

**Russian Liberalism and British Journalism:  
the life and work of Harold Williams (1876-1928)**

**a thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the career of Harold Williams (1876-1928), a journalist who, after training as a Methodist minister at home in New Zealand and taking a doctorate in philology in Germany, spent the years 1904-18 working as a foreign correspondent in Russia and in the 1920s became Foreign Editor of *The Times* in London. Although the thesis traces Williams's life as a whole, its particular concern is with his role as an interpreter of Russia to the British and the British to Russia. As a correspondent, Williams covered the 1905 revolution in Russia, the Duma period, the effect on Russia of the First World War, the fall of the tsarist monarchy and the coming of the Bolsheviks. Since, in 1917, his dispatches were appearing simultaneously in the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *New York Times*, he played a not insignificant part in the formation of both British and American opinion about the Russian Revolution. Because he tended to take sides and pursue causes, his journalistic work was by no means entirely neutral. The thesis sheds light on his involvement in the Russian constitutional struggle, the movement for a rapprochement between Britain and Russia, the work of the British war-time propaganda bureau in Petrograd, the campaign by Russian émigrés and western sympathisers to bring about western intervention in the Russian civil war, and the negotiation of the Locarno Treaty in the 1920s (which had the effect of isolating the Soviet Union). The proposition underlying the thesis is that although Williams was often admired for his modesty and his unassuming nature, he was nonetheless fiercely dedicated to the causes for which he chose to work. Sometimes, therefore, his journalism was a means to an end, a tool for the subtle promotion of the things in which he believed.

## Acknowledgements

I could never have finished this thesis without the help I received from a lot of people, some of whom I doubt I'll ever be able to properly thank. I'd especially like to mention the following people.

Katherine Lickwar gave me permission to use the Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams papers at Columbia University Library, and Tanya Chebotarev, the curator of the Bakhmeteff Archive, was very helpful while I was working there.

Margareta Gee of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington helped me during my visit to consult the Harold Williams papers there. Margaret Lovell-Smith shared her notes on Harold Williams and copies of the Lovell-Smith family newspapers with me. Neena Williams provided me with information about the Williams family, as did Jane Teal, the Archivist at Christ's College, Christchurch, and Karen Rusbatch of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists. I especially want to thank Rae Wilson, of the Methodist Archives of New Zealand, who came up with all kinds of pieces of information about Harold and Aubrey Williams.

Paul Simmons, of Moscow State University, very kindly showed me drafts of his work on Williams's encounters with the Tsarist police, and gave me copies of his notes from Williams's police files in GARF. Pekka Anttonen of the Paivlehdien Arkistosaatio in Helsinki located Williams's correspondence with Eero Erko for me; Annika Grönholm of the Finnish Institute in London helped me to find this archive in the first place, and Kati Blom helped me to read Williams's Finnish letters.

Harvey Pitcher very generously gave me the newspaper cuttings of Williams's articles he had used to research and write *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution*. Michael Palmer and William Peters provided me with information on William Peters, Arthur Ransome and Harold Williams. Alison Williams talked to me about her great-uncle, and gave me a copy of 'the Amazing Harold Williams' on tape. Elisabeth Sandschulte told me about the Tyrkov family's history, and supplied several of the photographs I have used as illustrations. Nick Mays helped me to find relevant material in and outside the Harold Williams collection at the News International Archive. Christopher Seton-Watson kindly gave me permission to consult the R. W. Seton-Watson papers at SSEES, and George Kolankiewicz gave me permission to consult the Bernard Pares papers there. Ann Farr and Malcolm Davis of the Brotherton Library, Leeds, Peter McNiven of the Guardian Archive at Manchester University Library, and Godfrey Waller of Cambridge University Library all helped me during my research in those archives. Jay Satterfield at Chicago University Library and Madeline Gibson at the University of Illinois Library located papers relating to Harold Williams in the Samuel Harper and H. G. Wells archives.

Katie Reid, Roger Alston and Rosy Phillipson all proof-read sections of my thesis, and Rosy also helped to put the illustrations together. Rosy, Nick Cott, Victoria Gardner, Zoe Colley, Laura Smith and Matthew Clark have all been through bits of the last four years with me.

The Arts and Humanities Research Board, which funded my Ph.D. research, also gave me a grant to go to New York and consult the Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams papers at Columbia University. David Cannadine gave me a lot of time at work to complete this thesis, without which I would have submitted it much later. Patrick Salmon and David Saunders, who jointly supervised this thesis, have given me lots of their time, advice and support.



## **PREFACE**

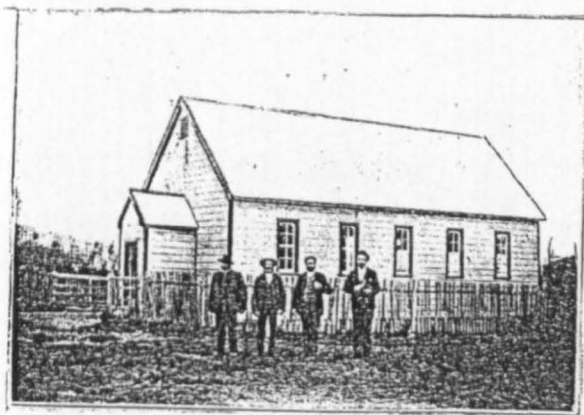
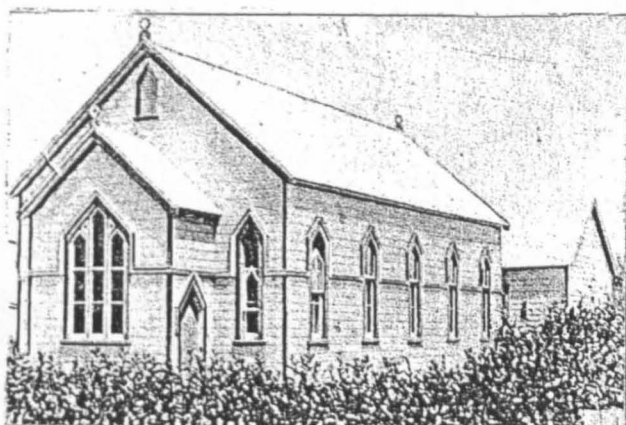
### **A note on dates**

Until February 1918 Russia used the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar, with the effect that the Russian calendar was twelve days behind the western calendar in the nineteenth century, and thirteen days behind at the beginning of the twentieth century. When referring to events in Russia prior to the change of calendars in 1918, I have given both dates, in the form 1<sup>st</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> March. When referring to events in Britain, and to the date of publication of Williams's dispatches, I have always given the 'new-style' western date. If only one date appears, it can be assumed that it is the date according to the Gregorian calendar.

### **A note on names**

Russian names for places and people used in this thesis are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system, but without diacritical marks. The only exceptions are names which have a particularly well-known and accepted western equivalent (e.g.: Tolstoy, Yasnaya Polyana). Since Williams and his contemporaries often used western forms for Russian names which are now outdated, some names appear in different forms in quotes and in my own text (eg. Izvolsky and Izvol'skii, Cadet party and Kadet party). Where places are referred to which now have a very different name, the current name appears in brackets – e.g. Reval (Tallinn), Lemberg (Lviv).

Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, whose married name was Borman and whose maiden name was Tyrkova, is referred to throughout her time in Russia as Ariadna Tyrkova, as this was how she styled herself. In London in 1918 and after, and in reference to her writings after this date, I refer to her as Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, as again, this was what she usually called herself (although she occasionally used Tyrkova, and sometimes just Williams).

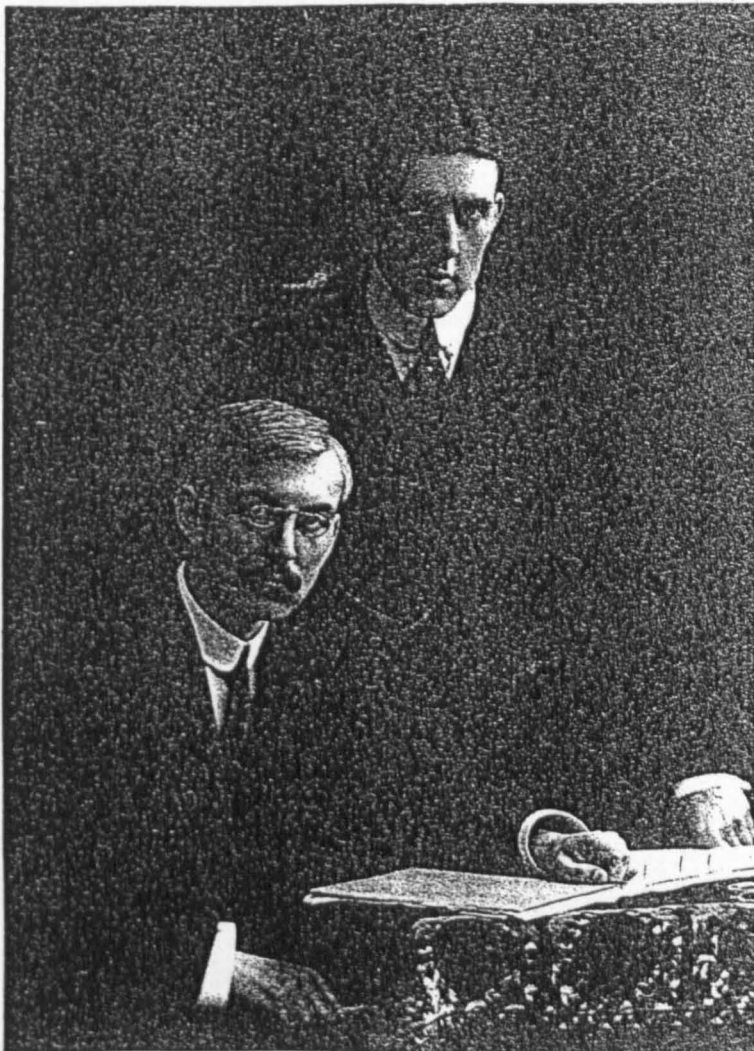


The churches at Inglewood, Midhurst and Waipuku, in the Waitara circuit, New Zealand.

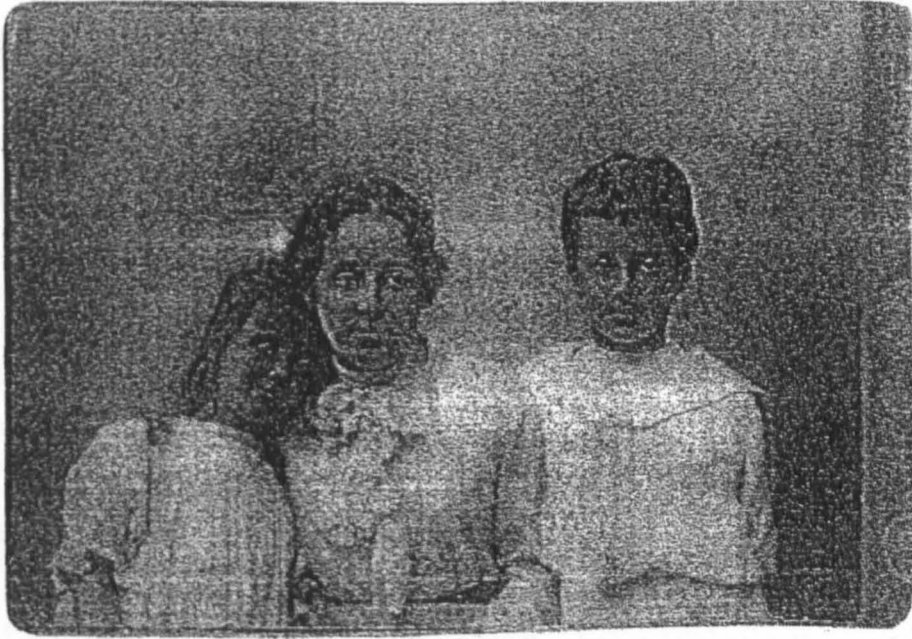
taken from William Morley, *History of Methodism in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1900).



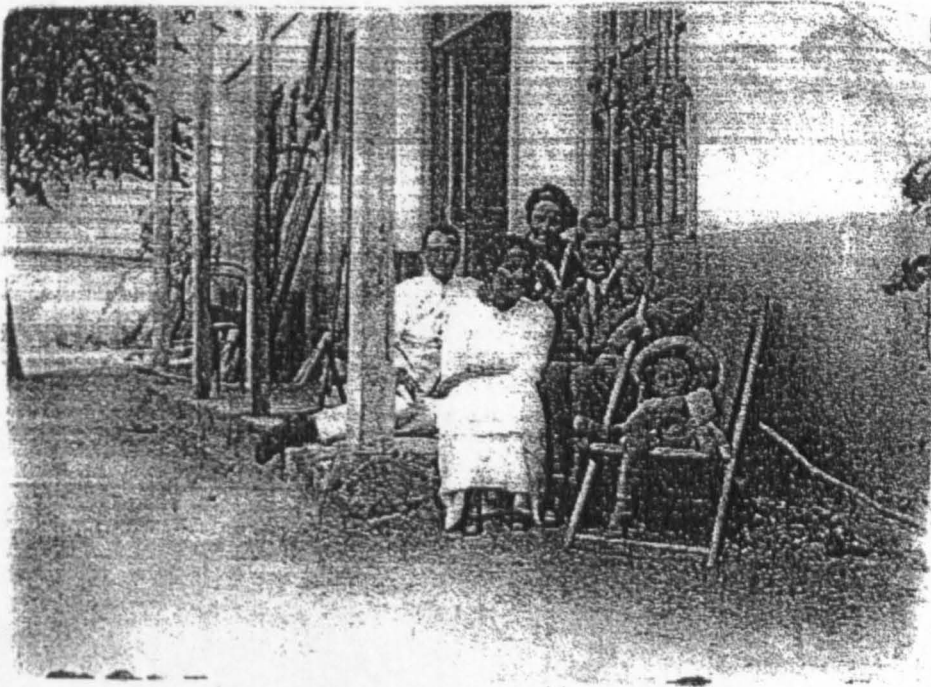
Harold Williams in Berlin, circa 1900.



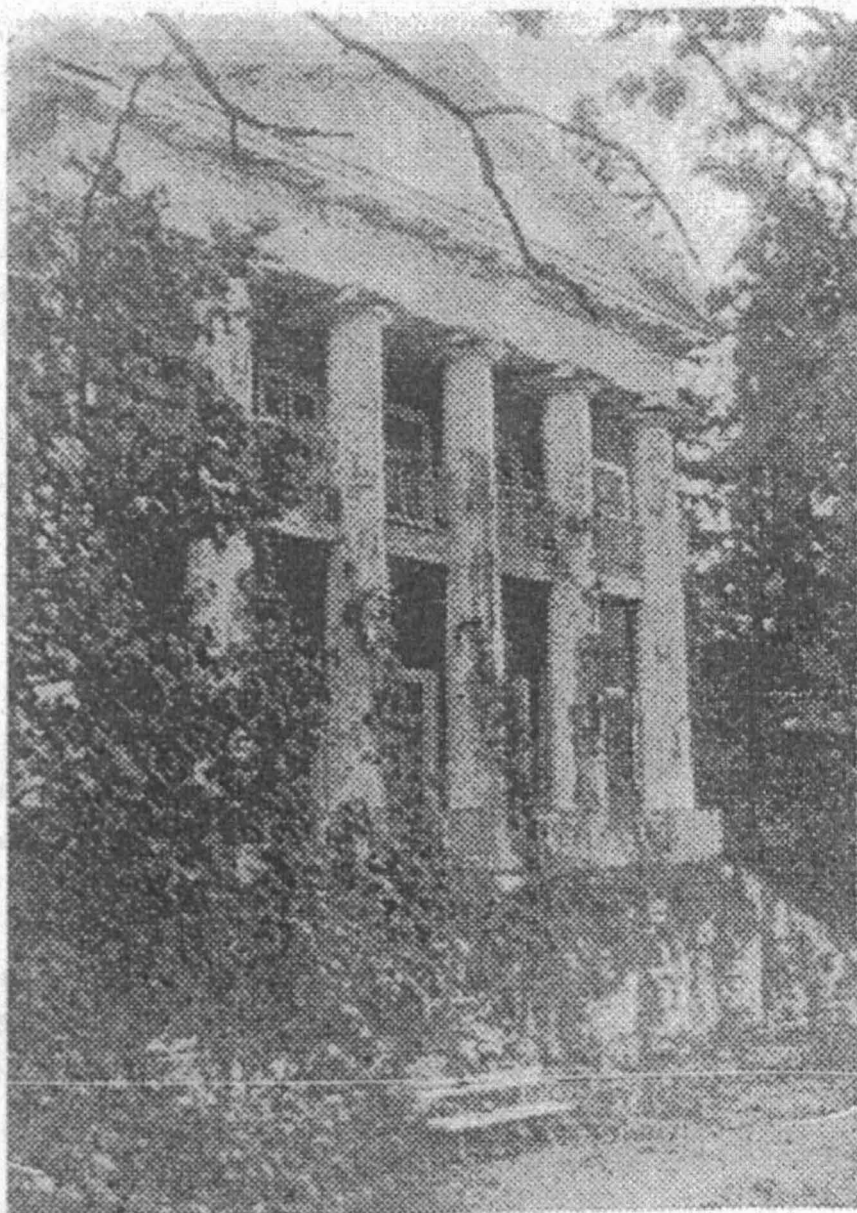
Harold and Aubrey Williams in St. Petersburg, 1914.



Ariadna Tyrkova and her children, Sonya and Arkadii, 1904



In Constantinople, 1912



*Усадьба Вергежа. 1914 г.*

Vergezha, the Tyrkov family's estate in the province of Novgorod





*Усадьба Вергежа, 1914 год. Третья слева – Софья Карловна, мать Ариадны Владимировны; далее – А.В. Тыркова-Вильямс; Елена Павловна с мужем, Аркадием Тырковым; Нина Алексеевна Кокорина, школьная учительница; Герберт Уэллс; Гарольд Вильямс.*



*В санях, слева направо: А.В. Тырков, Герберт Уэллс, Н.А. Кокорина; на спинке саней – А.В. Тыркова-Вильямс; в центре фотографии, на втором плане – Гарольд Вильямс*

Harold Williams and Ariadna Tyrkova at Vergezha, with H. G. Wells, 1914





Harold Williams and his family in London in the 1920s.  
Taken from <http://www.bl.uk/collections/easteuropean/tyrkov.html>, and  
<http://www.nzedge.com/heroes/williams.html>.



