



DURHAM
AT **WAR**



John Headlam

Travel diary written at the time of the March Revolution

Diary account, part 1

2-21 March 1917



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

Some impressions of a visit to Russia, written
at various times between 17/2 and 8/21 March,
during a tour of the South Western Front from
CZERNOWITZ to TARNOPOL.

[handwritten]

First reference to Revolution is in
Pg 13. The previous part is my
tourist chatter for family
consumption



Our time at Petrograd was so taken up with the meetings of the Conference and its committees, and with private interviews with personages of every sort, from Grand Dukes and Prime Ministers downwards, that there was little opportunity for sight-seeing for use seniors, though some of the younger members of the party managed to put in a good deal of gaiety. I confined myself to two or three of the big dinners, a “tea” at the Duma and the Foreign Office reception – very gorgeous functions which all interested me very much. I was sorry I couldn’t go to the one big social event, a party in our honour, given by the Countess Nostitz. I should have liked to have seen the “beauty and fashion”, but by the time this came off, I was dead beat: and after dressing myself up for the occasion, came reluctantly to the conclusion that if I was to be fit for my work next day, bed was the only place for me.

The Emperor very kindly placed his box at the opera at our disposal for the whole of our stay, so one could stroll in any night one felt inclined, and I managed this a couple of times and enjoyed it immensely. Of course, the ballet was perfect and, I believe, the music very good: but, of course, that is a subject on which I cannot speak: I love the Russian music, however it has always been a fad of mine/

Page 2

mine that the accompaniment spoils a song though I have never been able to get any musical people to agree with me! It always seems to me to make the whole thing artificial – the singer standing there, waiting until the accompanist has “done his bit” before starting off, etc. and I believe you’d agree with me if you heard the Russian singing. Even in the churches they have nothing but the voices and the effect seems to me infinitely more solemn and religious than anything I have ever heard before. And it is wonderful to see a Russian band put their instruments down and start singing – the conductor with his baton, etc. just the same, only the voices alone.

Since then, I have been treated to a concert by the “singers of a regiment at the Front (every regiment has its singers), and am more than ever in love with Russian music.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can’t change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

The churches impressed me – and the religious fervour of the people. Of course, they (the churches) are gorgeous and, I suppose, one must say, barbaric. But they are often very beautiful. I was particularly struck with the one erected over the spot where Alexander II was murdered by the Nihilists. The bit of pavement and the iron railings where he was standing when the bomb fell have been left intact and this wonderful church built over them. It is quite unlike anything I have ever seen, but splendid beyond description./

Page 3

description.

But perhaps the most impressive thing about the Russian religion is the way it, or at any rate, the “outward and visible signs” are taken into the daily life. In the corner of the mess room in General Brusilov’s special train was a beautiful ikon, and most striking of all the different “shops” in an arsenal seem to vie with each other in the adornment of their shrines. In the gloom of the foundry, among the whirr of the machinery, you see the gleam of gold and silver in the frame of some sacred picture. And in the frame sometimes a very touching sight, the St. George’s Crosses won in the field, hung there as votive offerings. It is all very oriental – indeed, if one has been in India, one must be stuck continually with the little touches which recall the East. In a Russian Country Town – and it is one of the great assets of these war-time tours that one goes out of the beaten track – the shops are the shops of the bazaar – just square holes, with the front open to the street and closed at night by huge iron-plated folding doors, secured by two or three great padlocks. The sign-boards are a great feature and really tell you – in the simplest way – exactly what you can buy. For they are covered with pictures of all the articles, and the artists appear to delight in representing with/

Page 4

with the greatest fidelity to detail, the utensils [sic] of the most domestic description and the most intimate articles of toilet.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can’t change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

Then the peasants in the country wear a sheepskin coat, own brother to the Afgan “poshteen”, a little difference in the embroidery, and that is all. A Russian gives the hilt of his sword to touch on presentation, exactly as an Indian does and I was given for lunch in the best hotel in Petrograd veritable “Kababa”. By the way, talking about food, do you remember that soup our cook at Simla used to give us? with whipped cream in it and hot cakes full of foie gras to eat with it? We never could make out where he had learnt it. That is pure Russian. One always eats hot cakes with soup here and very good they are. I like the Russian cookery, and there is a magnificent Gargantuan air about the way things are served – a long dish comes in with, say a great sturgeon, or a dozen or more partridges in a row, or a silver pheasant in the middle in full plumage with wings spread, and partridges arrayed all round, rather like chickens round a hen (but without their feathers).

