eastern Europe, Asia, or Africa.

The appeal is to the right instinct, or rather to the only principle that is broad enough, and has sufficient moral authority to harmonize the conflicting political instincts. But when applied to international politics the democratic principle covers a number of processes of very different kinds and qualities. It is a reagent that has very different effects in different polities, in different ethnographical conditions. It is a very general watchword for an era, it is the principle for a world-polity, but it is not a hard-and-fast programme immediately applicable to the needs of every nation that enters that polity.³⁰

American and British confidence in the democratic principle was useful for fighting purposes, according to Williams, but it needed to be tempered by "that tinge of

³⁰ Harold Whitmore Williams, "The Furnace of Democracy": 154.

doubt which, as the field of study broadens and complications appear, makes one go back and carefully sift one's fundamental principles."³¹

This was exactly what Williams had done. His experiences in Russia had caused him to step back and qualify his enthusiasm for the political awakening of the Russian masses. "The liberated and awakened masses – so to speak," he lamented, "got the bit in their teeth and bolted." He warned against the excesses of democracy with such ironic comments as: "If the world is to be made safe for democracy we have to make pretty sure that democracy is not going to be unsafe for the world." In his articles from 1905 or even in his book *Russia of the Russians* published in 1914, Williams could not have written these thoughts. Yet even in 1918, though he warned against the rhetoric of democracy, he did not give up what he believed was a worthy battle for democratic principles.

Russia is now stifled, gagged, and buffeted by a power that tramples on the idea of democracy, in the name, not of a monarchical despotism, but of the dictatorship of the proletariat....Reactionaries all over the world are preaching noisily on the terrible Russian example, and democrats are perplexed and alarmed....Does the Russian disaster mean that democracy is not the principle that is to govern the world and establish harmony among the peoples?...The case of Russia shows the necessity of re-testing, re-examining democracy as a principle of world-wide validity....And with the idea of the possibilities of a world-democracy more clearly before us – this means, I suppose, the sketching out of a sort of ethnography of democracy – we shall better understand what democracy is going to mean for our own particular nation and polity; for it is not quite certain whether we know all about that yet....What is far more important is to get a broad view and realise the possibilities. The prospect of the inevitable victory of democracy with its convulsions and motley reactions and contagions is almost as dismaying as it is stimulating. Safe and successful achievement demands such a force of moral inspiration that I sometimes think that some great prophet must arise to guide us through it all, to give lead and right ordering to that multitudinous awakening of irrational powers. In the meantime we must work as we can to broaden our minds and steady our hearts.³²

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 156.

For Williams, the “great prophet” was not going to be Woodrow Wilson or Lloyd George. While he did support the League of Nations idea in his article and Wilson’s good intentions in proposing it, he wanted the scholarly community and politicians to study the ramifications of democracy before applying it abruptly and haphazardly to other cultures.

Williams took on another difficult issue in “The Search for Russia,” published two weeks later in *The New Europe*. In his previous article, Williams had not addressed the issue of intervention. In “The Search for Russia” he pointed out the central difficulty for the Allies: How could they offer military aid if they didn’t know who would accept it or how it would be used? “Russia, as a tangible, accessible entity,” he wrote, “seems to have disappeared. We do not know what and how to grasp.”³³

Party affiliations had become meaningless, according to Williams. Words like “bourgeoisie,” “proletariat,” and “counter-revolutionaries” obscured the issue in the English press. Williams saw some hope in what he believed was the fluidity of the Russian intelligentsia. They were capable of being violently partisan in public, yet in private could reason freely without “the solemn orthodoxy of public congresses.”³⁴ He wrote that there was only one true Bolshevik, Kadet, and Menshevik and they were Lenin, Miliukov, and Irakli Tsereteli (1881-1960) respectively. England could not afford to give aid based on party affiliation. He also warned against any attempt to turn back the clock on the revolution:

It is an axiom, for instance, that the land the peasants have seized cannot, without perpetuating agrarian anarchy for years, be taken from them and returned to the landlords. It can now only be a question of fair partition of the land seized, and of provision for those who are impoverished by the

³³ Harold Whitmore Williams, “The Search for Russia”: 195-198.

³⁴ Ibid.

seizure. It must also be remembered that with all the ugly manifestations of violence and disorder that have marked the last year the masses have gained from the revolution one certain and inalienable benefit, and that is a new sense of their personal rights and dignity. Every effort made with Allied support to re-establish order and stable government in Russia must take account of these elementary facts, otherwise it will fail.³⁵

Williams was insisting that England could not send troops merely to support the interests of the nobility or middle class of Russia. Such an approach would only aggravate the class tensions that had helped bring down the Provisional Government and eventually cause Russia as a whole to turn its back on its former allies. He admitted that it was risky for England to lead intervention. The country had a tendency to “bungle” such projects, “that apparently being our fixed and incurable habit in every enterprise connected with the war.” Nevertheless, England needed to help Russia by “going forward in faith, recognising our limitations, confident in the justice of our cause.”³⁶

The mixture of cautionary advice and vague but sincere encouragement that characterizes “The Search for Russia” reflects Williams’s own growing ambivalence toward intervention. He was simultaneously determined to get help for the anti-Bolshevik cause and fearful that the project, if handled inappropriately, would only further alienate Russia. Since his return to England he had met with the highest government officials, written reports for them, and worked on a committee to analyze the problem. It seemed as if the government was stalling while events were moving quickly in Russia. Though they had been instrumental in forming the Russian Volunteer Army, Generals Alexeev and Kornilov were no longer leading it.³⁷ General Denikin was in

³⁵ Ibid., 198.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Both generals had died, Alexeev from a respiratory infection and Kornilov in battle.

charge and every change in personnel seemed to warrant further study before the British took action. Williams again took the issue to the public when in October 1918, he used a comment by Woodrow Wilson as the starting point for an article:

President Wilson's thesis on Russia as "the acid test" of the goodwill and disinterestedness of all the belligerents must be applied with utmost rigour. That thesis must be our guiding light; and with this torch in our hands we can already see certain fundamental principles on which we can at once begin to act.³⁸

The first principle was the removal of German soldiers and German influence from Russia. To accomplish this, Williams insisted that the Germans "not be allowed to take cover under Bolshevism."³⁹ Claiming that the Bolshevik Red Army included German troops and was trained by German officers simplified the picture for his readers. He admitted that "the aims of Lenin were not German aims, but they were systematically made to serve German ends." He speculated that it would be interesting to see what was left of Bolshevism once the German "element" was eliminated.