## Introduction

In 1935 Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, a prominent Russian liberal politician, writer, and one-time member of the Central Committee of the Constitutional Democrat (Kadet) party, published a biography of her husband, the New Zealand-born journalist and linguist, Harold Williams. In a review for the *Observer*, Robert Seton-Watson summed up something of the appeal of the book, and of its subject.

What could be more romantic than this career of the young New Zealand Methodist probationer, born of solid Cornish yeoman stock – the typical “dark celt” of modern anthropological jargon – who already in his teens had mastered obscure Malayan or Filipino dialects, and was led to study Russian by his interest in Tolstoyan doctrine. He soon finds that the Church is not his vocation, and fate draws him, penniless but never daunted, right across the world to the racial hotbeds of Eastern Europe, and immerses him in the struggle for Russian liberation, which was indeed to end in the downfall of the hated Tsarist regime, but also in the forging of a despotism till then un-dreamt-of in the Slav world.<sup>1</sup>

Harold Williams’s career does in many respects seem romantic. It was certainly varied and interesting. He was born in New Zealand in 1876, but at the age of 24 left for Germany, where he studied for a doctorate in philology at the universities of Berlin and Munich. He secured work for *The Times* reporting on the activities of a group of liberal Russian émigrés, led by Petr Struve, in Stuttgart. At the end of 1904 he went to St. Petersburg for the *Manchester Guardian*, where he provided coverage of Bloody Sunday and the events of the revolutionary year of 1905. He remained in Russia for fourteen years, writing for a series of British newspapers (the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Morning Post*, and the *Daily Telegraph*) and also working with Bernard Pares and others to improve relations between Britain and

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Seton-Watson, ‘A Notable Journalist’, *The Observer*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1935, p. 10. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver – the Life of Harold Williams* (London, Peter Davies, 1935). R. W. Seton-Watson (1879-1931). See chapters three, four and five.

Russia.<sup>2</sup> During the First World War he became involved in British propaganda in Petrograd. He was a close advisor to the British Ambassador to Russia, Sir George Buchanan, and worked hard to encourage speedy acceptance by the British of the new Russian Government after the February Revolution in 1917. In early 1918, following the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, he and Ariadna Tyrkova left Russia for London, where they were leading lights in the campaign for Allied intervention in the Russian civil war. He returned to the south of Russia briefly in 1919-20, to cover events on Denikin's front for *The Times* and the *Daily Chronicle*. He ended his life as Foreign Editor of *The Times* in London.

Throughout his life Williams maintained an interest in philology, which he might easily have pursued as a career, and he picked up new languages with an apparently astonishing ease. Stories about his remarkable linguistic abilities abound, and they become almost ridiculous as they are re-told. There is the story of a group of traveling Indians at Chudovo railway station, with whom only Williams could communicate. There were the Papuans who had been brought to St. Petersburg as part of a theatre troupe, and whom the Russian Premier's (Stolypin's) office asked Williams to see in order to ascertain whether they were being exploited. There was the group of Filipino parliamentary delegates that Williams encountered in the Duma, who asked him if he could help them to find the English philologist, Dr. Harold Williams, who had written the first grammar of the Ilocano language.<sup>3</sup> There was the time that Williams accompanied Bernard Pares to a field hospital during the war, and 'proved to know every language of the Austrian Empire'. When he had left, a group of

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Pares (1867-1949). See chapters three and five.

<sup>3</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 90-93.

Poles asked Pares where his Polish friend had gone.<sup>4</sup> There is the story of Williams, in Reval (Tallinn) for the visit of Edward VII in 1908, astonishing onlookers by replying to a toast in fluent Estonian.<sup>5</sup> It is almost impossible to know with what fluency Williams spoke any of these languages, or in what number – estimates, by the end of his life, range between thirty and fifty. After his death, friends and colleagues were ready to testify to his ability to fluently read an Egyptian newspaper, or to his perfect knowledge of ancient and modern Greek.<sup>6</sup> There is little surviving evidence – his Russian correspondence was certainly fluent, but then he lived in that country for fourteen years. His surviving Finnish letters contain some minor errors in the early stages, but soon become perfectly accurate.<sup>7</sup> Williams had grammar books in his study for languages which included Japanese, Chinese, Albanian, Old Irish and Tagalog, and Gospels (from which he liked to learn) in, amongst many other languages, Lithuanian, Welsh, Hebrew, Swahili, and Mandarin.<sup>8</sup> Harold Nicolson, who also reviewed Tyrkova-Williams's book, painted a picture of him lisping in Maori, speaking Serbian with a slightly Croat intonation, Rumanian with a Bessarabian lilt, and Swedish with 'a decidedly Norwegian accent'.<sup>9</sup>

In an essay on language written during the war, Williams explained something of his fascination with language, and the connection he felt existed between communication, in the form of language, and life.

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<sup>4</sup> Bernard Pares, *My Russian Memoirs* (New York, 1969, first edition London 1931) pp. 90-91. See also Bernard Pares, 'Harold Williams', *The Slavonic Review* Vol. VII January 1929 pp. 327-333.

<sup>5</sup> A letter from Francis MacCullagh, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1928, cited in Pares, 'Harold Williams' p. 332.

<sup>6</sup> *The Times* 21<sup>st</sup> November 1928 p. 19, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1928 p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> See his correspondence with Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams in Box 8, BAR MS Coll Tyrkova-Williams, and his letters to Eero Erkko at the Helsingin Sanomat, Paivalehden Arkistosaatio, Helsinki. I am very grateful to Kati Blom for her help in reading these Finnish letters.

<sup>8</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 330.

<sup>9</sup> Review of *Cheerful Giver* by Harold Nicolson, *The Daily Telegraph*, Christmas books supplement, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1935, p. xv.

We breathe, and by breathing we live. But not only do we live. By directing a certain proportion of our breath upon our vocal chords we produce sounds which, modified in the oral cavity by certain movements of tongue, teeth, palate and lips ... actually convey to other human beings an indication of certain phases of our consciousness...<sup>10</sup>

There was a gentleness, modesty and apparent diffidence about Harold Williams's character which made a lasting impression on those who knew him. He carried his learning lightly, was shy, yet completely unselfconscious, and had a strong sense of morality and spirituality. One friend described this as a 'commanding serenity'.<sup>11</sup> After Williams's death, Robert Vansittart, who had come to know him well in the 1920s, wrote that 'If ever ... I had been able for a day to believe that I had a character like his, it would have been a happy day for me; and if many of us could have or hold that illusion, even for a day, the world would be a happier place'.<sup>12</sup> Frank Swinnerton, another friend that Williams made in London after the revolution, left the following description of him: he had 'a peculiar tenor voice which, although it cannot have been raised at any time above a murmur, had a definite "tone", neither high pitched nor low pitched but with a strange singing quality.'

He laughed a good deal, in the same neither nasal nor throaty voice, and he was fond of filling any gap in a narrative with the words "and so on, and so on". The recurrence of these words, combined with his shy demeanour, helped to give one an impression of natural diffidence, and I think he was very modest; how far diffident I cannot say.

He was a tall man with a good idealistic head rising high above the ears, who wore his silver hair very short and a small neat dark moustache above the mobile lips. He had pince-nez upon his straight but unexpectedly short nose and looked as if he might be decidedly short-sighted; and one thought of him as a scholar and a visionary as well as a journalist. He combined a serenely happy-go-lucky air with unembittered sadness at the fate of Russia; and as his Russian wife and Russian step-children did

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<sup>10</sup> A short essay on language by Harold Williams, dated 21<sup>st</sup> May 1916. Box 23, BAR MS Coll Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>11</sup> G. Young to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 14<sup>th</sup> February n.d. Box 26, BAR MS Coll Tyrkova-Williams. 'Obituary, Dr. Harold Williams'. *The Times* 19<sup>th</sup> November 1928 p. 19, *The Times* 20<sup>th</sup> November 1928 p. 17, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1928 p. 21, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1928 p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> *The Times* 21<sup>st</sup> November 1928 p. 15.

the same it was easy, in staying with them, to put the note of the household as one of merry melancholy.<sup>13</sup>

As a journalist, however, reviews of his work were mixed. His fierce involvement with the anti-Bolshevik cause and his use of his journalism to further this campaign generated violent criticism. Philip Knightley, for example, describes Williams as 'the worst of the war correspondents' in post-revolutionary Russia; a man who was 'so personally involved with the anti-Bolshevist forces that he should never have been given the assignment'.<sup>14</sup> Arthur Ransome, who worked as a journalist in Russia during the First World War and the Revolution, fell out with Williams irretrievably over their attitudes to the revolution and their contrasting journalistic coverage of it. Nevertheless, Ransome saw Williams as 'a quiet man, unselfish, extraordinarily kind.' He did not think it possible that Williams had ever had an enemy.<sup>15</sup>

All of these things make Williams an interesting and intriguing character, but they also make a balanced assessment of his work quite difficult to write. This is something which is reflected in much of the existing literature about him.

Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams's 1935 book about her husband was the first, and is the only full-length published study of his career. The book draws on some of Williams's newspaper correspondence, as well as personal letters and of course Tyrkova-Williams's own memories, and those of some of Williams's acquaintances. It is an engaging book, and a frank account of Williams's work as Tyrkova-Williams saw it. In one respect at least her book has an advantage that no other study can have,

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<sup>13</sup> Frank Swinnerton, *Swinnerton – An Autobiography* (Plymouth 1937) p. 262.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Knightley, *The First Casualty. From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker* (London 1978) p. 138, pp. 169-70.

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Ransome, *The Autobiography of Arthur Ransome*, edited by Rupert Hart-Davis (London 1976) p. 167.

in that she knew and remembered Williams intimately. However, one of the problems that any study of Williams faces is exactly this one of disentangling the views and actions of Williams and Tyrkova-Williams. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams was a well-known liberal Russian politician, heavily involved in the liberation movement before 1905, in Russian politics before the war, and in émigré politics and social life after the revolution. Inevitably her view of the events of this period colours her biography; she is writing about events in which she, as well as Williams, was closely involved.<sup>16</sup>

The question is how far it is possible to separate their views and actions. As a couple, they were certainly very close. Their work and the causes with which they were involved were often connected, and they shared many political views. They also depended on each other – when apart they were clearly unhappy, and wrote to one another almost every day.<sup>17</sup> However, their closeness as a couple does not mean that it is impossible to assess their lives and careers independently. Williams was always an independent thinker, and while he may have been influenced by the attitudes of those around him, including Tyrkova-Williams, he did not lack the ability to seek information for himself and to draw his own conclusions. Where it seems necessary or appropriate this study will attempt to address the question of how close Williams was to Tyrkova-Williams's views, and how much he was influenced by her. But it will deal with him on his own terms and attempt to establish his individual position, while taking into account the influences on it, of which she was one.

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<sup>16</sup> She addresses many of the events of the pre-war period in more detail in her own memoirs; Ariadna Tyrkova-Vil'iams, *To, chego bol'she ne budet. Vospominaniia izvestnoi pisatel'nitsy i obshchestvennoi deiatel'nitsy A. V. Tyrkovo-Vil'iams (1869-1962)* (Moscow, 1998), originally published in two separate volumes: *Na putiakh k svobode* (New York 1952), and *To, chego bol'she ne budet* (Paris, 1954). There are also sections of an unpublished manuscript entitled 'Pod'em i krushenie', dealing with the period up to 1918, in Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams's archives at Columbia University - Box 14, BAR MS Coll Tyrkova-Williams. See also her account of the events of 1917; Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *From Liberty to Brest Litovsk – the first year of the Russian Revolution* (London 1919).

In the 1950s and 1960s there were a number of attempts to rescue Williams from the apparent obscurity into which he had by this time sunk. Oliver Gillespie, a New Zealand journalist who became interested in Williams in the 1950s, produced a radio play entitled 'The Amazing Harold Williams', which was based heavily on Tyrkova-Williams's book, and was broadcast on New Zealand radio in March 1954.<sup>18</sup> Gillespie was convinced that Williams was 'the greatest intellectual [New Zealand has] yet produced', and was anxious to bring him to the attention of current generations. He was in touch with Williams's brothers, Aubrey and Owen, and for a while was engaged in an attempt to have Tyrkova-Williams's book republished in New Zealand, and later an attempt to publish a new volume. However, his less than tactful correspondence with Tyrkova-Williams made her reluctant to send him any of the material in her possession.<sup>19</sup> He began writing to acquaintances of Williams's in England, but this does not seem to have been particularly fruitful either. Arthur Ransome warned him that he was sticking his head in to a hornet's nest, and advised him to postpone publication for as long as he could.<sup>20</sup>

In 1967, a chapter on Williams appeared alongside others on Katherine Mansfield and Sir Edmund Hillary, in a book by Eugene Grayland, 'Famous New Zealanders'.<sup>21</sup> It was based heavily on the information given in *Cheerful Giver*, and repeated many of the well known stories about Williams's linguistic feats. In 1969,

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<sup>17</sup> Correspondence between Harold Williams and Ariadna Tyrkova Williams, Box 7, Folder 'Williams, Harold (husband) 1918' BAR MS Coll Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>18</sup> *The New Zealand Listener* 26<sup>th</sup> February 1954 p. 19. The script of 'The Amazing Harold Williams' is in the Harold Williams collection in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington – MS Papers 0555-3. I am very grateful to Alison Williams for providing me with a tape of the original broadcast. Oliver Gillespie also published a newspaper article on Williams, 'New Zealand's Neglected Genius – Harold Williams' *The Auckland Star* 5<sup>th</sup> March 1955.

<sup>19</sup> Correspondence between Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams and Oliver Gillespie, 1954-55, Box 5, Folder 'G', BAR MS Coll Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>20</sup> Oliver Gillespie to Arthur Ransome, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1957, and Arthur Ransome to Oliver Gillespie, n.d., Arthur Ransome papers, Brotherton Library, Leeds

<sup>21</sup> Eugene Grayland, *Famous New Zealanders* (Christchurch 1967) pp. 27-36.

Arkadii Borman published a short biographical article on Harold Williams in the *Russian Review*. Again this summarized the story of Williams's life as told in *Cheerful Giver*. More detailed personal reminiscences on Williams can be found in Borman's biography of his mother, published in 1964 and based on his mother's letters to him and his own recollections.<sup>22</sup>

The first burst of scholarly interest in Harold Williams came in the 1980s, when Irene Zohrab, a lecturer in Russian at Victoria University, Wellington, began the publication of a series of articles on Williams in the *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, which she now edits. The first of these appeared in 1985, and gave a brief biographical introduction to Williams's career, with some commentary on his relations with the writers H. G. Wells, Hugh Walpole and Frank Swinnerton, whom he knew at various points before, during and after the First World War.<sup>23</sup> The remaining articles consist of previously unpublished manuscripts by Williams, some of which are taken from the Tyrkova-Williams archive at Columbia University, and some of which are part of an unpublished manuscript which was given to Zohrab by Hugh Williams, Harold Williams's nephew, who had received it from Arkadii Borman after Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams's death.<sup>24</sup> Zohrab's commentaries stress

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<sup>22</sup> Arkadii Borman, 'Harold Williams: A British Journalist and Linguist in Russia', *Russian Review* Vol. 28 (1969) pp. 327-337, Arkadii Borman, *A. V. Tyrkova-Vil'iams po ee pismam i vospominaniiam syna* (Louvain, Washington 1964).

<sup>23</sup> 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) pp. 3-15

<sup>24</sup> Irene Zohrab, 'The Place of the Liberals among the forces of the Revolution: from the unpublished papers of Harold W. Williams' *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1986) pp. 53-82; 'Russia and Mongolia: from the unpublished papers of Harold W. Williams' *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1987) pp. 177-203; 'The Socialist Revolutionary Party, Kerensky and the Kornilov Affair: from the unpublished papers of Harold W. Williams' *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1991) pp. 131-161; 'The Western Origins of Bolshevism: from the unpublished papers of Harold W. Williams' *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1993) pp. 101-117; 'The European Magnitude of the Russian Struggle: from the unpublished papers of H. W. Williams on Lenin's rise to power and advocacy of world revolution' *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* Vol. 8, No. 2 (1994) pp. 109-136, 'From the Archives of H W Williams (1876-1928): The Organisation of the Provisional Government; Lenin; Gorky's Letter to Lenin' *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (2001) pp. 225-235. On Williams's unpublished manuscript



Williams's New Zealand roots; for her, Williams was 'the most brilliant correspondent' of his generation.<sup>25</sup>

In recent years there has been renewed interest in Harold Williams. Paul Simmons has published some documents relating to Williams's encounters with the Tsarist police, in *Istoricheskii Arkhiv*.<sup>26</sup> Williams features heavily in a recent Ph.D. thesis by Michael Palmer, which looks at the connections between Russian liberals and sympathetic Britons in Russia in the pre-Revolutionary period.<sup>27</sup> Late in 2003, Dorothea Brady completed a Ph.D. thesis on Williams's journalistic career, entitled 'The Foreign Correspondent as Observer and Participant – Harold Williams and the Russian Revolution'. Brady's concern is with Williams's journalism, and with the development of his political views. She provides a thorough analysis of Williams's newspaper dispatches (although not those from the *Morning Post*), and gives a detailed discussion of the evolution of Williams's thinking on the revolutions in Russia.<sup>28</sup> She does not deal with his work for *The Times* in the 1920s or his work in the context of Anglo-Russian relations, and she was unable to use much of the available archival material.

There are archival collections relating to Williams in the British Library, in the Butler Library at Columbia University in New York, in the archives of *The Times* in London, the *Manchester Guardian* in Manchester and the *Helsingin Sanomat* in Helsinki, in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington, New Zealand, and in the

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see chapter four. On his relationships with H. G. Wells and Hugh Walpole, see chapter three, on his relationship with Frank Swinnerton see chapter four.

<sup>25</sup> Zohrab, 'From New Zealand to Russia to Britain' p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Simmons, '"Ia – Anglichanin, lubiashchii Rossii" Garol'd Vil'iams v Petrograde. 1915-1916 gg.' *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* No. 6 (2003) pp. 114-127. See chapter two for further details of Simmons's work and of Williams's encounters with the Tsarist police.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Palmer, 'The British Nexus and the Russian Liberals, 1905-1917' Ph.D. thesis, University of Aberdeen (2000).

Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, New Zealand. Williams's work in the Anglo-Russian Bureau in Petrograd is detailed in Foreign Office files in the Public Record Office in London. Correspondence between Williams and his friends and acquaintances can be found in, amongst other collections, those of Bernard Pares and Robert Seton-Watson at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES), of Samuel Harper at the University of Chicago, H. G. Wells at the University of Illinois, Arthur Ransome at the Brotherton Library in Leeds, and Samuel Hoare at Cambridge University Library.