But the real national dish is the “Blini” or pancake. I was fortunate enough to come in for “Butter week” (i.e. week before Lent) when they are eaten. They are ordinary, but very good, pancakes and are served flat, in a pile. If you are a Russian, you take a dozen, if not, two or three. On these you place/

Page 5

place a large spoonful of whipped cream – on that, a still larger one of fresh caviare [sic] – and, but this is optional, a slice or two of lax. You then roll the whole thing up and pour over it a good ladle of melted butter – and then eat it all with a spoon and thank God you are hungry – or at any rate greedy.

I first sampled this after a long morning in the snow, watching the gunners training at Tsarakoe Selo. We had started at 9, after only a cup of tea, and the thermometer down to something below zero, with a brilliant sky and all the air sparkling like diamonds. We came into the mess about 1.0 and had these, with Vodka (tell it not) and I think it was the best luncheon I have ever eaten.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

But don't think the Russian is all feasting. I have lived at "G.H.Q." where all the staff including the Grand Duke messed together, and at General Brusilov's headquarters, and nothing could have been simpler. For lunch, or supper, two courses – macaroni or eggs, or something of that sort, and a made up meat dish such as rissoles.

For dinner, soup, a plain joint and stewed fruit. Most of the messes dine in the middle of the day – 2 or 3 o'clock. In the big hotel at Kiew, dinner is from 2 to 7. Sometimes, red or white wine of the country is drunk, but more often, nothing but tea or "Kwass" – a teetotal beverage, made out of bread/

Page 6 (contains sketch)

bread (and the best I have drunk but nasty at that) or mineral water. Glasses of vodka are rare treats. I like it very much and have acquired the art of opening my mouth and throwing it down my throat with a flick. It is not the taste one drinks it for, but the extraordinarily pleasant glow it diffuses over the whole body – there's a fine text for a temperance orator! I wish I could bring some back to England with me. It's a grand thing to acquire a new vice in one's old age!

But enough about eating and drinking – you will say, too much already!

Rather a curious coincidence when I got to G.H.Q. The French Attache there had just got his periodical packet of photographs of the French front sent him, among them were a set of "Visite du General Anglais Headlam" – he gave them to me.

I have been staying a couple of days at such an interesting town called Kamanets Podolsk [Kamianets-Podilskyi, in present day Ukraine]. It is an old Polish Frontier fortress against the Turks, Cossacks and the Tartars from the Crimea. It reminded me very much of Durham, standing in the same way on a knoll in a bend of the river, surrounded by higher hills. But in this case, the bend of the river is so nearly a complete circle that the tongue of land separating the two channels is only just wide enough to form a causeway for the road. It is just a rib of rock, with sheer sides



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

walled up and called still the “Turkish Bridge.” As a relic of their occupation the Turks added minarets to the churches, which they/

Page 7

they turned into mosques. When the Poles got back they kept the towers, but clapped a statue of the Virgin Mary on the top.

We had a lovely walk there on a brilliant day. Unfortunately our day at Kiew [Kiev] was hopeless – continual snow in which one could see nothing. But I had a very interesting time. The general told off a very nice fellow to look after me and gave me a motor, etc., and the Dowager Empress expressed a wish to see me and I had a long tete a tete – half-an-hour or more-with her. A very interesting talk about all sorts of subjects. Her language on the subject of Kaiser Bill was “painful and frequent and free”. But what with that and having to spend at least two hours in the Arsenal, seeing guns being repaired and such like, I never managed the old churches to which I’d intended to devote my afternoon. I believe they are simply wonderful – and all the old monks in catacombs. The site is rather like Kamenets, but on a bigger scale, and the river is the Dneiper, several hundreds of yards broad. I believe the view is magnificent and the place is full of historical associations – in some ways more truly Russian than Moscow itself. I hope to go there on my way back.