Without German support, Williams believed the Bolsheviks would be greatly weakened. In turn, "the cautious" among the anti-Bolsheviks would be encouraged. If British troops established contact with the Russian Volunteer Army it would strengthen that "plucky little army, which has held out for our cause, and for Russia under incredible difficulties, and would decide absolutely in our favour the wavering allegiance of the Cossacks."⁴⁰

Depicting the Russian Volunteer Army as the underdog was Williams's way of making it more sympathetic. He was not exaggerating when he described them as a

³⁸ Harold Whitmore Williams, "Russia, The Acid Test," *New Europe* IX, no. 105 (17 October 1918): 15.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

“plucky little army” holding out for the Allied cause. Alexeev and Kornilov had been appalled at the Bolshevik repudiation of Russia’s commitments to the Allies. The generals had every intention of mounting a new offensive against the Germans but the idea was impractical given the small number of troops they had at their disposal and the more immediate threat of Bolshevism. Alexeev had increased his army by the alliance with the Cossacks but they were indeed wavering by 1918.

The Cossacks were troublesome allies from the start. They joined the anti-Bolshevik cause not out of any concern or pride for Russia’s past but because they feared a Bolshevik seizure of their vast land holdings. They had been granted allotments of land from the tsars in exchange for their military service. Over time Russian settlers from the interior had become renters with an uneasy relationship to their Cossack landlords, often proving to be Bolshevik sympathizers during the civil war. Having internal problems of their own, the Cossacks could not look beyond their local problems, and when their own interests were threatened they were unreliable on the battlefield as well. The leader of the Don Cossacks, General Alexis Kalendin (1861-1918), found himself severely criticized by his own people for his alliance with General Alexeev. Kalendin committed suicide early in 1918 and no new leader was elected until May 1918. In the meantime, the volunteer army had undisciplined Cossack troops that took advantage of the battles to loot and conduct pogroms. Their conduct created an ongoing public relations problem for the army’s leadership, especially when it was trying to get aid from the Allies.

The problems facing the Russian Volunteer Army were immense and while their defeat by the Bolsheviks was not predetermined, their victory depended on massive intervention by the Allies. The army was located on the outskirts of the old Russian

empire, away from the communication and transportation hub of central Russia that was controlled by the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks also had frozen the assets of many of their enemy's would-be contributors when they nationalized the banks. These circumstances made recruiting difficult, and the army was almost always outnumbered. Yet it had a core of trained soldiers and talented leadership that was not conscripted. Fearing a counterrevolution, the Bolsheviks would have to resort to drafting soldiers for the Red Army in the Fall of 1918, an army consisting mostly of peasant soldiers led by former tsarist officers.

The Russian Volunteer Army, its cause, and its very survival against the odds appealed to Williams. He had promised to try to get them help and when that proved to be slow in coming, he became eager to return to Russia himself and be part of the struggle. His determination seemed uncharacteristic and surprised even Tyrkova, but it shouldn't have. While on a temporary assignment for the *Chronicle* in Switzerland, he wrote to her about his feelings saying simply that "Russian wilds are home – but others, not a bit."⁴¹ He wasn't speaking metaphorically. His romantic nature had been drawn to Russia initially through the short stories and novels of Russians like Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883) and Tolstoy. In the years since, his own experiences had given him characters and drama enough to fill hundreds of newspaper columns. His contemporaries and friends often commented on his seeming aloofness from the events he was reporting and the objectivity he could display, but his relatively shy demeanor and British manners may have contributed to this impression, particularly among his Russian friends.

Williams could be evenhanded in his accounts of events, but he had a fiercely passionate

⁴¹ Harold Whitmore Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, Berne, December 6, 1918, Tyrkova-Williams Papers, Box 7, Bakhmeteff Archive.

side when he felt that injustice was being done and the rights of individuals were threatened. When the war finally ended in November 1918, Williams wrote: "Prussianism has been defeated. Bolshevism, that other great enemy of the new Europe, must be buried with its twin brother in the Prussian grave."⁴² He even mistrusted the new German government, complaining that its "new democratic manner is so hollow and machine-made."⁴³

The vehemence with which Williams conveyed his hatred of Bolshevism became a problem when the *Daily Chronicle* changed ownership and Robert Donald was dismissed as editor. The new editor, Ernest A. Perris (1874-1961), while desirous of keeping Williams as a correspondent, decided that it would be best to distance the paper from his opinions. His articles began appearing with a footnote reading: "Dr. Harold Williams expresses his personal views."⁴⁴ In an atmosphere when peace and reconciliation were the operative catchwords, Williams's drive to continue the war against authoritarianism was becoming risky for his career.

Was he naïve to expect the Allies to carry out a full-scale intervention that would topple the Bolshevik government? Williams was realistic enough to see that British or American intervention would be half-hearted at best while he continued to remain critical of the foreign policy of both countries in his articles. In spite of the obstacles, the Russian Volunteer Army was managing to win battles against all odds, and

⁴² Harold Whitmore Williams, "Opportunities and Dangers in Russia," *New Europe* IX, no. 110 (21 November 1918): 131.

⁴³ Harold Whitmore Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, Berne, November 20, 1918, cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 222-223. He continued: "How can one forgive the Germans when they poisoned Russia with Bolshevism for their own ends and do not repent of it? As long as Uncle Wilson holds the big stick, they are nice and humble, but perhaps later they will manage to take us in once more."