This thesis is based on these sources, as well as on Williams's journalistic output, his books and those of Tyrkova-Williams, Williams's published scholarly articles, and the secondary literature which surrounds some of the areas in which Williams worked. In the literature on Anglo-Russian relations and on links between Britain and Russia in this period, Williams's name crops up regularly. He appears as one of the witnesses in Harvey Pitcher's *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution*.<sup>29</sup> In G. S. Smith's biography of D. S. Mirsky, there is a section on the role Williams and his wife played as a nexus for Russian émigrés in Britain after the revolution.<sup>30</sup> In other places, where Williams might be expected to appear, there is no sign of him. For example in Keith Neilson's *Britain and the Last Tsar*, which includes a whole section on the 'old Russia hands' who helped to influence British opinion on Russia, Bernard Pares, Donald Mackenzie Wallace and W. T. Stead are covered, and Emile Dillon and Maurice Baring crop up regularly, but Williams is not mentioned at all.<sup>31</sup> Despite Williams's close involvement, the stories of the pre-war work for Anglo-Russian

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<sup>28</sup> Dorothea L. Brady, 'The Foreign Correspondent as observer and participant: Harold Williams and the Russian Revolution' Ph.D. thesis, City University New York (2003).

<sup>29</sup> Harvey Pitcher, *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution* (London 2001, first edition 1994).

<sup>30</sup> G. S. Smith, *D. S. Mirsky – A Russian-English Life* (Oxford 2000) pp. 88-89.

rapprochement and post-war work for intervention are told largely from the perspectives of Williams's colleagues, men like Bernard Pares, Samuel Harper, and Maurice Baring.<sup>32</sup> Williams's contribution remains relatively obscure.

What this study hopes to do is to fill this gap, and, in so doing, to shed some light on some of the organizations and activities with which Williams was involved. It will provide a thorough assessment of Harold Williams's career, placed in the multiple contexts into which his life fits – Methodism in nineteenth century New Zealand, British journalism in pre-war Russia, the development of the Anglo-Russian rapprochement, British propaganda work in Russia during the First World War, the campaign for Allied intervention in the Russian civil war, and journalism at *The Times* in the 1920s. It will also show how Williams, as a man who ultimately sought to serve society and do worthwhile work, moved from one cause to another throughout his life, and how he used journalism, his main pursuit, as a means of working for these causes.

The thesis contains five chapters. They are arranged thematically but also chronologically, with some overlap, so that while they move forward through Williams's life, each of them addresses one of the themes that I regard as central to Williams's career; one of the causes for which he worked, or areas of work to which he devoted himself. I have tried not to be too simplistic in doing this. Of course Williams had multiple interests and was occupied with many issues and interests at

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<sup>31</sup> Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar – British Policy and Russia, 1894-1917* (Oxford, 1995). See chapters two and three for discussion of Donald Mackenzie Wallace, W. T. Stead, and Emile Dillon.

<sup>32</sup> For example in Bernard Pares, *A Wandering Student – the story of a purpose* (Syracuse 1948), and *My Russian Memoirs* (New York 1969. first edition London 1931), Samuel Harper, *The Russia I Believe In – the memoirs of Samuel N Harper 1902-1941* edited by Paul V. Harper (Chicago 1945), Maurice Baring, *The Puppet Show of Memory* (London 1922), and Emma Letley, *Maurice Baring, Citizen of Europe* (London 1991).

the same time. What I try to show here is that it is possible to trace his involvement in a series of causes which change and develop throughout his career.

The first chapter covers the period 1876-1900, and looks at Williams's life in New Zealand - his early interest in languages, his work for the Methodist church, his enthusiasm for Tolstoy and other social reformers, and his reasons for abandoning the ministry. The second chapter, which deals with the period 1900-1914, analyses Williams's work as a foreign correspondent, his attitude to his career, and his journalistic style. It will offer some comparison of the newspapers he worked for, and the way in which they obtained their Russian news. It will also comment on Williams's attitude to the major events he covered in his dispatches during these years. Williams's work for the *Daily Chronicle* during the First World War is reserved for chapter three, where it fits more appropriately into the context of his support for the Anglo-Russian entente. This chapter looks at Williams's work in the context of Anglo-Russian relations between 1907 and 1917, first in the development of the pre-war Anglo-Russian rapprochement, and then in attempting to strengthen relations during the war. It also covers the February revolution, which Williams initially saw as the final stage in ensuring complete unity of action between the Allies. The fourth chapter looks at Williams's work after the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917, predominantly at his part in the campaign for Allied intervention in the Russian civil war, and his return to the south of Russia to report from Denikin's front. The final chapter deals with Williams's work as a leader writer and then as Foreign Editor at *The Times* in the 1920s, the ways in which his involvement with and interest in Russia continued, and the broadening of his sphere of influence and interests to European politics as a whole.

## 1. New Zealand, 1876-1900

Harold Williams was born into a large new second generation of European New Zealanders that emerged in the 1880s and 1890s. By 1881 the total non-Maori population of New Zealand had reached 489,933, and the census of 1886 recorded that almost 52 percent of this population had been born in the colony.<sup>1</sup> This new generation had to develop their own interpretation of the Utopian and Arcadian myths of the years of settlement, and come to terms for themselves with their relations with a mother country they had often never experienced, and with their own perceptions of their society. The period from 1880 to 1900 has been described by James Belich as one of 'recolonisation', in which New Zealand changed its focus from an American styled concept of 'Greater Britain' to that of 'Better Britain'; which accepted a close junior role, while maintaining the idea that life and people in the colony were of a better quality than in the mother country.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of New Zealand society in the late nineteenth century has been much debated, since Miles Fairburn challenged the traditional view of a close-knit, community based society, with his picture of isolation and atomization.<sup>3</sup> It seems certain that there were some forces that bound people together, however, and one of these was religion. By the 1870s most of the major British denominations were represented in New Zealand. Although no more than a quarter of New Zealanders were regular church attenders, for those who were closely involved with

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are taken from C. J. Gibson, *A Demographic History of New Zealand*, Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkeley (1971), cited in Geoffrey Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand* second edition (Oxford University Press 1992) pp. 112, 117.

<sup>2</sup> James Belich, 'Myth, Race and Identity in New Zealand' *New Zealand Journal of History* Vol. 31, No. 1 (April 1997) p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Miles Fairburn, 'Local Community or Atomised Society? The Social Structure of Nineteenth Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History* Vol. 16, No. 2 (1982) pp.146-67, and *The Ideal Society and its Enemies; the Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900* Auckland University Press (1989). For a repudiation of Fairburn's views, see Rollo Arnold, 'Community in Rural Victorian New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History* Vol. 24, No.1 (April 1990) pp. 3-21.

religious life their faith formed the backbone of their lives and social contact. The New Zealand Methodists, despite accounting for only ten percent of the non-Maori population, were particularly tenacious.<sup>4</sup> Initially there were three branches of the Methodist church in New Zealand – the Primitive Methodists, the Free Methodists, and the largest group, the Wesleyan Methodists. The Wesleyans and the Free Methodists reunited in 1896, and the Primitive Methodists rejoined them in 1913.<sup>5</sup> It was Wesleyan Methodism that brought the Williams family to New Zealand in the first place; it also provided the backdrop to much of Harold Williams's early life.

The Reverend William James Williams, Harold's father, had emigrated to New Zealand in 1870. He had been born in Cornwall, and converted to Methodism at the age of fifteen under the influence of the Reverend William Booth, a fiery and persuasive preacher who later founded the Salvation Army. Williams began to preach at the age of seventeen, and spent two years training at the Richmond Wesleyan College before being invited, at the age of 23, to be one of four ministers whom the Foreign Mission Committee had been asked to send out to New Zealand. The other three were J. J. Lewis, J. S. Smalley and F. W. Isitt. The latter had already been a close friend of Williams's at Richmond College, and the families of all three would remain close throughout their new lives in New Zealand.<sup>6</sup>

There had been Wesleyan Methodists in New Zealand years before official British control of the islands was established. Samuel Marsden and Samuel Leigh had made the first preliminary

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<sup>4</sup> Hugh Jackson, 'Churchgoing in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History* Vol. 17, No. 1 (April 1983) pp. 47, 50. Ian Breward, 'Religion and New Zealand Society', *New Zealand Journal of History* Vol. 13, No. 2 (October 1979) pp. 145-50.

<sup>5</sup> Margaret Lovell-Smith, *Plain Living, High Thinking. The Family Story of Jennie and Will Lovell-Smith* (Christchurch 1995) p. 161.

<sup>6</sup> 'Character Sketch: Rev. W. J. Williams', *The New Zealand Home Journal* 14<sup>th</sup> May 1908 pp. 1-2. *The New Zealand Methodist Times* 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1936 pp. 30-31. For background on Methodist missions abroad see Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George, and Gordon Rupp (eds.), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* Vol. 3 (London 1983) pp. 1-116.

visit from New South Wales in 1818, and after gaining support from the Wesleyan Conference at home, Leigh had returned in 1821 to found a mission there.<sup>7</sup> However, as the European population grew in the decades after annexation in 1840, immigrants of all denominations found that although there were a reasonable number of ministers in the country, their primary objective was to preach to, and attempt to convert, the island's Maori inhabitants. There were few men available to minister to the Europeans. Communities fared as best they could, holding prayer meetings amongst themselves and taking advantage of visiting clergymen when available.<sup>8</sup> Periodically, ministers were sent out to meet the need. By the time the Reverends Williams, Lewis, Smalley and Isitt arrived in New Zealand, they joined a well-established and still growing Wesleyan community.

The colonial Wesleyan church was organized into a system of regional circuits, to which ministers were assigned for periods of three years at a time. Between 1870 and 1900 William Williams served in Auckland, Wellington, Wanganui, Lyttelton, Christchurch and Timaru. His wife, Alice Hosking, whose family home, Binnerton, near Crowan in Cornwall, had served for over a hundred years as a meeting place for Methodists, came out to New Zealand to marry him in 1875. She and their sons, of whom there were eventually seven, moved with him around the circuits.<sup>9</sup>

Harold, the eldest son, was born at Grafton Road Parsonage, Auckland, on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1876.<sup>10</sup> He moved homes and schools as his father's work took him around the country, and as a result details of his early life are scanty. Those details that do survive seem to draw together some

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<sup>7</sup> Davies, George and Rupp (eds.), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* Vol. 3 p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> Jeanine Graham, 'Settler Society' in Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, pp. 126-7. Ernest Andrews, *St. Albans Methodist Church Centenary 1853-1953 – A Brief Retrospect* (Wesley Historical Society, 1953) pp. 7-8.

<sup>9</sup> William Morley, *History of Methodism in New Zealand* (Wellington 1900) pp. 208-209, *The New Zealand Methodist Times* 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1936 pp. 30-31, Notes, MS Papers 0555-1, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

<sup>10</sup> William James Williams; 'Dr. Harold Whitmore Williams', *The New Zealand Methodist Times* 15<sup>th</sup> December 1928 p. 13.

of the threads of his life in New Zealand – the Methodist ministry, the sea, and his fascination with languages. His father recalled that as a baby Harold was nicknamed ‘the Young President’, since the greatest achievement his parents wished for him was that he might one day become the president of a Methodist Conference.<sup>11</sup> Charles and Evelyn Isitt, a younger generation of the Isitt family, remembered him in Port Lyttelton in the mid 1880s, ‘trotting down with other little boys, with model yachts under their arms, merry, brown and carefree to sail their boats in the water’.<sup>12</sup> Harold apparently had, along with his younger brothers, ‘an intimate knowledge of every ship of every size’ that entered the harbour.<sup>13</sup> In 1887 the Williams family moved to Christchurch, where Harold attended the East Christchurch Primary School, before winning a scholarship to the Christchurch Boys’ High School, where he studied between 1888 and 1890.<sup>14</sup> Another friend remembered Harold at Timaru High School in the early nineties, where they were taught by George Hogben, a ‘liberal educationalist’ who had given the school a reputation for excellence, and advocated the teaching of languages by the direct method.<sup>15</sup>

Stories about Harold Williams’s remarkable aptitude for languages begin very early. His interest was apparently kindled by the French, Latin, Greek and Hebrew grammars he found in his father’s study.<sup>16</sup> He himself spoke about something ‘like an explosion in his brain’ which occurred when he was about seven years old – from that point on the acquisition of languages

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Isitt to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, n. d. Box 5, Folder ‘I’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Obituary – Harold Williams’ *The Manchester Guardian* 19<sup>th</sup> November 1928, p. 8. At the time of Harold Williams’s death Evelyn Isitt was working as a correspondent for the Manchester Guardian, and she attended his funeral in this capacity. It seems likely, given the content, that she wrote this obituary for the paper.

<sup>14</sup> *The Years Between – Christchurch Boys High School 1881-1981* (Christchurch 1981) p. 338. Notes, MS Papers 0555-1.

<sup>15</sup> Letter to the Editor, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1936, *The Press* (Christchurch). Box 32, Folder ‘Reviews of Books by A Tyrkova-Williams’. BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>16</sup> William James Williams, ‘Dr Harold Whitmore Williams’.



became easy.<sup>17</sup> He taught himself a number of Polynesian languages – Maori, Samoan, Tongan, Fijian – by studying Gospels and New Testaments which had been translated into these languages, and which a Christchurch bookseller helped him to procure.<sup>18</sup> In his teens he constructed a grammar and vocabulary of the language of Dobu, New Guinea, from a copy of St. Mark's Gospel which the Reverend George Brown had translated; 'there was no more amazed man than the Rev. George Brown in the South Pacific' when he saw what Harold Williams had done.<sup>19</sup> In 1893, the *Polynesian Journal* published a vocabulary of Niue (Savage Island), which Harold had constructed from a Gospel sent to him by the secretary of the society, Edward Tregear.<sup>20</sup> He also corresponded for a while in Fijian with a native minister who had gone to New Guinea.<sup>21</sup> While at the Timaru Boys' High School he sat an examination for a university scholarship, and despite an accident which forced him to sit the exam with his eyes bandaged, he won the scholarship purely on languages – a remarkable achievement in that 'being unable to reach the standard in mathematics, his possible maximum was 500 less than that of the other candidates'.<sup>22</sup>

William Williams was posted back to Auckland in 1893, to take up the position of principal of Wesley College. Harold Williams returned to Auckland with his family, and took up his scholarship at Auckland University College. There he began work on his BA degree, for which he studied Classical and Modern Philology.<sup>23</sup> In March 1896, at the age of nineteen, he was accepted as a probationer in the Methodist ministry, and was posted to the St. Albans circuit,

<sup>17</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Grayland, *Famous New Zealanders* p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> William James Williams; 'Dr. Harold Whitmore Williams'.

<sup>20</sup> 'Vocabulary of the language of Niue' *Polynesian Society Journal* Vol. 2 (1893) pp. 17-24, pp. 65-70.

<sup>21</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Letter to the Editor, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1936, *The Press* (Christchurch). Box 32, Folder 'Reviews of Books by A Tyrkova-Williams'. BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Lebenslauf, in Harold Whitmore Williams, *Grammatische Skizze der Ilocano-Sprache, mit Berücksichtigung ihrer Beziehungen zu den anderen Sprachen der Malayo-Polynesian Familie* (Munich 1904) p. 83.

on the northern outskirts of Christchurch. St. Albans had a thriving Methodist community. A new church had been opened only two years earlier, and there was also a Methodist day school.<sup>24</sup> The circuit also extended to Harewood Road, Papanui, Knights Town and Shirley. The resident minister, whom Harold Williams was appointed to assist, was the Reverend. J. A. Luxford.<sup>25</sup> Amongst the devout members of the local community were the Smith family, whose friendship with Harold Williams makes it possible to gain some real insight into the details of his life and the development of his thought at this time.<sup>26</sup>

In the late 1890s Will and Jennie Smith and their ten children were living in Upper Riccarton, in a house known as 'Westcote', but appropriately nicknamed 'Arcadia'. The Smiths were an earnest, devout family with a deep-rooted interest in social reform. They believed that their religious convictions should be expressed in essentially practical terms, and in all their actions and relations with others. This belief manifested itself in their active participation in the life of the local Methodist community.<sup>27</sup> Due to the size of the family, 'Arcadia' functioned like a small community, in which physical work, music, reading and discussion were the fundamental elements. As junior minister in the circuit, Harold Williams often visited their house, and as Macie Smith later recalled, became a favourite with them all.

He told the younger ones stories, danced Maori 'Hakas' for them, wrote notes for a family weekly newspaper which was handwritten and published in the home by pinning it up on the wall of the dining room. With us older ones he discussed social and spiritual problems, talked of and read Tolstoy in whom he was greatly interested as in many other reformers. There was among us a feeling of confidence so that we could discuss freely any problem that presented itself. Harold's

<sup>24</sup> Andrews, *St Albans Methodist Church Centenary* p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> W. A. Chambers; *Our Yesteryears 1840-1950, being a short history of Methodism in Canterbury, New Zealand* (Christchurch 1950).

<sup>26</sup> The children of Jennie and Will Smith changed their names to Lovell-Smith in 1908, and Will Smith's sisters followed suit in 1926. Therefore they are referred to in the text by the name 'Smith', but in references to their correspondence after these dates as Lovell-Smith. Lovell-Smith, *Plain Living High Thinking* p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Lovell-Smith, *Plain Living High Thinking* pp. 30-31.

innate modesty made it impossible for him to realize his intellectual superiority, and he was just the very good and simple hearted friend of us all.<sup>28</sup>

Macie was the closest to Harold Williams in age, being only a couple of months older. Her brother Edgar was a year older. The newspaper mentioned here was one of a number of handwritten publications produced by the older Smith children, which covered family news and events in the house and the local community. Many of them survive in the Lovell-Smith Collections in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch. Harold Williams is mentioned within them as a 'chief contributor' to the *Arcadian News*, which unfortunately only survives in fragments.<sup>29</sup>

Williams was also a frequent visitor at 'Aorangi', the home of Will Smith's sisters, Lucy and Eleanor, and their parents. When their father died in 1896, Lucy Smith remembered Harold Williams doing 'many little kindnesses for my mother, sister and self'. At fifteen years older than Harold, Lucy Smith 'came to look upon him almost as a young brother or elder nephew.'<sup>30</sup>

As a trainee Methodist minister Harold Williams conducted weekly services at the local churches in his circuit (including Riccarton village church, the Smith family's local church), paid pastoral visits to the elderly and the sick, and was closely involved in young people's organisations such as the Band of Hope (a temperance society aimed at educating the young), and the Young People's Guild. Meetings of the latter included discussion of such issues as prohibition, the evils of tobacco smoking, and the problem of poverty.<sup>31</sup> All of these were issues very close to Williams's heart. They were pertinent within the framework of the Methodist

<sup>28</sup> Macie Lovell-Smith to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1929. Box 5, Folder 'L', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>29</sup> *Weekly Snapshot* Vol. 1, No. 3. 8<sup>th</sup> April 1898. Box 22, Folder 61. Arc. 1998.3 Canterbury Museum, Christchurch. I am grateful to Margaret Lovell-Smith for copies of these newspapers.