Of course I always go about in Russian Uniform. It is very simple as they wear khaki [kahki?] too, so it only means the addition of large silver shoulder straps and a fur cap. The latter I love – so comfortable.

Page 8

Talking about clothes, they tell me that the English ladies who think it more amusing to nurse Russians than English, go about in a wonderful uniform, including sky-blue breeches! The Russians let their nurses go much further up to the front than we do – really almost up to the trenches – one sees them everywhere – very often driving about with young officers in sledges – and very attractive they look in their big veils.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

I think our English way is best, but I mustn't say a word against the Russian, for one saved me from bad earache after a bitter cold drive by treating it with warm oil etc.

This motoring in the snow is very trying – 100 versts [verst - obsolete Russian unit of measurement equivalent to 1.0688km] the day before yesterday and 120 to-day. The first was through lovely scenery, [sic] down a regular mountain valley out of the wooded Carpathians, and then over the rolling country of Bukovina to Czernovitz.

To-day to Galicia, it was not so interesting. The valley of the Dneister is fine, but it was generally very “ordinary” country. The wide open spaces of dazzling white have a great charm, though, and after a cold foggy morning the trees were a wonderful tracery in hoar-frost. And everywhere there are signs of war – for the tide of war has swept three times over this country – so there are trenches and wire entanglements and so forth everywhere.

But there is very little of the destruction to which we are accustomed – a few houses have only come in the way

Page 9

of a shell – every now and then, a hamlet or portion of a town has been burnt (always the Jews quarter) – and a more contented population you could not imagine. Of course, there are no men except the greybeards – the Austrians took away all those capable of military service. But the old men look very cheerful, pottering about in their costumes of the regular stage Tyrolean type, and the women are evidently having the time of their lives. They come streaming into the towns on market day literally in their thousands, and as one drives through the villages, one is everywhere greeted with smiles. I don't know whether it is the costume, but it certainly seems to me that these Bukovina peasant women are, en masse, the nicest looking I have ever come across. Their dress – and they all wear it – is very becoming. It consists of a plain white linen “smock”, embroidered, sometimes very beautifully on the shoulders and breast and round the hem at the bottom. Over this, they wear a sort of shawl, forming a skirt but leaving the embroidered edge of the smock showing.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

This upper petticoat is usually of bright colours. Then comes a girdle round the waist with long ends hanging down of bright beadwork: then a Zouave jacket.

Out of doors at this time of the year, of course, men and women wear huge sheepskin coats – wool inside- with the skin beautifully tanned to a soft creamy colour and

Page 10

embroidered in blue, yellow and green. These coats are always made with a waist, and what a tailor would call “a spring in the skirt”; and worn open, so as to show the embroidered bodies, etc. They have a very saucy effect! Then the head is bound in a white handkerchief and often a bright handkerchief tied turban-wise. And the boots – high, of course, but made straight in the leg, like a man’s riding boot – the foot black – the leg, bright yellow. I should like to have bought a whole costume, but we are travelling light.

Czernowitz [Chernivtsi, Ukraine] is a very picturesque town, and shows no sign at all of war, except in one of the suburbs round the bridges, where the fighting was. There is a very beautiful statue of the murdered Empress Elizabeth of Austria – I have never seen anything quite like it. It is a full sized statue, but instead of posing stiffly on a pedestal in royal robes, she is just sitting naturally on a big boulder with some flowers in her hands. The pose is perfect – just a girl at a picnic. The other object of interest is not so agreeable – the huge palace of the Catholic Archbishop – built in the St. Pancras railway station period and style, with magnificent suites of reception rooms, furnished in the most hideous taste at the greatest possible expense, and all wrung out of a very poor agriculture country. The orthodox churches in the villages are picturesque and suitable – built of wood, like their houses.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can’t change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