⁴⁴ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 220

dissatisfaction with the ruling Bolsheviks was growing after over a year of their government. The situation seemed volatile to Williams. He had seen before how quickly the Russians could change their leaders, and he continued to hope that Russia could put Bolshevism behind her just as she had over four hundred years of tsarism.

With the war over, the Allies no longer needed to re-establish an eastern front in Russia to prevent German troops from transferring to the West. The initial impetus for intervention was now removed. As a result, British foreign policy toward Russia became even more inconsistent than during the war. There was no consensus within the government on how to proceed. Lloyd George was convinced that the British public would not tolerate a new war, but he was also aware that fear of Bolshevism was becoming more prevalent and could not be ignored. Other politicians, including Winston Churchill (1874-1965), remained adamant that Britain could not abandon its former allies in Russia to the Bolsheviks. Without actually declaring war against Soviet Russia, the British continued their support of the anti-Bolsheviks. Before 1919, they had sent money, troops, and war materials for the campaign in Siberia being conducted by Admiral Alexander Kolchak (1873-1920). Kolchak, however, was rapidly losing ground against the Bolsheviks and the Allies turned their attention and support instead to Denikin's army in southern Russia as Williams had always urged.

Williams got his opportunity to return to Russia in May 1919 and further the cause. The London *Times*, acting on a request from the British Mission assigned to Denikin, recruited Williams as a special correspondent for the newspaper. With his language skills alone, Williams would prove useful as a liaison to the British Mission, the Russian high command, and the Cossacks. Still under contract to the *Daily Chronicle*,

Williams got his editor to agree to share his dispatches with the *Times* and co-sponsor the trip. With the syndication agreement between the *Chronicle* and the *New York Times* still in effect, this would give Williams his widest readership ever in two major London papers and one in America. His reputation as a fervent advocate for intervention also seemed a guarantee that he would provide provocative press to the British and American public.

Before departing for his new assignment, Williams very clearly defined his feelings about Bolshevism:

I cannot too strongly insist in the light of the Russian experience, that Bolshevism is a handmaid of evil reaction, that it is, indeed, itself a reaction, a relapse from that toilsome, liberating achievement which is the essence of true civilization, into a reign of violence and the primitive materialistic impulse. It is the wrong way; it is the negation of liberty and spiritual endeavour. Hate is its principle, and in theory and practice it destroys the conception of the intrinsic worth of the individual. It is a revolt against the soul of man. That is why Bolshevism and reactionary Prussianism find it possible from time to time cynically to combine their forces. I am aware that much of what I am saying may still seem incredible to British readers. Just as President Wilson found it difficult to believe the Germans cut down fruit trees during their retreat, so a number of people in England, who regard the cause of humanity as their own particular domain, refuse to believe in Bolshevik atrocities, and protest much more violently against those who describe them than against those who commit them. Bolshevism admits no compromise. Either you are for it or you are against it. Bolshevism, which is the extreme application of the materialistic interpretation of history, leads only to material and moral destruction. The only clear way of progress is one that is based on the strong sense of moral values, of the intrinsic worth of the individual.⁴⁵

In the article, Williams confronted what he saw as a convenient form of naïveté regarding the nature of Bolshevism. Those trying to be neutral in the coming battle between Bolshevism and western liberalism had, in Williams's mind, already chosen Bolshevism.

⁴⁵ Harold Whitmore Williams, "The Spirit of the Russian Revolution," *Round Table* VIII, no. 32 (September 1918): 710-749.

En route to Russia via Rome and Constantinople, Williams began writing to Tyrkova regularly while he embarked on his assignment without her.⁴⁶ As in the letters to Macie Lovell-Smith, he did not hesitate to express his hopes, doubts, or his faith in God and humanity. He returned to a theme that had emerged during his early life as a minister and that underlies his journalism. During a stopover in Rome, he mused:

It was worthwhile, indeed, to have been in Rome. We have all been here, this is where we went out from, to all the ends of the earth. What new era are we entering? What power will there be? What liberation? If only there is movement and fortitude of spirit, then with the help of God we will create beauty too out of the beauty of this world. Perhaps even slavery will disappear at last. It is worth trying, not for oneself but for Him, who sent us to learn how to love.⁴⁷

He admitted he was having trouble showing charity to either the Germans or the Bolsheviks, but while in Constantinople he wrote that “the Turks bear themselves with dignity. They have sinned, of course, but still they are good chaps.”⁴⁸ What stopped Williams from showing any tolerance toward Bolshevism and Prussianism was his belief that the two philosophies promoted hatred, aggression, and intolerance. Fear of violence from the state or one’s own neighbors was an elemental enemy of the freedom that Williams cherished in his own life. He had always extolled the variety of life he observed since his childhood in the seaports of New Zealand when he first heard the languages of sailors from around the world. Language, then literature, proved a key to the cultures he would later experience in his travels. His early articles had celebrated the various nationalities of the Russian empire and in this way he had fought tsarist

⁴⁶ Most of these letters were not deposited in the Bakhmeteff Archive and are only available in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams’s book, *Cheerful Giver*.

⁴⁷ Harold Whitmore Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, Rome, 12 May 1919, cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 230.

⁴⁸ Harold Whitmore Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, Constantinople, 19 May 1919, cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 231.

Russification. Now Bolshevism threatened to eliminate traditional religion and societal structures from Russian life. Individuals would be classified and treated based on their status as “proletarian” or “bourgeoisie.” Depending on convenience, such labels could be reversed or revised. Former tsarist military officers, once labeled “bourgeois,” became acceptable as “military specialists” when their expertise was needed. The arbitrariness and hypocrisy of such practices repelled Williams. He firmly believed that the Bolsheviks had to be defeated and that the White armies were capable of reestablishing stability, order, and civic freedom in Russia.