<sup>30</sup> Lucy M. Lovell-Smith to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1929. Box 5, Folder L, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>31</sup> *The Illustrated Riccarton News* 6<sup>th</sup> February 1897, *The Riccarton Gazette* 28<sup>th</sup> August 1897. Box 21, Folder 59, Arc. 1998.3.

church, with its opposition to intemperance and gambling, and its history of advocating social reform.<sup>32</sup> They were also relevant within the wider context of New Zealand society. The prohibition movement was supported by all the non-conformist churches, and was in part based on theories that morality and economic and social success were intrinsically linked.<sup>33</sup> Many New Zealanders, old and young, were interested in the new literature on social reform that appeared in the 1880s and 1890s. Many still identified closely with problems which existed at 'home', in Britain or Europe, and were interested in the application of new theories. They were also intrigued by the possible remedies, or alternatives, which could potentially be applied more easily in a young society such as theirs. One particularly popular author was Henry George, who argued for reform of the system of land ownership, and for a single tax, on land, which he felt would resolve economic problems and relieve poverty. George's theories, along with those of John Stuart Mill, had a considerable influence on thinkers and decision makers in New Zealand in the late nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Harold Williams was aware of this debate, and was familiar with the texts involved. He read George's *Progress and Poverty* (New York, 1880) in 1898, and while he was 'thoroughly convinced' by the criticisms of modern society within it, he was not entirely sure about the proposed solution. He could not reconcile himself to the rightness of any government by force.<sup>35</sup> This was an attitude he had assimilated from what was probably the greatest influence on his attitude to social problems at this time: the work of Leo Tolstoy.

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<sup>32</sup> See for example Maldwyn Edwards, *A Study of Methodism in its Social and Political Aspects during the period 1850-1932* (London 1943) chs. 5, 6 and 7.

<sup>33</sup> A. R. Grigg, 'Prohibition, the Church and Labour. A Programme for Social Reform, 1890-1914' *New Zealand Journal of History* Vol. 15, No. 2 (October 1981) pp. 135-154.

<sup>34</sup> Frank Rogers, 'The Influence of Political Theories in the Liberal Period, 1890-1912: Henry George and John Stuart Mill' in Robert Chapman and Keith Sinclair (eds.), *Studies of a Small Democracy – Essays in Honour of Willis Airey* (Auckland 1963) pp. 153-174.

<sup>35</sup> Letter of 4<sup>th</sup> July 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to Macie Lovell-Smith, transcribed and edited' [hereafter 'letters to MLS'], BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. In this archive and in Tyrkova-Williams's biography all of this correspondence is treated as though it were between Harold Williams and Macie Lovell-Smith. However, it is clear from the content of the letters, and from later correspondence between Macie Lovell-Smith, Lucy Lovell-Smith, and

In the 1880s and 1890s, Tolstoy's popularity in the English-speaking world was at its height. Not only was he a great artist, he was an earnest reformer, and this dual image was enhanced by the fact that, while his Russian audience had had time to appreciate the gradual change in Tolstoy's work from his major novels like *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* to his writings on social reform, English translations of his earlier and later works appeared almost simultaneously.<sup>36</sup> Tolstoy's condemnation of the modern state, his strictures on the gap between the 'overworked and underfed' poor and the 'idle and wasteful' rich, and his plea for a simple, moral, broadly religious approach to life, as expressed in volumes such as *What Then Must We Do?*, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, and *My Confession*,<sup>37</sup> found an avid readership amongst those who were uneasy about the social consequences of nineteenth century 'progress'. Russia was widely considered to be one of the worst examples of an oppressive society, but Tolstoy's damning assessment of modern society was seen to apply equally to society in other parts of Europe and the world.<sup>38</sup>

Harold Williams's enthusiasm for Tolstoy's ideas is abundantly clear in letters he wrote to both Macie and Lucy Smith after he left St. Albans, and it has also been discussed in some detail by Irene Zohrab.<sup>39</sup> As she points out, while Williams was interested in many reformers, Tolstoy dominated his thinking during the late 1890s. He makes frequent references to Tolstoy in his

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Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, that there are in fact two sets of letters, one to Macie Lovell-Smith and one to Lucy Lovell-Smith. As the letters have been transcribed, and the greetings at the beginning and end of the letters are omitted, it is difficult to tell (although possible to guess) which Lovell-Smith each letter is to. Therefore I refer here to each letter simply as 'Letter of 4<sup>th</sup> July 1898', etc. The transcription of many of the letters by someone with less than perfect English has resulted in the presence of a great number of spelling errors. In order to make quotes from the letters more readable, I have replaced the mis-spelt words with what I believe to be the correct word, in brackets.

<sup>36</sup> M. J. De K. Holman, 'The Purleigh Colony: Tolstoyan togetherness in the late 1890s' in Malcolm Jones (ed.); *New Essays on Tolstoy* (Cambridge, 1978) pp. 194-5.

<sup>37</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?* Published as *What To Do?* (London 1888), *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (London 1894), *My Confession* (London 1889).

<sup>38</sup> Introduction by Jane Addams, to Leo Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?* Tolstoy Centenary Edition (London 1934) pp. vii-xiii.

<sup>39</sup> Irene Zohrab, 'Leo Tolstoy from the Perspective of Harold W. Williams' pp. 14-48.

correspondence, and was even learning Russian by attempting to read Tolstoy in his native tongue.<sup>40</sup> Williams was not an uncritical disciple; there were aspects of Tolstoy's work that would naturally be difficult for Williams to accept, in his position as a Methodist minister, such as Tolstoy's condemnation of the clergy and of the institution of marriage.<sup>41</sup> Williams and his friends were intelligent and independent minded young people who were comfortable discussing and criticising current ideas. Harold, Edgar and Macie, amongst others, were members of a discussion group which they called the 'select circle'.<sup>42</sup> Although this was essentially a group of earnest young friends, they did have access, through family connections, to the ideas and opinions of forward thinkers such as the feminist and prohibitionist Kate Sheppard.<sup>43</sup>

It is interesting to see how Williams's Tolstoyan beliefs fitted into the structure of his Methodist upbringing and surroundings. In some respects, it seems to have been a natural progression; in others it was a radical step.

Tolstoy's approach to religion was a broad, and very personal one, which rejected dogmatic theology.<sup>44</sup> While the Methodist church had its own very clear tenets, the stress had always been on getting back to the Bible and the Gospels as the root of religious thought.<sup>45</sup> Williams naturally took an inclusive approach, and he seems to have been very open to other denominations. One of his favourite books of sermons was the Unitarian John Hamilton Thom's *Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ* (London 1882), which he felt contained a 'rare

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<sup>40</sup> Letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>41</sup> Irene Zohrab, 'Leo Tolstoy from the perspective of Harold W. Williams' p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Lovell-Smith, *Plain Living High Thinking* p. 52.

<sup>43</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Kate Sheppard (1847-1934), a leading light in the campaign for female suffrage in New Zealand, and a founding member of the New Zealand Women's Christian Temperance Union. She married Will Lovell-Smith in 1925, after the death of his wife.

<sup>44</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession, and What I Believe* translated by Aylmer Maude (London 1921). E. B. Greenwood, 'Tolstoy and Religion' in Malcolm Jones (ed.), *New Essays on Tolstoy* (Cambridge 1978) p. 168.

<sup>45</sup> John Wesley, *A Short History of Methodism* (London 1765).

thoughtfulness and sincerity'. On the whole, Williams took his inspiration for preaching from his general reading material rather than from published sermons.<sup>46</sup> A Quaker service that he once attended greatly impressed him, and he declared that he had never 'felt such a sense of true worship in any other service I went to'.<sup>47</sup> In his own sermons he tried to 'preach to the congregation as men and women, not as much as Christians and non-Christians ... to try and show that the duty of being Christ-like was binding upon them all whether they called themselves Christian or not'.<sup>48</sup> Only one of Williams's sermons from this period survives, and this was apparently written for children. In it he compares the multitude of languages spoken in New Zealand with the variety of nature, emphasizing that God is present in all of them.<sup>49</sup>

Williams preferred broad interpretations of doctrinal issues. When one of the Smiths wrote to him in June 1898 to ask his advice regarding the sacrament (they had just discovered that the Riccarton church was being supplied with fermented wine, which went against the Methodist belief in temperance) he advised them to follow their conscience and stay away in protest until the wine was changed.

No one need think that the fire of truth or love and purity will burn low in the heart because of the absence from sacrament ... I don't feel any irreverence to Jesus in saying this because I don't believe that he commanded the supper to be a perpetual institution. The words "This do [in] remembrance of me" are said by the best scholars to be an interpretation.<sup>50</sup>

He chastised some traditional Wesleyans for their lack of imagination in interpreting religious writings.

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<sup>46</sup> Letter of 13<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>47</sup> Letter of 27<sup>th</sup> June 1899. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>48</sup> Letter of 28<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>49</sup> 'Sermon by Harold Williams – The Language of Flowers'. 1897, Rapanui. Box 23, Folder 'Miscellaneous Short Articles (2)'. BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>50</sup> Letter of 9<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

I believe that a majority of Wesleyans have about as concrete ideas of the geography of the world to come as they have of the geography of England. I expect many of those old [metaphors] of the early church writers about the sea of jaspers and the golden streets and the Lamb and the beast (this last by the way is a wrong translation) are accepted by the bulk of Anglo-Saxon Christians as representations of actual fact. Take them as poetry just as you would the scenes of Dante's Divine Comedy and you may find your soul helped to the warmth and emotion necessary for receiving conceptions of the life beyond. But it must be a weariness and bondage to the flesh to look forward to a heaven [furnished] out with the symbols of the [Apocalypse].<sup>51</sup>

Williams also followed Tolstoy's belief in non-resistance, particularly in its application to the question of war. For Williams, as for Tolstoy, there was no 'just war'. He was appalled by the Spanish-American war of 1898, over Cuba, and at President McKinley's failure to stand up against the desire of Congress to go to war.<sup>52</sup> If the American action was inspired by a desire to dominate Cuban commerce, then he believed the war could not be too strongly denounced. But even if the United States were motivated by a genuine desire to protect Cuba, he argued

... is it possible to allow that such a war is right and Christian? I am afraid the average run of Christian people would say it is. But surely they make a great mistake. It is easy to be [misled] by vague generalisations. We talk about the STATES engaging in war, being moved by pity, acting righteously or unrighteously. And for the purposes of philosophy, for purposes of historical generalisation, for the purpose of working our certain social problems we have to generalise in some such way as that. But in a case of this kind we haven't got to judge of the actions of States but of our own personal belief and the kind of action it would inspire were we Americans. And do you think were we placed in battle face to face with the [enemy] and the command were given to murder him that we could honestly, with perfect sincerity dilute the cruelty of such a murder with the idea that we were acting as part of a state [which] in this way was bringing relief to oppressed Cubans? If it is wrong for me to murder one man to save another it is equally wrong to murder on behalf of a state which [professes] to be saving another people.<sup>53</sup>

Williams's own solution was Utopian in the extreme; he hoped that America might 'some day be Christian enough' to use the money it was spending on 'slaughtering Spaniards' to buy up land, either within the United States or 'in some south American republic', and to settle the

<sup>51</sup> Letter of 28<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>52</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>53</sup> Letter of 16<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.



Cubans 'out of reach of Spanish oppression. He also displayed an element of missionary zeal: if enough

self sacrificing men could be found in the free countries of the world to give up [their] homes and their privileges as free citizens and go and live in Spain to become in due time naturalised Spaniards, they might have a fine influence as social missionaries ... gradually by such a process the whole condition and policy of Spain might be transformed.<sup>54</sup>

Williams was delighted to hear of the proposal put forward by Tsar Nicholas II in August 1898 that all the great powers should meet to discuss arms limitation. Although he 'hurrahed' over it, he was realistic enough to acknowledge that it would 'have hard work to steer its way to reality'.<sup>55</sup>

On the Boer War, also, it took a considerable effort for Williams to adopt the 'orthodox' viewpoint.<sup>56</sup> Many Methodists loathed the idea of the Boer War, but they justified it in imperial terms. The Boers, it was said, used their subjects as slaves, and encouraged the liquor trade amongst them. For the Methodist church, the British Empire was 'a providential institution, on the whole greatly to the advantage of weak and subject races'.<sup>57</sup> Williams was proud of the achievements of the British Empire, but he was also aware of its failings. In reference to the Boer War, he wrote

As to our improving the condition of the natives, the less we say about that just now, the better ... England is great, but we are foolish if we think our greatness consists in a policy of the mailed fist.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Letter of 16<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS' BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>55</sup> Letter of 24<sup>th</sup> September 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS' BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. George Katkov and Michael Futrell, 'Russian Foreign Policy 1880-1914' in George Katkov, Erwin Oberlander, Nikolaus Poppe and Georg von Rauch (eds.), *Russia Enters the Twentieth Century* (London 1971) pp. 22-23.

<sup>56</sup> Undated letter. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen Koss, 'Wesleyanism and Empire', *Historical Journal*, XVIII, I (1975) pp. 105-118.

<sup>58</sup> Undated letter. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

His attitude to the Empire is interesting to note. Like many young New Zealanders at this time, he combined his identification with England as 'home' with a pride in his own country's achievements. On reading Sir John Seeley's *The Expansion of England* (London 1883), he described it as 'a splendid refutation of the idea that the colonies are mere [possessions] of England'.<sup>59</sup>

Williams was interested in a variety of new pseudo-scientific ideas, particularly those concerning the power of thought. He often attempted to practise what was known as 'mental healing' – the art of healing a person by replacing their negative or destructive thoughts with positive 'affirmations'. He was intrigued by the possibilities of telepathy.<sup>60</sup>

He was also a strict vegetarian. In describing his experience as a vegetarian, he claimed he had 'always had a hankering after a vegetarian life, as being more ethereal and refined than the life of a meat eater'. He had first given up eating meat at the age of fifteen or sixteen, after reading first 'an article in an American religious paper by an old minister who affirmed that he owed his ninety years to a vegetarian diet', then Tolstoy's 'First Step', in the *New Review*, and finally an article by Lady Paget on vegetarianism in *The Nineteenth Century*.<sup>61</sup> On this occasion the experiment lasted only six months, but after encountering more vegetarian literature he made another attempt shortly after his eighteenth birthday. From this time on he had remained a strict vegetarian 'with the exception of a very few occasions'.<sup>62</sup> His belief in vegetarianism was based on four key tenets; that it is wrong to kill animals for food, both on the animal's account and on the slaughterer's, that animal food is unnecessary, as all the necessary nutrients can be found in

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<sup>59</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>60</sup> Letters of 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2<sup>nd</sup> June and 19<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>61</sup> Leo Tolstoy, 'The First Step' in Leo Tolstoy, *Recollections and Essays* Tolstoy Centenary Edition (London 1937). pp. 90-135.

<sup>62</sup> 'My Experiences as a Vegetarian' by Rivai. Manuscript of an article by Harold Williams from *Light Ahead*, Box 26, Folder 'Manuscripts by Various Authors'. BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

vegetarian food, that animal food is in fact unhealthy, and that a vegetarian diet improves a person's temper, bringing 'increased clearness of brain and peace of spirit'. The only reason he might have for resorting to meat eating, he wrote, would have been a wish not to be singular, and that wish was never strong enough to overcome his 'absolute distaste for meat'.<sup>63</sup>

At the beginning of March 1898, Harold Williams attended the Methodist Conference in Dunedin, with his father and one of his brothers. His candidature for the ministry was discussed, and he was accepted almost unanimously, on condition that he be sent to a country circuit. The circuit in question was Waitara, in Wanganui, on the North Island.<sup>64</sup> Waitara differed considerably in character from St. Albans. It was the largest circuit in the Wanganui district, with five churches and fourteen preaching places, 'situated at distances from three miles to thirty from the superintendent's residence' (in Waitara).<sup>65</sup> Since 1898 a second minister had been appointed, to reside in Inglewood, and this was the post Williams was to take up. His last service at Riccarton village was held on Easter Sunday, 1898, and on the following day he set off for Wellington.<sup>66</sup>

Williams initially took lodgings with the Turner family in Inglewood. His preaching responsibilities centred around the towns of Inglewood, Midhurst, and Waipuku. A typical Sunday might consist of services conducted at Midhurst in the morning, Waipuku in the afternoon, and Inglewood in the evening.<sup>67</sup> Special services were sometimes held in other

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>65</sup> William Morley, *The History of Methodism in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1900) pp. 296-300.

<sup>66</sup> *Weekly Snapshot* Vol. 1. No. 1. 19<sup>th</sup> March 1898. Box 3, Folder 22, Item 60. Arc. 1998.3, Canterbury Museum

<sup>67</sup> Waitara pulpit notices, listed in the *Arcadian News*, June and July 1898. This information was provided by Margaret Lovell-Smith. Letters to the Lovell-Smiths, Box 12, Folder "Letters to MLS", BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams

locations during the week.<sup>68</sup> The new minister was also occasionally required to conduct marriage services, and the fees associated with these provided a welcome addition to his stipend, when they could be wrested from the people concerned.<sup>69</sup> Less pleasant were funerals, such as that of a man who had murdered his daughter and then drowned himself.<sup>70</sup> Much of the week was spent paying pastoral visits, often in the more remote areas of the circuit. This was one of the more trying aspects of Williams's work. There were long distances to cover, usually on horseback but sometimes by bicycle or even on foot. On one occasion in April 1898 he was obliged to walk nine miles in order to visit four people, as he was accompanied by a man who had no horse.<sup>71</sup> By the end of May he was able to report that he had paid 100 visits in six weeks, but that he still had 270 to go before completing his first round. He had also become an accomplished conversationalist on such subjects as the weather, and cows.<sup>72</sup> It was the mediocrity of this kind of conversation which bothered him more than the distances he was obliged to travel – he admitted to fearing that visiting would make 'less of a man' of him; often it left him feeling 'stupid and jaded'.<sup>73</sup> A welcome social held for the new minister in Inglewood was also trying. 'The games on the whole were extremely stupid', he reported, 'but I had to play or else be accounted a bear.'<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, Williams found that the people of Inglewood and its environs displayed a degree of 'frankness and openness' which contrasted with the 'coldness and suspicion' of some

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<sup>68</sup> For example in Lepperton, at the end of May 1898. Letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>69</sup> See for example letters of 25<sup>th</sup> April, 16<sup>th</sup> June and 25<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS' BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>70</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>71</sup> Letters of 25<sup>th</sup> April and 13<sup>th</sup> May 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. *Arcadian News* 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1898. This information was provided by Margaret Lovell-Smith.