In Catholic parts the villages are disfigured by huge ostentatious erections, just like those now springing up all over Ireland – showing nothing but an entire disregard for the poverty of the habitations of the people who have paid for them. Anything more desolate than our long drive from Buchach (?) to Tarnopol [Ternopil, Ukraine], it would be impossible to imagine. Bare rolling wolda with scarcely a tree, and the poor collections of huts which serves for villages, mostly destroyed. This was the line of the Russian Retreat in 1915, and the Austrian advance was only stayed at the very gates of Tarnopol. So every ridge was lined with trenches and everywhere one saw graves. Imagine a bleak winter's evening – with a moaning wind carrying the dust from the dry snow – a country such as I have described – the only objects in view these forlorn looking crosses, with occasionally just the outline of a horse under the snow by the roadside, and the only living creatures the carrion crows. It seemed somehow strangely familiar, and if you have ever seen a picture of the “Retreat from Moscow”, you will know exactly what it was like.

The Austrians seem to have been very careful about the marking of graves – friend or foe alike – all their own were numbered, and the Russian ones had little inscriptions,

Page 12 (includes drawing of crosses)

“Here lies three Russian soldiers” and so forth. The distinction between crosses was also carefully preserved, the Russians with the foot-rest, while the Turkish graves have the Crescent.

Talking of strange people, one sees, the most wonderful collections working along the roads. All the country people to begin with, - I have talked about them before – then thousands of prisoners, Austrians and Turks, all apparently well-fed, and quite happy. And finally the Turkomans and such like. The Russians have not the right by their treaties to exact military service from the various tribes in their Asiatic dominions, so they have brought then [sic] into work – from Bokhara and Samarkand



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

and Khiva and all the petty Kingdoms, so familiar to all who have studied the advance of Russia towards our Indian frontier. They add a great element of the picturesque, with their distinctive dress – long cloth robes often purple or green, lined and trimmed with fur, and with fur caps of weird design and their slanting Mongolian eyes. I suppose they are very much the same to look at as the Tartar hordes that swept over Russia under Genghig Khan.

There is not doubt a motor-car – certainly an open one – is not suited from driving over these wastes of snow. Wrap up as one may, it is almost impossible to keep warm,

Page 13

and the wind in one's face is like stinging nettles. It is such a relief when the time comes to desert the car for the sledge. That is delightful, especially when one gets a regimental "troika" – surely the most picturesque of all carriages – you must know it by the pictures. A big trotting horse in the centre under a huge arch, and these Russian horses trot at an astounding pace – and on each side, seemingly scarcely attached to the sledge, a regular "ladies hack" type, cantering gaily.

But the mention of ladies hacks reminds me of lady dentists. I did laugh when, having applied for the service of the military dentist the other day, I was ushered in to the torture chamber to find a pleasant looking, buxom lady of some 35 to 40 attired in a most business-like white overall, waiting to operate. It appears that there are a good many in Russia as the Government wouldn't allow women to become doctors.

In the train 8 / 21st March.

We are now on our way back to G.H.Q. from the front, and I think it may be of interest to jot down the impressions I have formed from seeing the reception of the news at the front, before allowing my mind to be biased by all that I shall hear at G.H.Q. I know nothing at present as to what has occurred anywhere but where I have been. Up to this,



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

I have been very careful to avoid any reference at all to political events in anything I have written. As an official visitor, received alike by the Emperor and the leaders of the different parties, and with no political functions, it seemed to me only right to avoid any expression of opinion, and especially anything that might compromise those Russians who had given me their views on the state of affairs and the probable trend of events. Now that is over, one can speak freely.

During our stay at Petrograd, of course, the political crisis was in everyone's mind, and nothing struck me more than the open way in which Russians spoke on the subject. It was indeed a common remark of theirs that a few years ago, no one would have dared to say half that they had – there seemed to be absolute confidence that now the whole nation was of one way of thinking.