Williams brought this mindset with him when he arrived at Denikin’s headquarters in Ekaterinodar, the capital of the Kuban Cossacks. He described the atmosphere to his readers:

Ekaterinodar is unique. Imagine half the War Office, half Westminster and Fleet Street, huddled together, say, in Taunton, sleeping three in a room, wearing all sorts of costumes and uniforms, working for the liberation of England.... Superficially it suggests for a moment a muddled epitome of Petrograd and Moscow on a Cossack background. In reality it is the centre of a crusade.⁴⁹

One of Williams’s desires in this first article especially was to reinforce the impression that British aid was not being wasted on the Russians. He repeatedly stressed the nobility of the struggle, elevating it from a common military campaign to a crusade. He also stressed the appreciation of the Russians for the uniforms, munitions, and equipment they had received from England. His description of the Cossacks jumping off their horses to kiss the British tanks was highlighted by his editor at the *Chronicle*.

⁴⁹ “Cossacks Kiss The British Tanks. Denikin’s Army of Crusaders Advancing Speedily in South Russia,” dispatch dated Ekaterinodar (Caucasus), June 3, *Daily Chronicle*, 18 June 1919, p. 1.

Minimizing the internal disagreements within the camp, he stressed the point that party differences were slight:

The three groups of Right, Centre and Left work in great harmony, and all ardently support the Volunteer army. General Denikin is revered, and hope is dawning at last, after the long night of desperate struggle.... The heroic period is not yet past. The memory of the great adventure of the heroic little band under Alexeieff, Korniloff and Denikin is vividly present here. There is more space now, more organisation, above all more supplies flowing from England in a steady stream.⁵⁰

Two days after writing this article, Williams finally met General Denikin personally. Denikin greeted him warmly saying, "I have heard so much about you. I know you are a real friend of Russia."⁵¹

In the resulting published version of his interview with Denikin, Williams emphasized Russia's gratefulness for England's intervention. He also drew a picture of the general that would combat the impression that all anti-Bolsheviks were reactionaries and monarchists:

Throughout the whole revolution I have not seen a Russian leader who inspires such confidence at first sight. In manner and speech he is directness itself, a man of the people. His rich idiomatic Russian, with its slow gentle intonations, is quite distinct from the language of the intelligentsia or aristocracy.... I have heard it asserted in London that Denikin is a reactionary. No appellation could be more inapt. He is a man, a patriot, a soldier, moved by single-minded devotion to Russia. He is unversed in political affairs, is progressive in his ideas, and is fighting a hard and clean battle against the most treacherous and most unscrupulous enemy that ever devastated the territory and soul of a great nation.... Of recent successes of his army he spoke without elation, but with quiet satisfaction. He dwelt, too, on his recently announced agrarian and labour

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 233.

reforms, to which he evidently attaches great importance.... The military position continues to improve daily.... Denikin's forces have captured 22, 000 prisoners, 150 guns, 350 machine-guns, four armoured trains, and an immense quantity of other booty.⁵²

With the new assignment, Williams could no longer claim journalistic objectivity, nor did he aspire to it. He had a very clear purpose in going back to Russia and that was to build up the reputation of the anti-Bolshevik movement and to help in any way possible its fight against the Bolsheviks. At the very least, he could use his linguistic ability and his connections to politicians in Russia and abroad. A free-lance British journalist on the scene, Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts (1894-1949), recalled much later in a personal reminiscence Williams's appearance and role:

A little out of his element in a British uniform – for he was officially regarded as an Intelligence Officer – he soon became the most valuable channel of communication between the White command and the British Advisory Mission. He was by far the most prominent Englishman there....⁵³

Williams was particularly concerned to demonstrate the differences in character and morals of the two opposing sides. He brought out the humanitarian acts of the volunteer army while noting the “strongly developed pogrom propensities” of the Red army. Although pogroms occurred in areas “liberated” by the White army, Williams omitted mention of anti-Semitism and focused instead on the constructive side of Denikin's campaign. There were challenges the general faced in trying to restore order to the economic and social havoc created by the Bolsheviks:

Now the Volunteer army has faced the great task of feeding and reclothing the liberated but ruined populations. The grain seized at Movozovskaya

⁵² “Interview With General Denikin. Man of the People, Who is Winning Against Bolshevism in South Russia. Sweeping Advance of the Volunteer Army. Denikin's Appreciation of British Support,” dispatch dated Ekaterinodar (Caucasus), June 5, *Daily Chronicle*, 21 June 1919, p. 5.

⁵³ C. E. B. R. [Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts] in a letter to the *Times* (London), 21 November 1928, p. 19. Only the initials C. E. B. R. appear in the *Times*.

was plundered by Bolsheviks from the Don Cossacks. The miners of the Donetz basin are starving, the resources of Kuban will not suffice and supplies of corn are urgently needed to tide the time till the new harvest. Some system of credit must be arranged, to ensure an abundant inflow of manufactured goods into the depleted country.... The primary necessity is the reestablishment of rapid communication with the civilised world, a plentiful telegraphic supply of authentic news, and a deliverance from the poisonous atmosphere of Bolshevik lying. The isolation here is unimaginable.... Systematic development of British aid in these directions would confirm the alliance with reviving Russia, and dissipate the German menace in the East.⁵⁴

Williams joined the British Mission and Denikin's campaign during the height of their successes. In the summer of 1919, it seemed that the volunteer army would continue its advance to Moscow and that the anti-Bolshevik forces would control both Moscow and Petrograd before the end of the year. Yet by January 1920, Denikin's armies would be pushed back to the south and the British Mission would be organizing mass evacuations of refugees and foreigners, including Harold Williams and Tyrkova.⁵⁵

How this turn of events unfolded is not apparent in the articles written by Williams from June to December 1919. His dispatches were delayed approximately two weeks and this complication only added to the discrepancies between his reports of Denikin's advances and news agency reports of Denikin's retreat. His tendency to minimize negative developments had also been present in his articles from the outbreak of the world war until the overthrow of the tsar. Again the same mixture of propaganda written for the good of a noble cause and misguided optimism appear in his writing during 1919. While his version of the history of the Denikin campaign should not be dismissed summarily, it is clear from many of the dispatches that Williams downplayed

⁵⁴ "Reds Disappear Before Denikin. Volunteer Army's Great Task of Relieving the Ruined Populations," dispatch dated Ekaterinodar (Caucasus), June 10, *Daily Chronicle*, 23 June 1919, p. 7

⁵⁵ Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams joined Williams in the fall of 1919.

the problems that would ultimately cause the defeat of the volunteer army.