<sup>72</sup> Letter of 28<sup>th</sup> May 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>73</sup> Letter of 28<sup>th</sup> January 1898 [1899], Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>74</sup> Letter of 13<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS' BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

of the people in St. Albans.<sup>75</sup> There were colourful characters amongst them, and he sent back sketches to entertain his friends. One bachelor in Tarata had once been a gardener for the Prince of Wales. The church steward at Waipuku, a dairy farmer named Coutts, was a Shetlander with bright blue eyes and an 'extraordinary dialect'. Another Waipuku man began each sentence at prayer meetings 'with a roar', and 'ended with a whisper'.<sup>76</sup> The children of the circuit were particularly affectionate. At a Band of Hope festival in Tarata Williams was surprised to discover that there was 'a tremendous competition' for the honour of being next to him.

When tea time came you would have been surprised to see my staid and [sober] form careering down to the church with a flock of small girls swarming around me, clinging to my wrists, fighting for the possession of a finger, hanging on to my coat-tails and generally trampling on my dignity.

Williams also sent descriptions of some of the local children as contributions to the *Arcadian News*.<sup>77</sup>

The living arrangements in the bush areas were also worthy of note, and seem to have differed considerably from what was characteristic of the relatively suburban St. Albans circuit. Houses were long and often low – on one occasion Williams stayed overnight in Tarata in a room with a ceiling that 'I could almost reach with my hand as I lay in bed'. Some were roofed with galvanised iron, others with shingle, and it was common for sacking to be used to divide the buildings into rooms. Arrangements for holding services were also primitive. At Purangi a service was held

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<sup>75</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>76</sup> Letters of 25<sup>th</sup> April and 13<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>77</sup> Letter of 13<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. 'Some Taranaki Children – Bertie Turner, Hessie Harkness and Wayman Coutts', *Arcadian News* 14<sup>th</sup> May 1898 and 28<sup>th</sup> May 1898. This information was provided by Margaret Lovell-Smith.

in a little galvanised iron shed that had been used as a store. The people sat on boxes, I leaned against the counter. There was a congregation of sixteen, some of whom had crossed the river in a packing case [strung] on a wire rope.<sup>78</sup>

The Wanganui countryside was also spectacular. The scenery was dominated by Mount Egmont, often covered with snow, and the valleys were full of the 'rich, rank growth of a New Zealand bush'.<sup>79</sup>

Williams also got the opportunity to exercise his linguistic abilities. One one occasion he delighted a Swiss woman by paying a pastoral visit in German. He also managed to pick up some Low German and Polish; one parishioner lent him a Polish story that he struggled to 'fathom the meaning of'. He had continuous contact with the Maori communities nearby, and took any opportunity to gain information about them.<sup>80</sup>

An increasing sense of isolation is evident in Harold Williams's letters, however. This seems to have been largely due to the difficulties he experienced in reconciling his own personal beliefs with the traditional and often very conservative establishment views of the people of Inglewood. Leading figures in the Methodist church included 'an old patriarch they call Father Jackson', a Cornishman who had been one of the earliest settlers, and was still preaching at the age of eighty. William Morley described him as having 'all the fervour of his native county'.<sup>81</sup> Another stalwart was Mr. J. C. Peach, the Sunday School superintendent and church steward. Williams was overawed by him at first, but soon came to realise that he was 'an ordinary mortal ... only he is a hard worker in the church'.<sup>82</sup> His wife was a 'very communicative' elderly lady

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<sup>78</sup> Letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>79</sup> Letters of May 13<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>80</sup> Letters of 25<sup>th</sup> April, May 23<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September 1898, and 28<sup>th</sup> January 1898 [99]. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>81</sup> Morley, *History of Methodism in New Zealand* p. 299.

<sup>82</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

whose 'one enthusiasm in life [was] for jam-making'.<sup>83</sup> Attempting to maintain his vegetarian regime proved difficult, and led to severe monotony in Williams's diet. The Turners, with whom he lodged, were a 'busy, hardworking family', and he was reluctant to ask Mrs. Turner to prepare special meals. The result was a surfeit of potatoes, marrow, pumpkin and cabbage.<sup>84</sup> The lack of protein in his diet seems to have resulted in a loss of energy, and a general feeling of being run down. On several occasions he swayed towards a return to meat eating, but his principles prevented this.<sup>85</sup>

Harold Williams's relations with his superintendent, the Rev. W. G. Thomas, were particularly bad. Thomas was a Welshman by birth; like Williams's father he had converted to Methodism at fifteen, and taken the usual course of study at Richmond College before being sent to New Zealand in 1868.<sup>86</sup> He had worked in many circuits, but this was his first position as superintendent. Williams was not impressed with either his intellectual powers, or his organisational skills. Thomas was 'the most incapable being I ever saw placed in charge of a Methodist circuit', and Williams found it 'difficult to speak of him with much respect'. He tried to take Thomas's advice 'as meekly as possible', and then disregarded it for the sake of the circuit. Thomas's comments on the lack of conversions following Williams's special services at Lepperton at the end of May 1898 were almost too much for him to tolerate. 'I know that I have not striking gifts as an evangelist', he wrote to his friend, 'but to be told so by Father Thomas

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<sup>83</sup> Letters of 25<sup>th</sup> April and 13<sup>th</sup> May 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Details about the contribution of Mr Jackson and Mr. and Mrs. Peach to the Methodist church in Inglewood can be found in Morley, *History of Methodism in New Zealand* p. 299.

<sup>84</sup> Letters of 25<sup>th</sup> April, 9<sup>th</sup> May, and 13<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>85</sup> Letter of 28<sup>th</sup> January 1898 [1899]. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>86</sup> Morley, *History of Methodism in New Zealand* p. 299.

was too much for my pride'.<sup>87</sup> William Morley, in his history of New Zealand Methodism, describes the Reverend Thomas as a 'patient superintendent'.<sup>88</sup>

Williams was aware that he was a 'standing puzzle' to the Rev. Thomas. 'He cannot fathom the problem how a youth with such a heterodox library as mine can do the work of a Methodist minister'. When Williams noticed a book that interested him on his superintendent's bookshelves, and requested the loan of it, the latter would not grant it. He later discovered that Thomas was 'actually taking the trouble to read it and assure himself that it can be safely put into my hands before he will pass it on to me.' On writing to his friend that he had been reading A. R. Wallace's *Darwinism – an exposition of the theory of natural selection* (London 1889) and James Martineau's *The Seat of Authority in Religion* (London 1890), Williams admitted 'I am afraid the idea of my reading both these books would send Mr. Thomas into a fit if he knew. For his [health's] sake I mustn't tell him'.<sup>89</sup>

This conflict with Thomas was not the main cause of Williams's problems in the Inglewood circuit, but it was indicative of the wider problems he faced, and of his own realisation that perhaps he was not cut out for the life of a Methodist minister. He missed having his friends to discuss social questions with,<sup>90</sup> and he was constantly aware that many of his parishioners regarded him as something of an oddball. After one of his earliest services in Inglewood church, an old man approached him and said, 'we are homely people here, and we like things plain'. Williams was unaware of any particular novelty of thought or phrase in the sermon. Another man kindly commented following that performance that the people of the circuit were likely to want to

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<sup>87</sup> Letters of 25<sup>th</sup> April, 28<sup>th</sup> May, and 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>88</sup> Morley, *History of Methodism in New Zealand* p. 299.

<sup>89</sup> Letters of 28<sup>th</sup> May and 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>90</sup> Letter of 28<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.



‘turn him out’ at the end of a year.<sup>91</sup> To be thanked for a sermon was a surprise.<sup>92</sup> Williams was only too aware that despite their friendliness the people of Inglewood harboured ‘a sensitive mass of prejudice composed of all the old Methodist traditions’. Initially he adopted the policy of trying to appeal to the people on their own level; to ‘find their needs and speak living words for them’.<sup>93</sup> His own thoughts had to be kept to himself.

I talk to the people as far as I can about what I know interests them. But my lips are sealed now about the things that most of all occupy my thoughts, and I have to learn bit by bit to see my way through many things alone.... And so next Sunday morning I am going to preach to myself on “Bear ye one another’s burdens” and “let every man bear his own burden”. Can you see the great principle that underlies this seeming paradox? It’s a principle that must be worked into my life during the time that I am here.<sup>94</sup>

Yet his own lack of faith in the work he was doing and his ability to do it well seem to have prevented this from proving successful. In Inglewood Williams lapsed back into stammering, an old habit he had eradicated during his time in St. Albans. During sermons he often found himself tongue-tied, and had to force himself from sentence to sentence. This was a serious handicap, and Williams was sensitive to his own failings. ‘Fluency means influence in work like mine, so you can imagine how fiercely I rage sometimes against my infirmity’.<sup>95</sup> When faced with a man who ‘railed vigorously against a paid ministry’, he found himself unable to put up much of a defence, as he felt that he himself was ‘only making the best of a bad job’. Although he felt that the work of the ministry was worth doing, and hoped he could find some corner where he could work in the Methodist church, he found himself constantly worrying about

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<sup>91</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1898. Box 12, Folder ‘Letters to MLS’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>92</sup> Letter of 13<sup>th</sup> May 1898. Box 12, Folder ‘Letters to MLS’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>93</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1898. Box 12, Folder ‘Letters to MLS’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>94</sup> Letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder ‘Letters to MLS’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>95</sup> Letter of 19<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder ‘Letters to MLS’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

the uncertainty of his future; another proof, as he saw it, of his faithlessness.<sup>96</sup> Williams was afraid that his unorthodoxy would prevent his ordination.<sup>97</sup>

A number of events conspired, in the summer of 1898, to revive Williams's interest in social reform, and particularly in projects for communal living. These projects had their roots in late nineteenth century dissatisfaction with the state of modern society, and a number of them were Tolstoyan in nature. Colonies had been established in various parts of Russia, but also in England, Holland, and the United States. Here it was hoped that the colonists would be able to distance themselves from the oppressive state system, and live purely by co-operation, physical work, and by adhering to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>98</sup> Tolstoy himself was sympathetic to these colonies, but denied the existence of any specifically 'Tolstoyan' teaching – he had never wanted his teachings to be followed as dogma; the important thing for him was the search for the truth.<sup>99</sup>

In early June 1898, Williams came across a 'rabid old socialist' by the name of Leech, who was a great enthusiast for the Ruskin colony in Tennessee. This colony had been founded in 1894 on progressive socialist principles, and was promoted by the publicist Julius Augustus Wayland, in the pages of his newspaper *The Coming Nation*.<sup>100</sup> Leech had once been a Wesleyan local preacher, for a time had been an alcoholic, and now, having reformed, was throwing his energies into promoting the Ruskin colony, and trying to establish a similar settlement in New Zealand. He had written a pamphlet on Ruskin, and hoped that after circulating it he would have

<sup>96</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>97</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> April 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>98</sup> Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy - Later Years* Tolstoy Centenary Edition (London 1930) pp. 220-228. W. B. Edgerton, 'The Artist Turned Prophet; Leo Tolstoj after 1880' in *American Contributions to the Sixth International Congress of Slavists* (Prague 1968) vol. 2, pp. 61-85.

<sup>99</sup> E. B. Greenwood, *Tolstoy – the Comprehensive Vision* (London 1975) pp. 147-8.

<sup>100</sup> For an account of the Ruskin colony see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *A Socialist Utopia in the New South: The Ruskin Colonies in Tennessee and Georgia 1894-1901* (Urbana and Chicago, 1996).

enough adherents to start a colony. One man had apparently already gone to the Ruskin colony from New Plymouth; several more were planning to go.<sup>101</sup> Despite Leech's scant education, 'indifferent' logical powers, and lack of religious sentiment, Williams found the man appealing, 'because of his earnestness, and also I expect, because his hobby is so near akin to mine'.<sup>102</sup>

Shortly after his first meeting with Leech, Williams came down with influenza, and was obliged to take a period of rest.<sup>103</sup> It was at this time that he began to fully realise how 'utterly alone' he really was in Inglewood.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, it gave him time to 'think of other things than the next service or the next meeting or the next round of visits.' He was able to 'turn back to those old social problems which after all attract me more than anything else in this world.'<sup>105</sup> A re-reading of Edward Carpenter's *Towards Democracy* (London, 1883) gave him 'an immense lift'.<sup>106</sup>

Upon his recovery he began to swap literature and ideas with Leech, and began to feel a new enthusiasm for life, and for 'the age to come'. He had now come to the conclusion that either he must be able to reconcile his deepest convictions with his work as a Methodist minister, or else he must give up that job.

Thinking out theological problems is a cold business. It is thinking how to bring the [kingdom] of heaven on earth that warms my enthusiasm. I was just being hemmed in by conventions, conventions of theological belief and social life and all the time I knew better and I was miserable under the bondage. I was simply [weary] of holding my own belief in a prudent esoteric fashion. My true self was striving to be let out. And it's coming out now. I am not going to shock the people. It's sheer pride and vanity and selfishness to delight in [shocking] people. But they must know somehow my deepest convictions and my truest thoughts. And [whether] I stay in the

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<sup>101</sup> Letter of 16<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Brundage, *A Socialist Utopia in the New South* p. 8

<sup>102</sup> Letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>103</sup> Williams's flu was reported in the *Arcadian News* of 11<sup>th</sup> June 1898. This information was provided by Margaret Lovell-Smith.

<sup>104</sup> Letter of 9<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>105</sup> Letter of 16<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>106</sup> Letter of 19<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

ministry or not, I don't care. Life is worth living now, that I see I can live for the sake of a nobler cause.<sup>107</sup>

Williams tried out his new policy first on Mr. Turner, and despite previously having been able to find little common ground in conversation with him, considering him 'an old fashioned English liberal', he was astonished to find that Turner was receptive to some of his ideas.<sup>108</sup> During a visit to Midhurst he expounded his belief in Christian Socialism to his host, a Mr. Hills.<sup>109</sup> Sermons were now coming more easily; 'thoughts and fitting words came without any effort', and he was able to speak with 'more vigour and force and with greater range of voice than I can remember speaking with for some time'. The stammer had all but gone. And what Williams was saying in his sermons was 'more really my sincere and innermost conviction than anything I have been able to say since I came here. I never once thought whether it was orthodox or unorthodox until afterwards.'<sup>110</sup>

For a period of around two months, from his recovery from influenza in June until the time of the next breakdown in his health in August, Williams was gripped by his passion for the community experiment. Separating oneself from society, and living purely by the principles of the Sermon on the Mount seemed to him to be the best way to 'demonstrate to the world, at cost of reputation, position, comfort and possibly even life itself that Christ's Christianity is practicable'.<sup>111</sup> He eagerly absorbed any information he could get about groups who were attempting to live the Tolstoyan ideal; the Ruskin colony in Tennessee, a group called the Christian Commonwealth in Georgia inspired by George Herron, a leading American Christian

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<sup>107</sup> Letter of 19<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>108</sup> Letter of 19<sup>th</sup> June 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>109</sup> Letter of 7<sup>th</sup> July 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>110</sup> Letters of 19<sup>th</sup> June and 7<sup>th</sup> July 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>111</sup> Letter of 7<sup>th</sup> July 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

Socialist, and a group led by Richard Heath in Rugby called the Brotherhood of the Kingdom.<sup>112</sup> The group Williams identified with most closely, and had the most information about, was the Croydon Brotherhood Church, led by John Coleman Kenworthy. Kenworthy has no connection with the established church. He had given up a career in business after a life-changing encounter with Tolstoy's religious and moral works, and in 1894 was appointed honorary pastor to a motley group of socialists and spiritualists based in Croydon. Under Kenworthy's leadership their aim was the establishment of 'an alternative society based on brotherly love and honest labour'. At the end of 1896 the Brotherhood Church established its own Tolstoyan colony, on land purchased for the purpose at Purleigh, in Essex.<sup>113</sup> It is unclear how Williams first came to hear about the Croydon group, but he seems to have been in touch with Kenworthy by mail, and he regularly 'sent home' for the Brotherhood's newspaper, the *New Order*, and other literature put out by the Brotherhood Publishing Company.<sup>114</sup>

Williams, convinced of the need for 'entire harmony between conviction and practice', was determined to join such a community if he had the chance, and hoped to see one established as soon as possible in New Zealand.<sup>115</sup> He was not entirely convinced by Leech's plans, however – they were heavily based on the Ruskin model, and Williams found the Ruskin newspaper, the *Coming Nation*, rather heavy, with 'too much denunciation, too little talk of constructive ideas'.<sup>116</sup> Even when positive information began to come through about the condition of the Ruskin settlement, Williams confessed it 'is Croydon and Purleigh that I set before my eyes when

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<sup>112</sup> Letters of 16<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June, and 7<sup>th</sup> July 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>113</sup> For details of the activities of the Croydon Brotherhood Church and the Purleigh colony see M. J. De K. Holman, 'The Purleigh Colony: Tolstoyan togetherness in the late 1890s' in Malcolm Jones (ed.), *New Essays on Tolstoy* (Cambridge 1978), and W. H. G. Armytage, *Heavens Below. Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960* (London 1961) pp. 342-358.

<sup>114</sup> Letters of 13<sup>th</sup> May and 4<sup>th</sup> July 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>115</sup> Letter of 29<sup>th</sup> July 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>116</sup> Letter of 16<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

I think of the happy time to come.'<sup>117</sup> He had heard of one New Zealand colony, although it 'would [hardly] fall in with our ideas' – a communal flax-milling concern had been established by a Mr. Garden of Wellington; all members had to be 'gentlemen by birth or education'.<sup>118</sup> Upon getting hold of some literature on the Christian Commonwealth, Williams 'Herronised Inglewood to the extent of about 4. doz. copies.'