The situation was obviously one of great delicacy. The postponement of the meeting of the Duma had caused wide-spread indignation and all the members were in Petrograd – one of the most interesting functions was the tea they gave in our honour.

Ministers made no secret of their precarious position, dependent upon the whim of an autocrat, never knowing from day to day when they might be dismissed without reason owing to some Court intrigue.

There were constant arrests, and though I never saw

one, English people told me of carriages closely shut and guarded being driven rapidly over the bridge to the fortress prison of St. Peter and St. Paul. One saw, too, amid all the glitter of the streets, the long queues of people waiting patiently in the bitter cold for the opening of the baker's shops. Hunger is the handmaid to



Revolution, and it was whispered to us that the Guard Cavalry Division had been ordered to Petrograd from the Front, and it had refused to come, the officers openly declaring that they would not act against the people. When an Emperor cannot count on the allegiance of the officers of his own guard, the end is likely to be near.

And yet we all hoped it might be avoided. The leaders of the popular party, M. Rodzianko at their head, let it be known that they would put up with almost anything rather than risk the catastrophe which any upsetting of Government might cause. Much, too, was hoped for the meeting of the Duma which was fixed for a day or two after I left Petrograd, and when we got the news at G.H.Q. that it had met and that all had passed off well, everyone breathed more freely. That was the last I heard before leaving for the front. And then one day, like a thunderclap came the news of the dissolution. We only just heard the fact on our tour, but everyone was grave; it seemed that things could not go on – there must be

Page 16

a limit to what any people – even the most docile – will suffer, particularly when they are engaged in a life and death struggle, and they feel that their most dangerous foe is within their gates.

No one, I think, accuses the Emperor personally of disloyalty but they certainly do the Empress – whether rightly or wrongly – I cannot say. All are agreed that she has been the evil influence, but whether actuated by German Predilections, or by a determination to maintain the autocratic power, is a matter much debated. Certain it is, however, that the Germany party has been strong at Court, that in fact, they owe their existence to Court favour. If ever there was a case of “Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat” [Whom the Lord wishes to ruin, he first deprives of reason] (I hope my Latin is correct!) it has been that of the Emperor. A man with great natural charm, he was the idol of the country when he assumed command of the Army not two years ago. Since then, by what can only seem pure folly, he gradually lost all the regard of his subjects. Over and over again, during the time I have been in this country, I have heard Russians say “If we could only have responsible Ministers,



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

there would be no more trouble.” But the Emperor would not consent. When it was pressed upon him by well-wishers, he would often agree, but before anything was done, the Empress was able to exert her influence, and then time and again, he went back on everything, and refused to abate one jot or tittle of his autocratic powers. He seems to have all the obstinacy of a weak man.

Page 17

And there were more serious, or at any rate, more damaging things too. The German influence at his court, the open scandal of Rasputin. You may say, why didn't someone speak to the Emperor? They did. I believe everything possible was done in the very highest quarters, but to no avail. One man who thought it his duty to speak to him personally on the subject, told me that there were some things you could not say more than once to an Emperor.

This “wrong headedness” in some matters seems incredible. To give you an instance. Committees were formed all over Russia for developing local industries and setting up munition works on the lines of our “national shell factories,” the thing above all needed in Russia. Yet every possible obstruction was put in their way. A Minister of war was dismissed by the Emperor because as he said, he wanted a man he “could trust not to co-operate with non-official organisations hostile to the Government.” They probably did talk politics, but they were all out to beat the Germans. So far did this persecution go that in the semi-official “Army News” which each Army circulates, they were ordered to insert every criticism of these industrial organisations and forbidden to include a word in favour of the work they were doing. And this after the bitter experience of the result of the want of ammunition in 1915! It is almost impossible to credit it, - but it was so. Another, man of high position and of

Page 18

considerable age, who was “doing his bit” as a censor, told me how maddening it was having to stop all that he would like to publish, and which as he said “ought to be published”.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

To hark back – we got the news of the rising in Petrograd on arrival at Tarnopol, after a long drive across Galicia. The General commanding the Army kindly sent a Staff officer to let us know, though, of course, they themselves knew little beyond the bare fact; and nothing was published until the Manifestos of the Emperor and of his brother and that of

Even now I know practically nothing of the course of events at the Capital – all I can speak of is what I saw myself.