Williams made effective use of rumor to demonstrate Bolshevik ruthlessness. Among the alleged Bolshevik practices that Williams highlighted was the “nationalization” of women which made them the “property” of the retreating Red army.⁵⁶ He described the “abominable measure” as latent in Bolshevik theory and temper but not universally applied for fear of popular revolt.⁵⁷ He also told of a commander of the Ninth Red Army, a Colonel Sivoloboff, who caused a sensation by driving with his wife and children into Denikin’s lines to surrender. “Russian officers,” Williams noted, “doing enforced service under the Bolsheviks, are prevented from following Sivoloboff’s example by the dire penalty threatening their families in the event of their desertion.”⁵⁸ Adding fuel to the fire, Williams reported the following:

Namenskaya and Millerovo, two great trading centres of the district, tell the same story of robbery and murder, murder and robbery. “They took our cattle and our corn; they sent it north; they took our clothing and furniture; they shot our people without trial, especially the old men; sometimes they took little boys away with them as servants; and often they carried off women.”⁵⁹

In contrast, Williams applauded the volunteer army for its efforts to repair the devastation to liberated populations:

I find a strong tendency here to establish civil administration on the broadest and most liberal lines, with immediate introduction of the elective principle in local government. “We must be very kind and

⁵⁶ “Bolshevik Hindenburg Line Broken/British Tanks and British Khaki Terrify Trotsky’s Troops in S. Russia/Rout of Red Army Complete/ “Red” Drive in Russia/Trotsky in the Late Tsar’s Train Tries to Stop Stampede,” dispatch dated Ekaterinodar, June 17, *Daily Chronicle*, 2 July 1919, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Dry Rot in Red Army/Break-Through to Moscow May Be Expected Quickly,” dispatch dated Novocherkassk-On-Don, June 26, *Daily Chronicle*, 12 July 1919, p. 1.

⁵⁹ “Sweeping Northward in Russia/Tales of Scarred Land from Which the Reds Have Fled/Bolshevik Zone Shrinking,” dispatch dated Ekaterinodar, July 1, *Daily Chronicle*, 16 July 1919, p. 5.

considerate,” say the Don leaders, “to the poor people, who suffered so much.”⁶⁰

Williams was optimistic that there was nothing impeding the volunteer army’s march to Moscow “provided communications could be secured and civil administration guaranteed.”⁶¹ These were two of the biggest problems facing Denikin’s forces. Even as the number of his troops grew, he could not afford to stop his forward momentum and leave behind trustworthy administrators. Supplies of food and clothing were coming from Britain but he could not provide for both his soldiers and the local populations. The British Mission also was frustrated because of corruption within the volunteer army when supplies meant for the troops were being sold on the black market to townspeople. Williams played down such scandals, preferring to relate the positive aspects of Denikin’s campaign. In Ekaterinoslav, Williams told of a deputation of workmen who thanked Denikin for “deliverance from Bolshevik liberty”:

General Denikin, replying, said: “There must be no division into bourgeois and proletarians, nobles and peasants. We must be one Russian people, all equally loving our great country. Labour legislation shall be revised with the assistance of workers and co-operators.” The more generously and the more quickly British aid is given here the better it will be for Russian liberty.⁶²

Throughout the summer of 1919, Williams stressed the need for British aid. He justified the righteousness of the anti-Bolshevik cause by emphasizing the non-controversial side of Denikin as a simple military man, neither dictator nor reactionary.

⁶⁰ “Dry Rot in Red Army/Break-Through to Moscow May Be Expected Quickly,” dispatch dated Novochoerkask-On-Don, June 26, *Daily Chronicle*, 12 July 1919, p. 1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² “Britain and Volga and Caspian War/Denikin Facing Towards Moscow While “Reds” Menace Caucasia/Peril at the Gates of the Middle East,” dispatch dated Ekaterinodar, July 8, *Daily Chronicle*, 24 July 1919, p. 7.

“General Denikin,” he wrote, “with the sure instinct of a genuine patriot and man of action unhampered by excess of theory, divines the needs of this movement at each critical stage.” The general’s goals, he reported, were simple; Russia would be united but with broad local self-government, land reforms to satisfy the peasantry, an advanced labor program, a national assembly elected through universal suffrage, and a republic or constitutional monarchy.⁶³

Williams continued to report Denikin’s advance through the end of October, although with some reservations:

I should like to be an optimist and say we shall be in Moscow before the end of the year. But an intimate experience of Russian revolutions and civil war is profoundly sobering; and I shall not prophesy until the break has actually come and the Bolsheviks are on the run along the whole front. They are not yet on the run. They have lost the initiative; they are being stubbornly pressed back; but they are still maintaining a very hard defensive struggle.... Denikin’s cause is steadily winning.... Few men in the world have such a terrible burden of responsibility as the brave, unselfish General who in the south directs the regeneration of Russia.⁶⁴

By mid-October, however, it had become apparent that while Denikin’s forces were growing, the Bolsheviks, whether through coercion or genuine recruitment, could put more men on the battlefield. The farther the front extended, the harder it was for Denikin to maintain his offensive line. He could not deliver on promises of reforms, whether political or economic, if he could not leave in the wake of his campaign competent administrators. The British Mission wanted to help him in this regard, but it faced problems of its own.

⁶³ “Russian War-March To Freedom/ “On To Moscow and Liberty!” – Motto of the Armies and Rulers/Koltchak and Denikin at One,” dispatch dated Ekaterinodar, July 2, *Daily Chronicle*, 26 July 1919, p. 5.