Williams's correspondence from this time is full of enthusiasm for these projects, but also of disillusionment with his present circumstances. He admitted that 'sometimes I wake up from my thinking and dreaming and simply shudder at my surroundings.'<sup>119</sup> Lucy Smith seems to have been trying to exert a cautious influence on him. They discussed practical problems such as the morality of charging interest, the problem of finding an ethical manufacturer of straw hats, and a crusade against the unethical manufacture of matches.<sup>120</sup> One particular dilemma for Williams was the question of abstaining from the vote, which would mean he would not be able to vote for Prohibition. He struggled with himself on this point. 'Christ did live within the institutions of his time', he wrote, 'but I am positive he would not have sat on the throne of [Ceasar], which took the place in the ancient world of our voting power'. 'In voting one's whole intention may be simply to hold up the hand for the right. Yet what is the effect. One gives [consent] that anyone who infringes on that right shall be forcibly suppressed.'<sup>121</sup>

At around this time the members of the Select Circle decided to put together a newspaper, *Light Ahead*, to be edited by Macie Smith. The paper's policy would be to promote 'advanced reform on Christian principles'.<sup>122</sup> While Harold Williams had been in Inglewood, the Smiths had

<sup>117</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>118</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>119</sup> Letter of 29<sup>th</sup> July 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>120</sup> Letters of 19<sup>th</sup> June and 4<sup>th</sup> July 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>121</sup> Letters of 29<sup>th</sup> July and 11<sup>th</sup> August 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>122</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

sent their family newspapers for him to read.<sup>123</sup> Like these, the new paper was only to be circulated amongst friends, but it was to be a more intellectual, critical publication. Williams suggested a series of articles on vegetarian experiences, one of which he wrote himself. He also offered to write a series on Great Reformers, to be called something like 'Messengers from Utopia', in which he would say what he knew of 'Tolstoy, Mazzini, Carpenter and others.' A series on communities was another possibility. Williams's enthusiasm for this project, and 'the thought of working for a happier, better time' had given him a new enthusiasm, and a new 'hold on life'. The new paper, he felt, would 'bridge space with ideas', and 'obliterate difference of circumstances by community of thought.'<sup>124</sup> *Light Ahead* was bound together in the form of a booklet, and was rated in the other Smith family newspapers as 'a high class paper'. However, only four issues ever appeared, none of which survive.<sup>125</sup>

In mid August, Harold Williams had a more serious breakdown. On August 11<sup>th</sup> he reported to the Smiths that his parents wanted him to go home or get a change of work. Mr. Isitt, who was doing missionary work in New Plymouth at this time, had told them that he was under some strain. Williams had a sense of 'utter dissatisfaction' with his work in the ministry, and Mr. Garland, another family friend, thought he was feeling the effects of years of study. Whatever the cause, it was clear that he was 'not strong enough at present to work this circuit as it should be worked'.<sup>126</sup> It seems likely that it was at this time that he stayed with the family of Annie Wood, sister of Will and Lucy Smith. Dorothy Du Pontet, daughter of Annie and James Wood, recalls Harold Williams having 'had a severe breakdown' and 'spending some time with us in Fielding

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<sup>123</sup> *Weekly Snapshot 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1898* Box 3, Folder 22, Item 65, Arc. 1998.3, Canterbury Museum.

<sup>124</sup> Letters of 16<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>125</sup> Lovell-Smith, *Plain Living High Thinking* p. 53.

<sup>126</sup> Letter of 11<sup>th</sup> August 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

to rest and recuperate'.<sup>127</sup> He was eventually persuaded to go to Auckland, where he stayed with his parents for several weeks.<sup>128</sup>

Upon his return to work in Inglewood, he admitted that during his period of rest he had 'had a dose of common sense' instilled into him. He felt that his loneliness in Inglewood had contributed to a morbidity in his outlook. He now realised that he was young and inexperienced, and had a lot to live for.<sup>129</sup> He regained some of his lost enthusiasm for circuit work, and was anxious to stay in Inglewood.<sup>130</sup> His enthusiasm for the community experiment had also dimmed somewhat, as he explained to Lucy Smith.

I can understand now why you used to answer my impassioned tirade against [society] with those gentle recommendations to use existing means and not tie myself down to one method of saving the world. I shiver sometimes when I think of those months when Kenworthy's ideas dominated my imagination and chilled my sympathies for the life that now is. Poor, noble Kenworthy. I admire and honour him yet, but I simply dare not follow him. Some infusion of conservatism seems to have been given to my nature and my socialism is no more the gloomy desperate thing it was.<sup>131</sup>

Nevertheless, it seems that this 'infusion of conservatism' had come too late to have a positive impact on the leading men of Inglewood, several of whom expressed opposition to Williams continuing in the circuit for another year. Despite the kindness of the majority of his parishioners, Williams could not, in this knowledge, remain in his position with any comfort. At Easter 1899 his work in the Waitara circuit came to an end. He was fêted at Waitara, Midhurst and Inglewood, before leaving again for his parents' home in Auckland.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Dorothy Du Pontet, *The Long Years of Youth* Micro MS-0493, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Margaret Lovell-Smith provided this reference, for which I am very grateful.

<sup>128</sup> *Arcadian News* 20<sup>th</sup> August 1898. This information was provided by Margaret Lovell-Smith.

<sup>129</sup> Letter of 10<sup>th</sup> September 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>130</sup> Letters of 28<sup>th</sup> September and 19<sup>th</sup> Nov 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>131</sup> Letter of 19<sup>th</sup> November 1898. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>132</sup> Letter of 14<sup>th</sup> April 1899, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.



Having effectively failed in his chosen career, Harold Williams was left with the task of deciding what to do with his life. The summer and autumn of 1899 was a frustrating period of waiting. For a short time in 1899 he was sent to the Northern Waiora circuit to cover for the regular minister, Mr Gibson. The circuit consisted of a number of small 'saw-milling' townships and a few farms, on the banks of a large river. The chief industry of the area was gum-digging. On the gum fields, and on the steamer on the way there, Williams met a number of Austrians, an Italian, a Maltese, and a Greek. This, combined with the area's large Maori population, and some Samoans, meant that Williams 'indulged his linguistic tastes to the full'.<sup>133</sup> He was also active at this time in the campaign for Prohibition. At this time there was no opportunity for a national vote on the question; licenses could be revoked at a local level leaving individual districts to decide their own policy.<sup>134</sup> In December 1899, Williams was campaigning with the Prohibition movement in New Plymouth. He was bitterly disappointed at their defeat, but felt that the campaign's effect in 'sobering and hardening up our party will be a great advantage in the next fight'.<sup>135</sup> He had been appalled at the state of the Maori in Waiora, who, when travelling on the train 'pressed their whiskey on all and sundry.' The opening of a new hotel in the area did not help. Williams prayed that Prohibition would come quickly.<sup>136</sup> He also seems to have been doing some degree work, and was reading books set for this purpose; Aristotle's *Ethics*, and Silvio Pellico's account of his imprisonments, *Le Mie Prigione* (1837).<sup>137</sup>

The first mention of any intention to actually leave New Zealand came in June 1898, when Williams referred to hopes he had had the previous year to go to England. It is unclear what

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<sup>133</sup> Letter of 27<sup>th</sup> June 1899, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>134</sup> Richard Newman, 'New Zealand's Vote for Prohibition in 1911', *New Zealand Journal of History* Vol. 9 No. 1 (April 1975) p. 52.

<sup>135</sup> Letter of 18<sup>th</sup> December 1899. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>136</sup> Letter of 27<sup>th</sup> June 1899, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>137</sup> Letter of 19<sup>th</sup> November 1899, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

he had hoped to do there.<sup>138</sup> By April 1899 all sorts of plans were circulating. It was 'barely possible that if I can scrape together sufficient money for a steerage passage I may make the attempt to visit the States and see with my own eyes the working of the Christ spirit in Commonwealth'.<sup>139</sup> There was also the possibility of a position on the *Daily News* in New Plymouth.<sup>140</sup> For a while he considered becoming a missionary amongst the Maori, or going abroad with one of his brothers. Hugh was planning to go to England, and Aubrey hoped to go to South Africa, where he felt there 'should be a good opening for any young fellow who is anxious to make his way'.<sup>141</sup>

There were other circumstances, besides the search for an occupation, which compounded Harold Williams's final decision to leave New Zealand for Europe. In the middle of 1899, he had become engaged to a Miss Harkness, the daughter of an Inglewood family whom he had first met in June 1898. The Harknesses had been 'about the most intelligent people' within Williams's reach during his time in Inglewood.<sup>142</sup> By the end of June the following year they were clearly engaged; Williams was hoping that she would soon be able to come to Auckland and stay with his mother, and wrote that she would very much like to know the Smith family.<sup>143</sup> However, by December that year Williams had broken the engagement off, and wrote to the Smiths in explanation.

For a long time, from the beginning of my engagement I had an uneasy feeling that somehow everything was not right and that the love I had for Miss Harkness was not the love a man should have for the woman he wants to spend his life with. I had felt sorry for her because I thought she was in trouble and because I had seen her often I thought that I had a kind of mission to her, that I ought to help her. And it seemed to me that I could not help her as I ought unless I became

<sup>138</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1899, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>139</sup> Letter of 19<sup>th</sup> April 1899, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>140</sup> Letter of 27<sup>th</sup> June 1899, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>141</sup> Letter of 10<sup>th</sup> January 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>142</sup> Letter of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>143</sup> Letter of 27<sup>th</sup> June 1899, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

engaged to her. And so it happened and ever since then I have been unhappy about it. I tried to make the best of it. I did my best to love her. I told her that I loved her, but the love I had for her was a feeble thing and nothing like she expected. At last I could bear it no longer and to be honest I had to tell her the other day the true state of my feelings. I cannot tell you now of the agony of it all. I only know that now I am the man I most despise – a man who has broken his engagement.<sup>144</sup>

In the small and very moral social circle in which Williams moved, there were inevitable repercussions, and his conscience obviously troubled him. It seems likely that this scandal encouraged him to put his plans into action and leave for Europe. Williams decided to go to a German university, and study philology. His preference was for Berlin. He was helped by the generosity of a number of people. Mr. William Wilson, one of the proprietors of the *New Zealand Herald*, on hearing of Williams intentions, 'at once sat down and wrote out a cheque for 50 pounds' to cover the cost of his ticket.<sup>145</sup> A steerage ticket cost 15 pounds and 15 shillings, and Williams reserved the rest for expenses at the other end. Another gentleman, on hearing that he was travelling steerage, offered to pay the difference between that and a second class passage, but was eventually persuaded to allow Williams the option of saving this extra money for his arrival in Europe. The university fees were low, he reported, and he hoped to survive by doing some coaching in English.<sup>146</sup> He left armed with letters of introduction, including 'one from my old Classical professor to an influential person in Berlin', and the addresses of two vegetarian restaurants in London. His first port of call would be England, to visit his relatives, and he intended to see Kenworthy and the Purleigh colony when he got to London, as well as Edward Carpenter, who lived in Sheffield.<sup>147</sup> His 'chief ambition', however, was 'to make a pilgrimage to

<sup>144</sup> Letter of 18<sup>th</sup> December 1899, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>145</sup> Oliver A. Gillespie, 'New Zealand's Neglected Genius – Harold Williams' *The Auckland Star* 5<sup>th</sup> March 1955. Letters of 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> January 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>146</sup> Letters of 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> January 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>147</sup> Letters of 10<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

Tolstoy. If by any piece of good fortune I can get to Russia before he [dies] I shall consider myself happy.<sup>148</sup>

It was eventually decided that his brother Aubrey would accompany him to England.

They were to sail on the *Konigin Louise*, from Sydney, on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1900. Before leaving, Williams wrote to his friends in St. Albans.

The time is at hand and I can't help feeling a little downhearted at the thought of leaving my own country, it may be for many years. I have faith enough to believe that I shall succeed in the undertaking and I am anxious to work hard. The end of it all will be something better than my imagination can reach at present and on the whole I am content.<sup>149</sup>

Harold Williams never returned to New Zealand. He saw his parents on one further occasion, when they, along with his brothers Aubrey, Sydney and Hugh, were all in England in the summer of 1901.<sup>150</sup> In November 1905 his mother died, and in January 1906 William Williams remarried, to a Methodist deaconess named Alice Jeffrey, also known as Sister Olive.<sup>151</sup> Hugh, Harold's immediately younger brother, served an apprenticeship with a New Zealand shipping company, and became a ship's captain involved in transportation of troops and salvage operations in both world wars. He died in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in 1944.<sup>152</sup> Aubrey, the next youngest, sailed to England with Harold, and spent some years during the war living with his elder brother in St. Petersburg.<sup>153</sup> Owen, six years Harold's junior, taught at Nelson College and Wellington College, and became the (Anglican) chaplain of Christ's College in

<sup>148</sup> Letter of 27<sup>th</sup> January 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>149</sup> Letter of 27<sup>th</sup> January 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>150</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>151</sup> 'Sister Olive Jeffrey', *Methodist Church of New Zealand Jubilee Brochure 1907-1957: Methodist Deaconess Order* (Christchurch 1957) pp. 45-46. She had a son, Geoffrey, in 1909, but he died of meningitis in 1924.

<sup>152</sup> S. D. Waters, *New Zealand Master Mariners. A series of articles in the Evening Post 22 May 1958-20 June 1959* No. 49, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

<sup>153</sup> See chapters two, three and four.

Christchurch in 1923.<sup>154</sup> Norman, born in 1885, was a clerk who later became an organist at one of Christchurch's churches. Bertie, born in 1887, was killed at Messines in 1917. Sydney, the youngest brother, became a steamship officer, and moved to New South Wales with his wife, Polly.<sup>155</sup>

Williams was reunited with some of his brothers on a number of occasions; there is a photograph of Hugh, Aubrey, Owen and Harold together in London in 1919. He wrote regularly to Owen, less regularly to Hugh and to Syd, and wrote to his father until the end of his life (William Williams outlived his son by eight years). But his plans to return to New Zealand, 'strong and independent, and with [his] place established in life', which he still harboured at least as late as 1906, would never be realised.<sup>156</sup> The journey to Europe was to take him in a different direction altogether.

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<sup>154</sup> Michael Blair, *Clergy in the Diocese of Christchurch 1890-1925* (Christchurch 1994). Don Hamilton, *College! A History of Christ's College* (Christchurch 1996) pp. 338, 419.

<sup>155</sup> I am very grateful to Rae Wilson of the Methodist Archives of New Zealand, Karen Rusbatch of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists, and Mrs Neena Williams of Christchurch for the information they provided on the Williams family history.

<sup>156</sup> Harold Williams to Owen Williams, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1906. MS Papers 0555-1.

## 2. Journalism, 1900-1914

The years that Harold Williams spent studying in Germany challenged the ideas and ideals he had developed in New Zealand, and forced him to adapt them to fit a new, European context. Almost as soon as he was on the boat to Sydney his horizons began to broaden. He was captivated by Sydney itself; 'the buildings, the harbour, the meetings, the streets', and especially the 'crowd of self-appointed orators' at the Sunday afternoon debate in the Domain park.<sup>1</sup> On board the *Konigin Louise*, sailing to Europe, his fellow steerage passengers entertained him and sparked his linguistic interest. There were Germans, Italians, two Syrians 'jabbering away in Arabic', a Russian store keeper from Western Australia, originally from Kiev, and a 'hideous' old Russian Jew with 'a frightful face and a thumbless hand', who demanded payment in cigarettes for answering Williams's questions about the Romanian language.<sup>2</sup> At sunset, glorious combinations of colour transformed the glassy seascape. The equator came and went, with 'no perceptible increase in the [rotundity] of the earth'.<sup>3</sup>

By the beginning of April, Harold and Aubrey were in London, where they stayed for a week at a hotel in Bridgewater Square, dining every day at the Central Vegetarian Restaurant. They 'did not fall in love with London'. The weather was depressing, and the famous streets and shops seemed no more impressive to the young New Zealanders than anything they could experience at home.<sup>4</sup> Harold was anxious to meet members of the English Tolstoyan movement. He called several times at the Brotherhood Publicity Office in Paternoster Square, where he met Frank Henderson, who had taken over the editorship of the *New Order*, and picked up a copy of

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<sup>1</sup> Letter of 20<sup>th</sup> February 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>2</sup> Letters of 20<sup>th</sup> February and 1<sup>st</sup> March 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of 1<sup>st</sup> March 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of 4<sup>th</sup> April 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

*Resurrection*, Tolstoy's latest novel. John Kenworthy, it transpired, was living at Purleigh, and at the first opportunity Williams took a train from Liverpool Street out to Maldon in Essex, before walking the five miles to Purleigh. Unfortunately Williams's impressions of the Tolstoyan colony do not survive.<sup>5</sup> He later commented to Lucy Smith that Kenworthy was 'quite what I expected him to be and I am very thankful to meet one more man in whom I need not be [disappointed]'. It seems that Williams and Kenworthy met on at least one further occasion.<sup>6</sup>

After a week in London the Williamses moved on to Ilkeston in Derbyshire, to stay with relatives. They visited Derby, 'a quiet old fashioned town', and Harold called on but missed William Hare, an enthusiastic Tolstoyan who edited a newspaper called *Candlestick*. He also learned more about the movement in Europe. Frank Henderson sent him several copies of *Vrede*, a paper published by a Dutch group based at a colony in Blaricum. The Austrian movement was apparently struggling; a Tolstoyan journal entitled *Ohne Staat*, edited by Eugene Schmitt, had ceased publication. Williams wished there were a strong movement in Germany, but feared that 'Social Democracy absorbs most of the reform element there'.<sup>7</sup>

By the autumn of 1900 Williams was in Berlin, and had begun his studies. He was fascinated by the city.

The streets. The people. The soldiers. Unter den Linden. The Schloss. The Tiergarten, the churches, the University, the Kaiser, the shops, everything wunderschön, reizend. I am never weary of gazing at this city. I look at the shops, I smile at the people, I gaze at the monuments and I take [off] my hat to the Kaiser.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Letter of 4<sup>th</sup> April 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. It seems unlikely that Williams would not have sent his friends a description of the colony, but these letters are transcriptions, and this one tails off just after Williams describes his train journey to Maldon.