One was naturally shy of doing more than expressing sympathy in their anxiety, and hope that all was for the best, especially as regards the prosecution of the war, and of that there seems no doubt. It was taken by all that the news would be a great encouragement to the man in the trenches, and so it seems to have proved. All with whom I spoke seemed to look upon it as a great relief from a state of tension which had become almost intolerable, though all did not express this so forcibly as one Russian friend of mine, whose remark when we heard the news was “Now we are rid of these devil people.”

The manifestos were published – being officially read to the troops by their commanders – the day we left the front, and the General commanding one of the Divisions in the Corps came with us on appointment as the new Governor-General of

Page 18

Moscow. But it was not until we reached Kiew that we saw any popular demonstrations. There the streets were full of people, flags flying, and the troops defiling before the “Duma” (or Town Hall) where the General in Command and the local authorities were on the balcony. There, for the first time, I saw some signs of Republican sentiments. There were a few red flags, and the statue of Stolypin (the Prime Minister who was shot in the theatre there a dozen years ago) had the face covered with a crimson scarf and a placard “D—d traitor” hung round the neck. Next day the rejoicings continued and the republican element was much more



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

pronounced, most of the bands playing the Marseillaise, and nearly all the soldiers – officers as well as men – and the great majority of the civilians wore red rosettes and, curiously enough, carried branches of our English “palm” tied with red ribands, while many regiments carried red banners. Some of these had inscriptions hailing the “Democratic Republic”, but more bore simply “welcome to freedom” or “the nation and the Army” “a National Army” and such like unobjectionable sentiments. At the same time, the placard and the bandage had been removed from Stolypin’s statue, and the most perfect order prevailed. All the shops were open, everybody looked cheerful and there was not the least sign of hooliganism. I was in the streets all day and did not go away until a midnight train. In the crowd in the streets – in the turmoil of the station – the punctiliousness with which I was everywhere

Page 19

saluted was most marked. I was, of course, wearing the badges of a Russian General. The only disturbing element was provided by the student – ever the stormy petrels of Continental disturbances. I saw them in the crowd – unshaven unhealthy looking youths, with long hair and pallid faces, fitted out with a whole armoury of rifles, swords and revolver, waving red flags and cheering hysterically. The “intelligentia” were responsible for most of the harm in the troublous time of 1905, owing to their total ignorance of the feeling of the people and their lack of organizing power, and I trust they mayn’t be allowed to drag the present constitutional movement also into the path of anarchy. By some lamentable foolishness the students are excused military service; the best thing the new Government could do would be to withdraw this exemption – a year in the trenches would make men of them.

In the morning I inspected the central school of the Flying Corps. The Grand Duke Alexander is the head of the Corps, and had invited me to visit it when I met him in Petrograd. He had now left Kiew with the Dowager Empress, presumably to join the Emperor – no one knows. But I was shown over by the Colonel in command and found them all at work and everything in perfect order, though at 12 o’ clock they had



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can’t change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

to take part in the Demonstration Parade; and an hour afterwards I saw the whole of the officers and men march past with their red rosettes!

Page 20

Of course it was a great opportunity for me to see the troops. I was particularly impressed by several battalions composed of about the finest looking young men I have ever seen fully up to the standard of our Guards in size and smartness of bearing. They were the “Cadet Schools” of which there are five at Kiew – and these thousand or two of young fellows were all in training for officers; a happy augury for the Army that they should have such a reserve to draw upon.