⁶⁴ “Denikin’s Better Position/Further Off Moscow But Well Supported/Volga and Ukraine,” dispatch dated Rostoff-On-Don (South Russia), Oct. 28, *Daily Chronicle*, 5 November 1919, p. 5.

Williams began to have concerns for the success of the operation. In a detailed and critical dispatch, he faulted British foreign policy for delaying Denikin's efforts to overthrow Bolshevism.⁶⁵ By the time the dispatch arrived at the *Chronicle*, Williams's editor was obliged to add to this dispatch that the British government had recently announced that current supplies being sent would be a "final contribution of stores and assistance to General Denikin."⁶⁶

The central fault Williams found with the British Mission was that its original purpose, as a purely military mission, was inadequate for the problems that had arisen from the civil war. The Mission's main function was to see that British supplies reached their proper destination and that Russian troops were adequately trained to use British weapons. As it was, the Mission was chronically understaffed but as Denikin liberated more territory, Russian expectations of the British Mission had grown:

The Mission represents the only real connection between this part of Russia and the outside world. It controls foreign passports and postal communications. It represents England, it represents all those opportunities and connections from which Russia has so long been cut off. And for this reason it is besieged by a myriad demands, political, economic and merely personal, which it cannot possibly satisfy. The position and prerogatives of the Mission are in excess of its actual power and resources.... Taxed to the utmost by its own particular work, it is made responsible, as the only representative here of British policy, for all sorts of matters with which it is unable to deal. And the result is a certain disappointment. The Mission helps in such big ways. Why, think many Russians, can it not help in all sorts of little ways?⁶⁷

Williams was concerned that Britain was missing an opportunity to demonstrate its genuine interest and support of the recovery of Russia as a nation. As an example he

⁶⁵ "British Policy in Russia/How Our Military Mission's Work is Circumscribed in Some Directions/Need for Civil and Economic Aid," dispatch dated Rostoff-On-Don, Oct. 14, *Daily Chronicle*, 8 November 1919, p. 6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

cited one overworked major who had been put in charge of the economic section of the British Mission. He lacked the resources, time, and staff to investigate the economic possibilities of the areas recovered by Denikin's armies – areas that included vast grain-producing territory rich in raw materials. Williams was concerned that British support would be visible only in the British uniforms that Denikin's troops were wearing or the guns and tanks they used to defeat the Bolsheviks. To really protect the liberated areas from Bolshevik propaganda and promises, Williams believed Britain needed to help the local populations reestablish their economic and civic freedom. By not providing such support, Britain was leaving open economic opportunities that the Bolsheviks and the Germans were unlikely to pass up. "What is needed," he concluded, "is the logical development of the effort that is being made in support of the Volunteer Army now."⁶⁸

At the very time Williams was urging Britain to deepen its involvement in the fate of Russia, the British government was terminating its funds to the anti-Bolshevik movement. Denikin was managing to hold on but on other fronts the Bolsheviks were defeating the forces of the White leaders, Admiral Kolchak and General Nicholas Iudenich (1862-1933). Meanwhile, rumors were circulating at the Mission that the British government was urging Denikin to make peace with the Bolsheviks and that the Mission would be recalled. Williams made a serious effort to repair some of the damage by going to see Denikin himself.

The meeting took place at Taganrog on December 5, 1919. When Williams told him that there were people in England who thought the time had come for him to make peace with his enemies, Denikin responded:

⁶⁸ Ibid.

“You may state categorically that I shall never consent to any negotiations with the Bolsheviks. Whatever happens I shall fight on, and I am sure that is Admiral Koltchak’s view too. The position is difficult now; the Bolsheviks are concentrating their strength against me. But even if peace is made on all other fronts and the Bolsheviks throw against me their entire force, I shall continue fighting. I cannot do otherwise. Our success may be delayed, but we shall win in the end, even though it be at the cost of great suffering. It is particularly painful to me that the suggestion of compromising with the Bolsheviks should be made in England.”⁶⁹

Within the interview, Williams also noted Denikin’s assertion that had he been given adequate equipment he would have defeated the Bolsheviks months earlier. The implications of the dispatch were mainly that Denikin was a noble and unselfish warrior for a just cause and was being betrayed and abandoned by an erstwhile ally.

The reluctance of Harold Williams to admit that the anti-Bolshevik campaign had collapsed around him is apparent in his dispatches. Taken alone they make it easy to believe that he was writing only to bolster the White cause and deliberately not reporting the negative aspects of the Denikin campaign. Both the Bolsheviks and the Whites had their share of corrupt officers and officers who allowed their troops to conduct vengeful raids on conquered towns. Williams, in the end, saw the Whites as the lesser of two evils. It was a task made easier by his genuine admiration for Denikin, and he continued to believe that Denikin would manage ultimately to win the war. Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts gave the following account of his visit to the British Mission in Rostov in December 1919:

I went round to call upon Dr. Harold Williams, the correspondent of the *Times* and *Daily Chronicle*. Mrs. Williams had arrived from England, where I had seen her only a short time before; but already they were beginning to wonder if they would not soon have to think about returning. Not that they were pessimistic. On the contrary, Dr. Williams considered

⁶⁹ “General Denikin Interviewed/ “Our Success May Be Delayed; But We Shall Win in the End.”/Views on England’s Policy/Implacable War on Bolshevism,” dispatch dated Taganrog (S. Russia), Dec. 5, *Daily Chronicle*, 19 December 1919, p. 1.

that the position at the Front was touch and go. The Bolsheviks, he thought, might easily suffer a check and roll back to their bases their forces minimised by desertion to the victors, or the present rout of the Volunteers might continue. On the whole, they were hopeful. So were most of the people whom I met at their hospitable table. Among these I noticed especially M. Peter Struve, the economist, whose acquaintance I had made in Moscow in 1915, when he was editing the famous monthly review *Russian Thought*. Like most of the other Russians I was meeting again, M. Struve seemed greatly aged.... There were no free rooms in Rostov, except, perhaps, those from which dead typhus patients had been removed. The flat in which Dr. and Mrs. Williams were living was overcrowded with British officers from the machine-gun school....⁷⁰