<sup>6</sup> Letter of 11<sup>th</sup> April 1900, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> undated letter from Berlin, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

He enjoyed observing the differences in custom, and related these to his friends in New Zealand. Dress was much smarter than at home, and nowhere was alcohol such a problem as in New Zealand. The position of women, on the other hand, was much worse; American women in Berlin had a great deal of freedom, but English women were more restricted. The German ideal of a woman was still 'the uninspiring one of the Hausfrau'. By comparison the Women's movement in New Zealand seemed to Williams to set a positive example.<sup>9</sup> At a meeting in Berlin Williams heard the American radical liberal H. D. Lloyd speak on New Zealand. Lloyd 'seemed to find no words of praise too strong to apply to the land of our birth ... the result was that the whole company was stimulated with a desire to go to New Zealand and crowded round me for further information.'<sup>10</sup>

Williams's lectures included Philosophy, Greek, Sanskrit, and Slavonic languages. He planned to write his dissertation on some aspect of the Polynesian languages.<sup>11</sup> He made friends, among the English community, with a Unitarian minister named Herbert Rossington, and with Godfrey Phillips, who later went to work at the United Theological College in Bangalore. Williams also began a lifelong friendship with Nina Jaesrich, a linguist, and her clergyman husband; in 1902 he spent Christmas with them in their new home at Botzen in the Tyrol.<sup>12</sup> Some holidays were spent in Germany, others in England, with relatives. In 1901 Williams spent the summer in Cornwall with his mother and father, who had travelled to England for the Methodist conference in London, and three of his brothers, Aubrey, Hugh and Sydney. With so

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<sup>9</sup> undated letter from Berlin, and letters of 29<sup>th</sup> Jan and 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1901. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>10</sup> Letter of 13<sup>th</sup> March 1901, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>11</sup> Letter of 8<sup>th</sup> May 1902, and undated letter from Berlin, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Lebenslauf, in Williams, *Grammatische Skizze der Ilocano Sprache* p. 83

<sup>12</sup> Letters of 27<sup>th</sup> February 1901, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1902, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Godfrey Phillips to Harold Williams, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1922, Box 12, Folder 'Various Persons to Harold Williams' BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 17.



many of the family in one place, Cornwall 'really seemed remarkably like home'. This was the last time Williams would see either of his parents.<sup>13</sup>

In the autumn of 1902 Williams moved to Munich, where he found life much quieter; he had time to walk, to read, and 'occasionally, very occasionally, time to think'. He continued to attend lectures, and spent the rest of his time working on his dissertation. Here he befriended the Bergens, an American Tolstoyan and his German wife.<sup>14</sup>

Although there was no strong counterpart in Germany, Williams maintained his interest in the Tolstoyan movement, and received bits and pieces of news about its progress.<sup>15</sup> On his way to England in the summer of 1901 he paid a visit to the Blaricum colony in Holland. He also met Felix Ortt, the editor of *Vrede*, with whom he remained in contact; Ortt later paid Williams a return visit in Berlin.<sup>16</sup> Although Williams's interest in Tolstoyan projects remained strong, his personal enthusiasm and desire for involvement had paled somewhat. This was partly due to his absorption in other work.<sup>17</sup> It also stemmed from his disappointment in some of the leading figures of the movement, who had failed to live up to the ideal. A scandal had broken around George Herron, who was divorcing his wife and planned to marry another woman. Another scandal surrounded Professor Bemis, a populist professor who had been dismissed from his post at the University of Chicago, on grounds of immorality. All this made Williams doubtful about the character of the modern reformer, which seemed to suffer from a want of solidity.<sup>18</sup> By early

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<sup>13</sup> Letters of 12<sup>th</sup> August, 6<sup>th</sup> September and 1<sup>st</sup> November 1901, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>14</sup> Letters of 21<sup>st</sup> Nov 1902 and 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>15</sup> Letter of June 1902, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>16</sup> Letter of 12<sup>th</sup> August 1901, undated letter, and letter of June 1902, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>17</sup> undated letter from Berlin, and letter of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1901, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>18</sup> undated letter from Berlin, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

1903, the English Tolstoyan movement was also in trouble. In Williams's words it had 'fallen to pieces for want of a strong head to guide it'. Aylmer Maude and John Kenworthy were involved in a legal battle over the publication rights to Tolstoy's works in English, and the Purleigh community had largely disintegrated. Williams had begun to doubt that Kenworthy had either the intellectual capacity or the strength of character to follow through on his early work.<sup>19</sup> Williams confessed he was 'beginning to have a distrust of men who put forward vast schemes of reform'.

The 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.<sup>20</sup>

By June 1904 Williams found himself agreeing that Tolstoy was 'useful as an awakener, not as an absolute guide'.<sup>21</sup>

It is also clear that the ideas Williams was enthusiastic about had different, more political implications in Europe than they had had in New Zealand. This was particularly true of socialism. The concept of socialism espoused by Williams and his friends at Arcadia had spiritual, Christian overtones. The spiritual side of life, for Williams, was 'the chief matter to be insisted upon. When that is right, the rest will follow'.<sup>22</sup> In Europe, the word 'socialist' had a 'distinctly political association', and by European standards, Williams found he could call himself a socialist only 'in the most general sense'.

In Germany, for instance, a Socialist means a member of the Socialist Democratic Party, the aims and methods of which are almost purely materialistic. I admire it in many ways but could not call myself a member of it. Just as little could I call myself a member of any of the Socialistic parties in English politics. I certainly agree most heartily with the principle of equality of opportunity for all; but I am sceptical as to the value of political action in this direction, and am more inclined to

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<sup>19</sup> Letters of 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 13<sup>th</sup> August 1903, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>20</sup> undated letter from Berlin, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>21</sup> Letter of 24<sup>th</sup> June 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>22</sup> Letter of 12<sup>th</sup> August 1901, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

trust to the efforts of voluntary associations of individuals. You may contend that the State, at any rate in a new country like New Zealand practically amounts to a voluntary association of individuals. This is only partially true, because even the New Zealand state appeals in the long run not to reason, not to goodwill, but to the weight of its own authority. And this authority if you unveil it is simply force.<sup>23</sup>

Williams admitted that 'it may be that one changes one's point of view in a city like this'.<sup>24</sup> He sometimes found it 'positively depressing to be here at the heart of civilisation'. Despite the famous places, people, and buildings, he could not help feeling that 'when it comes to living one's life and meeting every day facts New Zealand is the happier place'.<sup>25</sup>

Williams's years in Germany were a financial struggle, and he soon found he had to take 'lessons in the dismal science of economy'.<sup>26</sup> According to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, her husband admitted living close to the bread line, and to sometimes suffering from fatigue brought on by lack of food.<sup>27</sup> He struggled to maintain a vegetarian diet, but his choices had to be dominated more by economy, availability and a lack of energy than by ethical or moral considerations. Although his conscience troubled him, he was coming to realise that hard work and vegetarianism, in the environment in which he lived, were not a viable combination.<sup>28</sup> He taught English to German students, which brought in some much-needed money, but 'wasted a lot of time'. He also managed to get some work in the Indonesian section of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin.<sup>29</sup> Harold Williams's initial experiments in journalism were also motivated by the need to find extra sources of income. In the beginning he had little intention of making a career out of it.

<sup>23</sup> Letter of 26<sup>th</sup> November 1901, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>24</sup> undated letter from Berlin, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Letter of 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 1901, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>27</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 16-17.

<sup>28</sup> Letters of 29<sup>th</sup> January 1901, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1902, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>29</sup> Letters of 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 1901, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1902, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Lebenslauf, in Williams, *Grammatische Skizze der Ilocano Sprache* p. 83.

This is hardly surprising given what we know of Williams's background and ambitions. Although he had been exposed to, and in an amateur way been involved in the world of journalism in New Zealand, it certainly seems an unlikely choice of career for someone as idealistic as he was; a young man with an apparent need to do useful and fulfilling work, for a cause he could believe in. Neither did his first attempts at journalism in Germany fill him with much enthusiasm. According to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, he did some 'rather unsuccessful' work for what she refers to as an obscure women's magazine.<sup>30</sup> He also managed to get a couple of articles published in the New Zealand press – an article on Kruger, the Boer leader, that Williams had sent to his father appeared in the *Auckland Herald* in early 1901, and William Lovell-Smith, Macie's father, offered to take material by Williams for the *Christchurch Press*.<sup>31</sup> He sent a description of the unveiling of the new Bismarck monument to the *Press* in June 1901. Williams had obtained a ticket of entrance to this event through Dudley Braham, the assistant correspondent in *The Times's* Berlin office, with whom he was friendly.<sup>32</sup> At this stage Williams still demonstrated a fairly ambivalent attitude to journalism. In mid 1901 he wrote to his friends

I seem to be forced more and more into writing for my living and it's barely possible that I may turn journalist. I can't say that I rejoice particularly at the prospect. I have an uncomfortable feeling as though I were forsaking old ideals and settling down to be a [humdrum] man of the world.<sup>33</sup>

In November 1901, when Dudley Braham left *The Times's* Berlin office, Williams was given a fortnight's trial as his replacement. He was to work as assistant to George Saunders, *The Times's* correspondent in Berlin. Saunders was an astute and outspoken journalist, and his critical reports regarding German hostility to Britain at this time had earned him great unpopularity in

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<sup>30</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> Letter of 13<sup>th</sup> March 1901, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>32</sup> Letter of 19<sup>th</sup> June 1901, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

Berlin. The German Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Baron Richthofen, had on one famous occasion demonstratively turned his back on Saunders, after publicly telling him that no-one had done so much as he had to poison Anglo-German relations.<sup>34</sup> Williams was paid five pounds, but he was not kept on at the end of his trial; a replacement for Braham had been sent out to Berlin. Although Saunders had been impressed with Williams's knowledge of German (which he considered essential for the job), and thought him discreet, sensible, and a man who 'might one day turn out to be valuable', Williams's English style, while it might pass muster in New Zealand, was 'hardly crisp and idiomatic enough for the Times', and he did not know enough of English institutions to be able to translate German ideas into their English equivalents. Saunders suggested that Williams spend a year in London, Oxford, or Cambridge, in order to 'acquire a sense of the rhythm of correctly spoken and written English'.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, Saunders promised to keep Williams in mind in case he should need assistance in the future, and gave him some advice on journalistic matters for which Williams was grateful. He considered Saunders to be very kind, despite the fact that he did not have 'wide sympathies'. The work had kindled Williams's ambition to write, but he confessed to feeling

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 organisation, but really I have very 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.<sup>36</sup>

This experience opened up new possibilities; by early 1903 Williams was making some extra money by writing a weekly Munich letter for the *German Times*, an English paper

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<sup>34</sup> *The History of the Times: the Twentieth Century Test* (London 1947) pp. 295-320, 363-371. Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe – R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (London 1981) p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> George Saunders to Moberly Bell, 4<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June 1901, 11<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup> October 1901, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1901, Moberly Bell Files, TNL Archive.

<sup>36</sup> Letters of 1<sup>st</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November 1901, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

published in Berlin.<sup>37</sup> It was still clear that he did not regard journalism as a realistic career option, however, and when he was offered his first serious journalistic appointment, in the summer of 1903, he accepted it only as a temporary measure, in the absence of more serious work.

By the end of June 1903 Williams had completed his doctoral thesis, and it was successfully examined in mid July. Entitled *Grammatische Skizze der Ilocano Sprache mit Berücksichtigung ihrer Beziehungen zu den anderen Sprachen der Malayo-polynesischen Familie* (A grammatical sketch of the Ilocano language with consideration of its relation to the other languages of the Malayo-Polynesian Family), it provided a detailed study of the grammatical structure of Ilocano, building on work done by Spanish missionaries such as Francisco Lopez in the early seventeenth century.<sup>38</sup> As Williams came to the end of his studies, a number of offers of philological and ethnological work surfaced. Franz Boas, Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University, New York, had expressed an interest in sending Williams to the Philippines to do field work. Professor Felix von Luschan, in Berlin, had mentioned the possibility of sending him to the New Hebrides and Solomon islands.<sup>39</sup> Williams was uncertain; he recognised that philology was his 'strong point', but didn't feel 'in the least attracted to the life of a German scholar.' He was still drawn to the idea of returning to New Zealand and going into

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<sup>37</sup> Letter of 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>38</sup> Letters of 30<sup>th</sup> June and 19<sup>th</sup> July 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>39</sup> Letter of 30<sup>th</sup> June 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Franz Boas (1858-1942), took his doctorate at the University of Kiel in 1881, and had worked at the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin in the mid 1880s. He undertook extensive field work amongst Eskimos on Baffin Island and later with native Canadian Indians in British Columbia. He lectured at Clark University and Columbia University, and became Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University in 1899. Felix von Luschan (1854-1924), also had connections with the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin.

missionary work, and felt that the philological work he had done would be valuable in this respect.<sup>40</sup>

In the meantime, Dudley Braham approached Williams with an entirely different proposition. Since leaving the Berlin office in 1901 Braham had been working as *The Times's* correspondent in St. Petersburg. The British press, conservative as it was on most issues, followed an almost unanimous policy of criticising the Tsarist regime in Russia. Not only was the government repressive, corrupt and opposed to any measures of reform or popular representation, Russia was also a traditional imperial rival, and was still perceived to be a threat to British security.<sup>41</sup> *The Times*, during Braham's tenure in St. Petersburg, had earned itself a reputation for particularly virulent criticism. In the aftermath of the Kishinev pogroms of 6<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> April 1903, Braham sent outspoken reports condemning the ineffective Government response. On 18<sup>th</sup> May *The Times* published a letter (unconnected with Braham) which gave credit to the idea that V. K. Plehve, the Russian Minister of the Interior, had given instructions to the Governor of Kishinev not to take action to prevent the riots, which he had known about beforehand.<sup>42</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> May, Braham was arrested and informed that he was being expelled from Russia on the grounds of his 'hostility to the Russian Government and the invention of false news'.<sup>43</sup> Although it was widely assumed that these charges related to Braham's coverage of the fallout from Kishinev, Plehve revealed to Sir Charles Scott, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, that Braham's expulsion had been planned for some time. Ever since Braham had

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<sup>40</sup> Letter of 27<sup>th</sup> February 1901, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>41</sup> W. Harrison, 'The British Press and the Russian Revolution of 1905-1907' *Oxford Slavonic Papers* New Series Vol. VII 1974 pp. 75-6.

<sup>42</sup> For an account of the Kishinev pogrom and its context, see Edward H. Judge, *Easter in Kishinev – Anatomy of a Pogrom* (New York and London, 1992), or John D. Klier (ed), *Pogroms – anti-Jewish violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge 1992) pp. 195-248. See Braham's dispatches in, for example, *The Times* of 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> May 1903.

<sup>43</sup> *The Times* 30<sup>th</sup> May 1903, p. 7.

taken up the post of correspondent in St. Petersburg, Plehve maintained, *The Times* had 'devoted itself to attacking Russia and Russian policy'. The paper's correspondent could no longer be tolerated in the Russian capital.<sup>44</sup>

*The Times* was naturally outraged, and vigorously defended its policy in a leader of 30<sup>th</sup> May. Plehve's actions, it insisted, would not affect its attitude towards the Russian Government, which it was not afraid to criticize, 'without fear or favour'. Neither would Plehve 'deprive us, as he perhaps hopes, of the means of informing our readers with regard to events of public interest in Russia'.<sup>45</sup> *The Times* would find another way to get news from Russia. They were determined that nothing would induce them to send out another correspondent. 'If ever they ask for the old one they shall have him', wrote Moberly Bell, the manager, 'but no one else'.<sup>46</sup>

Faced with the difficulty of finding new, unofficial sources of Russian news, *The Times* pursued a number of options. They continued to receive some news from St. Petersburg and Moscow through unofficial, anonymous sources. They still had sources of information in Finland, and in South-Eastern Europe, which could provide Russian news. They also, as a form of protest, began to take an interest in centres of revolutionary activity outside Russia, and it was in this context that Braham's approach to Williams developed. What they wanted was a correspondent who would put himself 'in touch with Russian reformers abroad, get Russian views from them, and work it up into dispatches for the Times'.<sup>47</sup> Williams refused this offer initially, but when neither of the philological appointments became more definite he decided to accept *The Times* position temporarily. The work would be easy, he anticipated, and there was to

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<sup>44</sup> *The Times* 30<sup>th</sup> May 1903, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> *The Times* 30<sup>th</sup> May 1903, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> *The History of The Times: the Twentieth Century Test* p. 388

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, and letter of 30<sup>th</sup> June 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.



be a salary of 250 pounds a year. Before long, he hoped, he would be able to 'get finally into the groove of ethnological work'.<sup>48</sup>

It was proposed that Williams should be sent to Stuttgart, which along with Geneva was one of the main centres of émigré activity outside Russia. The city was home to a liberal group led by Petr Struve, the editor of the constitutionalist newspaper *Osvobozhdenie* (Liberation), circulation of which was forbidden in Russia. *Osvobozhdenie*, although run by liberals, gave publicity to all shades of opposition to the autocracy. It highlighted instances of repression and corruption and carried long exposés of government policy.<sup>49</sup> Dudley Braham had visited Struve at his home in the suburb of Gaisburg in June 1903, and while the latter was happy to provide *The Times* with information, he was too busy with *Osvobozhdenie* to correspond for them himself. *The Times* needed someone who could live in Stuttgart, 'be in constant touch with Struve, have his advice and assistance and use his library'.<sup>50</sup> Harold Williams seems to have arrived in Stuttgart in late July or early August. He took a room not far from the Struves' home, in the top storey of a west-facing building from which he could see 'splendid sunsets every evening'.<sup>51</sup> For several months at the end of 1903 and the beginning of 1904 Williams moved into the Struve household, as the family had moved into the town following a diphtheria scare. Struve and Williams remained in the house together. From here there were fine views of the valley of the Neckar, which wound down towards the Black Forest.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Letter of 30<sup>th</sup> June 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Pipes, *Struve – Liberal on the Left, 1870-1905* (Cambridge, Massachusetts 1970) pp. 316-20. On *Osvobozhdenie* see also Klaus Frölich, *The Emergence of Russian Constitutionalism 1900-1904* (The Hague, Boston and London 1981).

<sup>50</sup> Dudley Braham to Moberly Bell, 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> June 1903, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> July 1903, Moberly Bell Files, TNL Archive. Pipes, *Struve – Liberal on the Left* pp. 331-2, 353n.

<sup>51</sup> Letter of 13<sup>th</sup> August 1903, and undated letter, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>52</sup> Letters of 19<sup>th</sup> December 1903 and 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

*The Times's* action in sending Williams to Stuttgart may have been a protest, but it was not an overt one. Williams's position as correspondent to this revolutionary group was not advertised in the pages of the newspaper. The news Williams received from Struve, which the latter obtained from correspondents in Russia and which Williams translated and edited for *The Times*, appeared in short bulletins along with information from the newspaper's other Russian sources. These carried the by-line 'from our Russian correspondents'.<sup>53</sup> The Stuttgart service constituted an alternative means of obtaining news, rather than a new direction in editorial policy. The work gave Williams the opportunity to read up on Russian affairs, and allowed him to pick up a lot of information on the liberal movement.<sup>54</sup> The news from Russia was not particularly fresh, but the Struves received frequent visits from members of the revolutionary movement; 'a queer little student from St. Petersburg ... on some secret business' or 'a big baron from Courland' who had come 'for a political gossip'.<sup>55</sup> The Struves were often under the surveillance of the Okhrana, who worked in co-operation with the Württemberg police, and in December 1903 the latter conducted a raid on the Struves' property. Quantities of printed material, correspondence, and the addresses of people with whom Struve was in contact were seized. These were to be used by the authorities in Königsberg in the trial of some German Social Democrats who were accused of smuggling seditious material into Russia.<sup>56</sup>

Petr Struve, who would become a life-long friend, was initially something of a puzzle to Williams. He was clearly a 'nice and able fellow', but was absent minded, and it was often

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<sup>53</sup> See *The Times's* 'Latest Intelligence' pages, August 1903 – August 1904, and marked copies in the TNL Archive for this period.