To-day’s journey has been marked by two rather significant incidents. Waiting at a small junction, an armed guard suddenly marched in and lined up on each side of the line, and then a saloon was backed up to be attached to our train – with three soldiers with fixed bayonets on the platform at each end. It contained, I learnt, Baron Friedriche, the Chamberlain or Minister of the Household at the Court for forty years, on his way to trial at Petrograd. I last saw him presiding over the ceremonies in the palace at Tsarskoe Selo [Tsarskoye Selo, former Imperial residence, 24km south of St Petersburg] – the perfect picture of the ideal courtier – covered with orders, and conspicuous, even in that brilliant throng, by his great star in diamonds, a personal gift from the Emperor.

Page 21

The other incident was the arrival of the news sheet with the order of the new Minister of War abolishing the title of “Excellency” for generals, and the correspondingly degrading title of “inferior” for private soldiers, and directing that, in future, the former were to be called simply “general” and the latter “soldier” – and further, abolishing the present laws by which a private soldier cannot enter restaurants, railway carriages, etc., except of the lowest classes. The former I regret – I had got quite used to being called “Excellence” and liked it very much! The latter had been a great hardship for my poor servant, and we have sometimes found great



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can’t change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

difficulty in arranging for him. It was on par with the cases we had at home some years ago of restaurants and public houses putting up notices "No soldiers served here", except that this was a Government order – so I am very glad to see it abolished.

But at Kiev we found time for other things than attending patriotic demonstrations or inspecting military institutions. There were the oldest churches in Russia to see, and I am an inveterate sight-seer and globe-trotter. So we left the cheers of the crowd and the strains of the Marseillaise to plunge into the labyrinths of the catacombs where the monks lie in their open coffins by the cells they occupied so many centuries past, and look at the

Page 22

Byzantine mosaics in the church of St Sophie, built just 900 years ago by the chief whose son married the daughter of our English Harold. But perhaps more interesting than even these ancient buildings were the congregations who listened with such devout prostrations to the beautiful chanting of the services, and rushed forward with such obvious sincerity to form with their heads a support for the great silver-bound Bible as the priest came forwards to the rails to read the lesson – young soldiers, smart and well set up in their long military great-coats, and old peasants in great sheepskin coats, with their hair straight down from the crown and cut straight all round – the very image of the pictures of our Saxon forefathers in that very Harold's time. There can be no doubt about the Russians being a religious people.

I think I wrote before about the site of the great monastery of Kiev in a lofty, wooded bluff over a bend of the Dneiper. In spring it must be lovely – even in the gloom of a winter's afternoon with the whole landscape white except for the dark belt of forest it was very beautiful; and perhaps the absence of colour elsewhere served only to bring out a richer hue in golden domes and minarets.

There is nothing like gold! As the domes rose over the trees they took my mind back at a bound to the great



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can't change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk

Shive-Dagon pagoda at Rangoon [Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon, Myanmar], and the golden icons set with precious gems, and the monks in their long robes, and even the candles guttering before the shrines, seemed curiously akin to those Buddhist temples.

One word more about the revolution. From all that I had heard before, from all that I have seen since, I believe that it will strengthen rather than weaken Russia in a military sense. The one danger seems to me to lie in the fact that, according to some rumours which have reached us, the troops took an active part in bringing it about, I believe that there is scarcely anything more dangerous to the safety of society than for the Army – as an Army – to become a factor in political affairs. That is why I fought with all my might against the popular view as to our right line of conduct in the Curragh crisis.

We need not go back as far as the “decline and fall” to find instances of the danger. The appetite grows by eating, and there will always be politicians ready to promise anything for the support of the armed forces. If it is true that the Army took the active part reported I shall be nervous for the result, particularly in view of the severe repression under which the lower ranks have suffered here. It is dangerous to apply one’s own standard to other people,

but it must be wrong for an officer to snatch a cigarette out of a soldier’s mouth and slap him in the face for smoking in public! They say someone tried this on one of our British bluejackets – and took 6 weeks in hospital to recover!

John Headlam [signature]



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You can download this work and share it with others as long as it is credited, but you can’t change it in any way or use it commercially

© Durham County Record Office: Ref. D/He 299. Email record.office@durham.gov.uk