On New Years' Day 1920, the British Mission abruptly ordered the evacuation of Rostov. After days of waiting cramped in idle trains with hundreds of other refugees, Williams and Tyrkova arrived in Novorossiisk. In response to a letter sent there from Sir Samuel Hoare, a family friend in England, Williams expressed his disbelief at developments:

If the front holds, and it is possible to defend the present area, there will be some chance of building up again on new lines. At present we are still under the impression of the astounding set-back which no one expected, and which even now it is hard to explain. The Bolsheviks are so absurdly weak that this sudden collapse here is simply unpardonable. With a little coolness and common-sense it need never have happened. I am extremely disappointed and bitterly blame many people, both politicians and the military. We were all deceived. We were sitting quietly in Rostov and then suddenly the whole thing came tumbling over our heads.... And now people are sitting huddled together in tiny Novorossiisk, counting heads to see if every one is really there, staring at each other helplessly and asking what on earth has happened. It is a deplorable state of affairs.⁷¹

Novorossiisk was evacuated under similar circumstances in March 1920. Williams helped military officials work out the evacuation plan to get thousands of foreign nationals and Russian refugees to Constantinople. In his last dispatch as a

⁷⁰ Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts, *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919-1920* (London: W. Collins Sons, 1921), 117-118.

⁷¹ Harold Whitmore Williams to Sir Samuel Hoare, draft of a letter dated Novorossiisk, January 16, 1920, cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 245.

Russian correspondent, he could only convey his personal bitterness, writing that “the crushing sense of abandonment by the Allies is only mitigated by the efforts of the British military and political Missions, who are doing their utmost to relieve the intolerable distress.”⁷² British foreign policy had changed, Williams observed, and “the cause for which Denikin and Kolchak fought is thrown to the winds.” He admitted that he was too close to the situation to pass judgment on British politics, but his remaining hope was that the British public would at the very least show generosity and sympathy to the Russian refugees.⁷³

Williams’s career as a Russian correspondent ended with the Denikin campaign, and he returned to England with Tyrkova. To the very end he had underestimated the power of the Bolsheviks both militarily and ideologically. As an occasional lecturer, he was dismayed when his speeches critical of the Bolshevik regime made little impression. After a period of unemployment, the London *Times* in June 1921 hired him to write leaders and editorials on a vast array of subjects. In a series of letters to his wife who was away at the time, he noted his frustration:

I write about all countries, and everywhere everything is going to the dogs. An incredibly stupid world. I have turned conservative. I don’t like this new world, with its gross disorderliness.... It is very hard and sorrowful, but the thought of Russia colours all my writing. To have lived through such a catastrophe means to realize the instability of all political foundations and the vanity of many of our efforts. But there are foundations, firm, unshakable. On them we can base our life though the storm rages around us.⁷⁴

⁷² *Daily Chronicle*, March 6, 1920, cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 250. This dispatch, “Last Brave Battle of Denikin’s Men/Events Which Led to Exodus from Novorossisk,” was undated when it was printed in the *Daily Chronicle* of March 30, 1920. Williams’s comment that Denikin’s and Kolchak’s cause had been “thrown to the winds” by the new British foreign policy was omitted, probably by his new editor.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Harold Whitmore Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, London, September 16, 1921 and September 18, 1921, cited in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver*, 261-262.

Far from the “Kingdom of God on Earth” that Williams had wanted to help build as a young minister, there had risen up the harsh reality of a different world. If the *Times* was a strange place to become the last refuge of Williams’s active career, it was at least a logical one. The conservatism of the *Times* editorial policy suited him, and by May 1922 he was promoted to foreign editor. It was a position he held with some contentment until his death in November 1928.

CONCLUSION

When Harold Williams left Russia in 1920 never to return, he was disillusioned and emotionally exhausted. His hopes for a Bolshevik defeat, indeed his often illusory reports projecting that defeat, had failed to be realized. Prior to his disillusionment, however, he had lived through, reported, and interpreted events that raised and dashed the hopes of millions. To many outsiders, Russia was a place where a new world could be born and a new way of life introduced that would be somehow fairer, more rewarding, and more humane. To idealists like himself concerned with the future of mankind at the end of the nineteenth century, Russia had an almost mystical attraction. Although by no means alone in his love and fascination for his adopted country, he was among the best able to assess the implications of the events he covered and to lift the veil of Russia's mystique.

Williams's strong point was social and political commentary rather than reportage. Once the Russian autocracy seemed vulnerable, he was caught up in the excitement and speculation about Russia's future. Reform of all phases of society, economy, and government seemed imminent, and he wrote about the possibilities of change in a new democracy. Along with Russian visionaries, he experienced the drama and romantic energy which initially infused the diverse anti-autocratic movement before and during the 1905 Revolution. From then on, Williams detailed in his articles the frustrations of the Duma, the incessant debates and deliberations, and the lack of unity in the face of a government whose response to criticism appeared at once receptive and defensive. With the advent of World War I, his analysis took a new turn as it

concentrated on human interest stories from Russia's battle fronts. Arguably, Williams's most potent contribution to journalism as a foreign correspondent was his coverage of the rise and fall of the Provisional Government; his frequent dispatches provided astute political assessment while also capturing the mood of the Russian public with all its hope, despair, and, finally, apathy.

Scholarship on Williams is not without criticism of his coverage of the Russian Revolution and the civil war. In an early study of newspaper coverage of the November 1917 Revolution, Walter Lippmann (1889-1974) and Charles Merz (1893-1977) statistically scrutinized the reliability of the *New York Times* – and in the process evaluated Williams's reporting. They counted ninety-one reports from November 1917 to November 1919 that the Bolsheviks had fallen from power or were on the way out. The sources of such erroneous stories were rarely the newspaper's correspondents or Williams, though their dispatches made a Bolshevik collapse seem as inevitable as the writer deemed it desirable. In criticizing Williams's reports of Denikin's campaign in southern Russia, Lippmann and Merz observed: "The news about Russia is a case of seeing not what was, but what men wished to see."¹

In later scholarship, Phillip Knightley and Elisabeth Hupp Schillinger made a similar evaluation. According to Knightley, Harold Williams "was so personally involved with the anti-Bolshevist forces that he should never have been given the assignment."² Schillinger asserted that "reporters unschooled in Russian history and society took it upon themselves to draw illogical parallels and make baseless

¹ Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz, "A Test of the News: An Examination of the News Reports in the New York Times on Aspects of the Russian Revolution of Special Importance to Americans March 1917-March 1920," *The New Republic*, supplement to Vol. XXIII (August 4, 1920): 3, 10, and 42.

² Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty*, 138.

predictions.”³ Her general condemnation of press coverage made no mention of Williams’s many years of experience in Russia.

On the other hand, Geoffrey Dawson (1874-1944), Williams’s editor-in-chief at the *Times*, noted his “astounding knowledge of Russian affairs, and an instinct for what he didn’t know,” calling him “irreplaceable.”⁴ Bernard Pares, in a personal tribute, credited him with sending home “some of the greatest articles in the annals of foreign correspondence,” adding that “he was for everything that stood for life and character and social consciousness.”⁵ Lord Robert Vansittart (1881-1957), permanent under-secretary of state for foreign affairs during the 1920s, recalled that he “counted on him (Williams) not only as a friend but as an ally of weight beyond mine in exposing German and Russian intentions.”⁶ The *New York Times* obituary praised his wartime dispatches as “universally admired for their accurate, vivid and authoritative picture of the historic events he witnessed and for the sympathetic attitude that the writer never lost toward the human beings of various social classes that suffered in them.”⁷ Noted diplomat and statesman George F. Kennan (1904-) described Williams as “one of the most passionately interested and best informed of the western observers in Russia at the time of the Revolution.”⁸

Although a conscientious foreign correspondent, Williams professed no great love for his work, particularly in peacetime. In a revealing letter to his wife while on

³ Elisabeth Hupp Schillinger, “British and U.S. Newspaper Coverage of the Bolshevik Revolution”: 10-16 and 24.

⁴ Quoted by Sir John Evelyn Wrench in *Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1955), 265 and 276.

⁵ Bernard Pares, “Harold Williams,” *Slavonic Review* VII, no. 20 (January 1929): 332.

⁶ Lord Robert Vansittart, *The Mist Procession* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1958), 363-364.

⁷ *New York Times*, November 19, 1928, p. 19.

⁸ George F. Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920, Volume I: Russia Leaves the War* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1956), 352.

assignment in Berne, Switzerland shortly after World War I, there is a sense of boredom and distraction:

It is better to be a carpenter, a sailor, a groom than to be a correspondent at such a time as this....How hard it is to write anything intelligible. It was simpler when there was a war, but I am very thankful the war is over....⁹

That Williams had his biases is unmistakable. If he detested Bolshevism, neither was he kind to socialism generally. He distinguished his roots in Christian socialism from the doctrinaire political variety, and he did so vehemently. Believing that all extremes were bad, he looked forward to a society where a more stable, level-headed, and basically English-style constitutionalism would prevail. If his biases color his accounts, the same is true for other eyewitnesses and later scholars. Reading his original accounts gives one a sense of the drama, exhilaration, and heartache of the events, providing a necessary supplement to scholarly research.

Most significantly, Williams took the Russian people to heart. While he could write about the restructuring of political institutions and economic plans, he could never divorce them from those affected. He worried about a generation of college students whose studies and careers had been disrupted by the upheavals; he sympathized actively with the wives and children of soldiers during war, revolution, and famine; and while he became convinced that Russia's immediate future would be even worse than its past, he held out hope for a better destiny. If he had a weakness, it was his overly optimistic trust in good resolutions and his faith in the triumph of justice. Above all, he aspired to be a decent citizen of the world community as well as a prescient journalist.

⁹ Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 27 November 1918, Tyrkova-Williams papers, Box #7, Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University, New York.

Today Russia is again experimenting with democracy and trying to understand its past. In his time, Harold Williams was among the first to see through the falsities of a new absolutist political system. Although premature in his predictions of the imminent collapse of Bolshevism, he pinpointed its ruthlessness and its suppression of basic freedoms and human rights. He would have encouraged his adopted homeland's current efforts.

Harold Williams's Assignments as a Correspondent

1. Stuttgart, May 1903-December 1904: Correspondent for the London *Times*. Williams was to cover the activities of the Russian Liberation Movement centered around Peter Struve. He was a regular guest of the Struve family and was introduced to Ariadna Tyrkova through Struve.
2. Saint Petersburg and Moscow, December 1904-Early 1908: Correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*. Williams covered the Revolution of 1905 and its aftermath.
3. Saint Petersburg, Moscow, and Constantinople, spring 1908-1914: Correspondent for the London *Morning Post*.
4. Saint Petersburg, Moscow, and the Russian provinces, summer 1914-1918: Correspondent for the London *Daily Chronicle*. He covered the Russian home front during World War I, the collapse of the monarchy, the Provisional Government, and the Bolshevik takeover.
5. Southern Russia with Denikin's army, May 1919-March 1920: Correspondent for the London *Daily Chronicle*, with syndication of his articles to the London *Times* and the *New York Times*.
6. London, June 1921: Joined the editorial staff of the London *Times*; appointed foreign editor in May 1922. Williams remained at that post until his death in 1928.

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Contains correspondence, manuscripts, and news dispatches relating to Harold Williams and Ariadna Tyrkova. The archive contains his letters to Macie Lovell-Smith which detail Williams's thoughts on his youth in New Zealand and his years in Europe prior to 1905. The archive is particularly strong in material for the period 1920-1928 and includes unpublished manuscripts and notes regarding European and Russian affairs.

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