<sup>54</sup> Letter of 6<sup>th</sup> September 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>55</sup> Letters of 8<sup>th</sup> January and 24<sup>th</sup> March 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>56</sup> Letter of 19<sup>th</sup> December 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Pipes, *Struve – Liberal on the Left* pp. 349-50.

necessary to remind him several times before he would do something.<sup>57</sup> His guests were surrounded by what seemed to be an unnecessary air of secrecy.<sup>58</sup> In time Williams came to appreciate that Struve's awkward, idiosyncratic character and his social ineptitude were the by-products of his formidable intelligence and his restless mind. In attempting to pin down this combination in a character sketch years later, Williams wrote:

In your pleasure at his coming and after hours of stimulating talk that opens up a hundred new perspectives, you may introduce him to a stranger, only to find, to your despair, that he had become very nearly inarticulate, or that in a tremendous access of tact and diplomacy, he hesitates in his speech, uses long and incomprehensible words, and reinforces them by laborious gestures.

Struve was, nevertheless, an academic of the first rank, and 'a fountain of ideas and moral vigour'.<sup>59</sup>

It was also in Stuttgart that Williams first met Ariadna Tyrkova. Tyrkova had been born in 1869 into an ancient Novgorod family, and had early connections with the revolutionary movement; her elder brother Arkadii had been implicated in the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 and he spent twenty years in exile in Siberia. At school Ariadna formed close friendships with Nadia Krupskaja, who would later marry V. I. Lenin, and Nina Heard, the wife of Petr Struve. After the failure of her first marriage to Alfred Borman, a naval engineer, Tyrkova began writing on literary and political subjects for provincial newspapers. She became closely involved with the Yaroslavl' based *Severnyi Krai* (Northern Region), edited by D. I. Shakhovskoi, one of the founding members of the Union of Liberation. In 1903, Tyrkova was approached by E. D. Kuskova, another member of the Union, who asked her to go to Finland and bring back copies of *Osvobozhdenie*. Tyrkova and a friend, Evgenii Anichkov, were subsequently arrested on the

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<sup>57</sup> Letter of 6<sup>th</sup> September 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>58</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 23.

<sup>59</sup> Harold Williams, 'Peter Struve' *Slavonic Review* Vol. 4, No. 10 (June 1925) pp. 18-19.

Russo-Finnish border, attempting to smuggle copies of *Osvobozhdenie* into the country. They were both tried and sentenced to two and a half years in prison, but Tyrkova was released on health grounds, and was helped to escape to Stockholm.<sup>60</sup> She paid a brief visit to Petr and Nina Struve in Stuttgart, before moving on to Switzerland. Williams, who had been following news of the trial, greeted her 'almost as an old acquaintance'. Tyrkova was delighted that 'an Englishman, the first I had ever met, not only knew of my personal political adventure, but took such an interest in me that his face lit up when he saw me'.<sup>61</sup>

Williams's involvement in the Russian constitutional struggle had given a new impetus to his writing, and it is clear that he was beginning to see the liberation movement as a possible 'cause' for which he might do good work. His reservations about journalism had not been completely resolved, however. He still felt that the life of a European journalist was 'artificial'.<sup>62</sup> He expressed his doubts in a letter to the Smith family in September 1903.

I feel ashamed that my life should be so limited, that I should be tied down as I am to merely selfish objects – and yet I sometimes try to hope that if I do the work I am doing well my time isn't altogether lost. And for a great many reasons I am thankful for the experience in Europe. Only sometimes I feel that I should be heartily glad to lose myself in work for some great cause. For the present I must feel that the liberation of Russia is the great cause I have to work for.<sup>63</sup>

A significant part of the problem stemmed from Williams's connection with *The Times*.

He had expressed doubts in the past about his sympathy with *The Times*'s view of life, and these

<sup>60</sup> On Ariadna Tyrkova's career see Ariadna Tyrkova-Vil'iams, *To, chego bol'she ne budet* (Paris, 1954), and *Na putiakh k svobode* (New York 1952). These two volumes of Ariadna's memoirs have also been recently republished as Ariadna Tyrkova-Vil'iams, *To, chego bol'she ne budet. Vospominaniia izvestnoi pisatel'nitsy i obshestvennoi deiatel'nitsy A. V. Tyrkovo-Vil'iams (1869-1962)* (Moscow, 1998). There is also a volume by Ariadna's son Arkadii; A. Borman, *A. V. Tyrkova-Vil'iams: po ee pis'mam i vospominaniiam syna* (Washington 1964). Biographical articles include Anita Norman, 'Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams' *Russian Review* 21 (1962) pp. 277-81, V. V. Shelokhaev, 'Ariadna Vladimirovna Tyrkova' *Voprosy istorii* 11-12 1999 pp. 67-81, and O. A. Kaznina, 'Tyrkova-Vil'iams (1869-1962)' in O. N. Mikhailov (ed.), *Literatura Russkogo zarubezh'ia 1920-1940* (Moscow 1999) pp. 298-317.

<sup>61</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 25, 27.

<sup>62</sup> Letter of 19<sup>th</sup> December 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>63</sup> Letter of 6<sup>th</sup> September 1903, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. See also letter of 24<sup>th</sup> March 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

doubts were still keenly felt. This problem resolved itself in mid 1904. From around the time of the police raid in December 1903 the Struves began to consider moving either to Paris or Switzerland. Their plans became firmer early in 1904, and from around March Williams seemed certain they would move to Paris during the summer.<sup>64</sup> The Struve household and the editorial offices of *Osvobozhdenie* eventually relocated to Paris in September 1904.<sup>65</sup> At this time it also became apparent that *The Times* no longer wished to have a representative with Struve. Despite the blow to his finances, Williams was pleased.

It has been troubling me for a long time that I was in the service of the Times and I should have broken with them sooner or later anyhow. Some people were born to be Times men, others were not. I certainly don't think I was. But the experience has been very useful for me. I have got some knowledge of Russian affairs and I mean to use it.<sup>66</sup>

Williams accompanied the Struves to Paris, with the intention of offering notes on Russian affairs, and translations from Russian papers, to the English press.<sup>67</sup> Struve had promised to continue supplying him with information, which Williams proposed to work up into dispatches. As he explained to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*;

As [Struve's] journal is the centre of the Russian Liberal movement he is in a position to receive valuable political information that is not available elsewhere. The information is of various kinds. A good deal of it, naturally, relates to the work of the zemstvos, the rural councils out of which any system of constitutional government for Russia must be developed, and which are likely to pass through interesting phases under the regime of the recently appointed minister of the interior.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Letters of 19<sup>th</sup> December 1903, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1904, and 24<sup>th</sup> March 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>65</sup> Pipes, *Struve – Liberal on the Left* p. 357.

<sup>66</sup> Letter of 17<sup>th</sup> September 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams, and Moberly Bell to Harold Williams, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1904, Foreign Editors Letter Book No. 37, TNL Archive.

<sup>67</sup> Letter of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>68</sup> Williams to C. P. Scott, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1904, A/W52/2, Guardian Archive, University of Manchester. The Minister of the Interior referred to here is Prince Sviatopolk-Mirskii, who replaced Plehve after the latter's assassination, but whose tenure was only brief. He was himself replaced by A. F. Bulygin in January 1905.

Williams would also have access to confidential government circulars and private letters published by *Osvobozhdenie*, as well as more general information on social and political movements in Russia. However, as Williams soon discovered, most of the English newspapers 'didn't want anything of the sort'.<sup>69</sup>

This was not due to a lack of interest in Russian affairs. In the early years of the twentieth century, interest in foreign news was greater in Britain than it had ever been. The rapid expansion of telegraph cables and facilities, and by association the expansion in the services of news agencies, meant that news was being received faster, in more detail and from more areas than ever before. As it had become virtually impossible for the correspondents of individual newspapers to cable hard news faster or more effectively than agencies like Havas and Reuters, most newspapers now subscribed to at least one of these services.<sup>70</sup> Editors still attached a great deal of importance to having their own correspondent on the spot, and most newspapers had a network of resident and 'special' correspondents, whose job was now to provide comment, analysis, and the 'human interest' element which was in increasing demand. With this relatively sophisticated news-gathering network in place, there was little demand for Russian news from Paris, or indeed from anywhere else outside Russia. *The Times's* arrangement with Struve had not proved to be of any real value as a news service.

The one newspaper that did agree to take Williams's Paris dispatches was the *Manchester Guardian*. Founded in 1821 as a liberal provincial daily newspaper, the *Manchester Guardian* had undergone, and in some respects was still in the process of, a transformation from provincial news provider to being a nationally and internationally recognised paper. C. P. Scott, editor from 1872 to 1929, a convinced liberal and a tireless editor, worked hard to make his paper and its

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<sup>69</sup> Letter of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>70</sup> 'The British press and international news, 1851-99' in George Boyce, James Curran and Pauline Wingate (eds.), *Newspaper History from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present Day* (London 1978) pp. 205-219.

policies known, networking in London political circles, and vigorously criticising the Boer war, at the risk of losing all credibility.<sup>71</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* was still relatively small and financially weak by comparison with its larger London counterparts, however, and its foreign news service was one of the aspects that needed further development. Scott recognised the importance of overseas news, and he was particularly interested in the cause of Russian constitutional reform.<sup>72</sup> He also had a clear idea of the way he wanted his correspondents to write. If the task of a correspondent was to provide comment rather than to cable the hard facts, then by that rationale it was important that the correspondents should express views that were in broad sympathy with the tone of the newspaper. The tone of the material Williams was offering fitted well with the aspirations and outlook of his newspaper. Scott agreed to take up to two columns of this material each week, and 'an occasional telegram if the occasion was discreetly chosen'.<sup>73</sup>

Still, what the *Manchester Guardian* really wanted was news direct from St. Petersburg. The paper had in the past printed some Russian letters from Bernard Pares, a British academic who made regular trips to Russia for the purpose of private study. It seems that in the autumn of 1904 Scott asked Pares whether he knew of anyone who might make a suitable Russian correspondent. Pares would have liked to offer his own services, but was prevented from doing so by commitments in England. He admitted it would be difficult to find the sort of man Scott wanted in St. Petersburg, as most of the correspondents there knew little Russian and lived 'mainly amongst the English'.<sup>74</sup> When Scott made the same enquiry of Williams shortly afterwards, the latter was quick to offer his own services. The situation in Russia had become so

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<sup>71</sup> David Ayerst, *Guardian – Biography of a Newspaper* (London 1971) pp. 266-356.

<sup>72</sup> When the revolution of February 1917 eventually came, Scott described it as 'a wonderful and glorious event'. J. L. Hammond, *C. P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian* (London 1934) p. 212.

<sup>73</sup> Note of 4<sup>th</sup> November 1904, A/W52/3, Guardian Archive.

<sup>74</sup> Bernard Pares to C. P. Scott, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1904, A/P3/3a, Guardian Archive

critical, he wrote, that he would prefer if possible to work from St. Petersburg. As he pointed out, he already knew many members of liberal and literary circles in St. Petersburg, and Struve had promised to assist him in getting to the centre of the liberal movement.<sup>75</sup> He had also become slightly uncomfortable about his situation in Paris. The city was beautiful, with 'the winding Seine and the soft clouds in the great sky and the noble sunsets and the Isle of the City with Notre Dame and all the memories of the Middle Ages, and the Place de la Concorde with the memories of the guillotine, and the boulevards and cafes and theatres and cabarets and all the motley life of the streets'. Yet for Williams it was ultimately 'a beautiful picture of which I form no part'.<sup>76</sup> His living arrangements were also causing him some concern. He had taken a room in a flat rented by Ariadna Tyrkova, who had moved on to Paris from Switzerland, on the understanding that her children were on their way from Russia. However, after unexpected delays to the children's arrival, Williams found himself living on 'in rather a hand to mouth fashion, halving household expenses.'

When I'm out of spirits I blame myself for having accepted the offer so hastily, but in an awkward position one must never fear or doubt and then it becomes quite normal and natural. Madame [Borman] is a clever and interesting woman and we get on well together.<sup>77</sup>

Following a positive reply from Scott Williams went to Manchester to consult with him. He stayed with Herbert Rossington, the Unitarian minister he had known in Berlin. The city, although 'grimy and gloomy', was 'full of life, business life and church life too', and he found the people were keen on self-improvement. Williams was given a tour of the *Guardian's* printing office, and was fascinated by the machinery, and the 'magical' printing process. He returned to

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<sup>75</sup> Williams to C. P. Scott, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1904, A/W52/4, Guardian Archive. This exchange is also described, although slightly inaccurately, in Ayerst, *Guardian – Biography of a Newspaper* p. 356.

<sup>76</sup> Letter of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>77</sup> Letter of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.



Paris 'with the impression that the affair was practically settled'.<sup>78</sup> By early December 1904 Williams was in St. Petersburg.

There was a well-established community of foreign journalists in St. Petersburg, and although the personnel frequently changed, the character and habits of the group remained fairly constant. There was undoubtedly a sense of camaraderie, but there was also a necessity to compete for newsworthy material. As David MacGowan, correspondent of the *Standard*, later put it, 'While we had good times over the whiskey in the afternoon and after dinner coffee at Hotel de France and La Grave's, we were very much bent on business and each was for himself'.<sup>79</sup> There was no sense of animosity towards newcomers, however; Arthur Ransome described how, in the summer of 1914, the other correspondents took much trouble in 'teaching the new boy the ropes'; showing him how to abridge his telegraphic material and so on.<sup>80</sup> It was normal practice to cover for another correspondent if they were ill.<sup>81</sup> Regulars during Williams's early years in St. Petersburg, besides MacGowan, included Robert Wilton, *The Times's* correspondent, Guy Beringer, who was the Reuters correspondent, Maurice Baring for the *Morning Post*, Henry Nevinson for the *Daily Chronicle*, and Emile Dillon for the *Daily Telegraph*.

Dillon, who was a prolific writer and a strong linguist, was one of the first Williams met; indeed it was from Dillon that Williams learned much of what he knew about journalism in Russia. However, towards the middle of 1905 Williams began to feel that this friendship was being taken advantage of. As he wrote to C. P. Scott, earlier in the year Dillon had been very unwell, and 'manifestly suffering from overwork'. Williams had urged him to take a holiday, which he finally agreed to do on the condition that Williams would do his work in the meantime.

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<sup>78</sup> Letter of 20<sup>th</sup> November 1904, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>79</sup> David MacGowan to Ariadna Williams, Box 6, Folder 'M', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>80</sup> Ransome, *Autobiography* p. 187.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* p. 181.

Dillon had assured him that this was 'quite the ordinary thing' amongst correspondents. After an absence of about a month, Dillon returned and offered Williams money for the work he had done. Williams refused this 'on the grounds that I had done what I had done merely to enable him to get a holiday and I did not think that my relations with the Guardian would permit of my accepting money from another English paper'. Dillon became upset, having assumed that Williams would accept some payment, and eventually Williams was obliged to take the money, 'though with a good deal of doubt'. Only a few days later, Dillon told Williams that he had received a telegram asking him to return to London on important business. He asked him to take on the *Daily Telegraph* work again, intimating that it would only be for 'a matter of a few days'. It was only after long dispatches, 'quite obviously in his style' appeared from New Hampshire, that Williams became convinced that Dillon had gone to America to cover the peace negotiations between the Russians, led by Dillon's friend Count Witte, and the Japanese. Williams was understandably annoyed. 'I would gladly do Dr. Dillon's work for six months if he [continued] ill for so long', he wrote, 'but I strongly object to the Daily Telegraph's exploiting me and through me the Guardian'.<sup>82</sup>

At the time of the opening of the first Duma, the arrangements for foreign correspondents to be seated and to obtain entrance necessitated the formation of a Foreign Press Association. This was at first headed by Robert Wilton, *The Times*'s correspondent, until dissatisfaction with Wilton's means of distributing these privileges (he was giving seats first to *The Times*, *Le Temps* and other major national newspapers, and discriminating against correspondents from 'lesser' British newspapers) led to a noisy meeting at which he was forcibly deposed and replaced by David MacGowan.<sup>83</sup> The Association was later dissolved by Williams, who was acting as

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<sup>82</sup> Williams to C. P. Scott, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1905, A/W52/9, Guardian Archive.

<sup>83</sup> David MacGowan to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, Box 6, Folder 'M', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

president temporarily in MacGowan's absence, when it was discovered that one of the members, a man named Kurz, was in fact a representative of the secret police, and was reporting to them on the activities of the foreign correspondents.<sup>84</sup>

Harold Williams was the *Manchester Guardian's* first permanent staff correspondent in a foreign capital.<sup>85</sup> The paper had previously relied on special correspondents, and resident correspondents whose work they shared with other papers. They also had a good relationship with Reuters news agency, and since the mid nineteenth century had been making regular use of their dispatches to cover major world events.<sup>86</sup> This was in contrast to some larger papers, particularly *The Times*, whose relationship with Reuters can at best be described as competitive; there was an element of prestige attached to one's own correspondents being first with the news, and *The Times*, when it did agree to take Reuters telegrams, did so more for the benefit of knowing what news they contained, than as an alternative to their own news network.<sup>87</sup> Even with Williams in St. Petersburg, the *Guardian* continued to use quantities of Reuters news. It was often the case that Reuters would break a story, leaving Williams to fill in the details later. The first news of the strikes of January 1905, for example, came through in a short Reuter telegram printed on 19<sup>th</sup> January. The first descriptive reports from Williams did not appear until 24<sup>th</sup> January.<sup>88</sup> Time lags also occurred with news of the events of Bloody Sunday, and with the mutiny of the Battleship *Potemkin* in July (in this case Williams was not on the spot, but sent in a

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<sup>84</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 80.

<sup>85</sup> Ayerst, *Guardian – Biography of a Newspaper* p. 356.

<sup>86</sup> Donald Read, 'Truth in News: Reuters and the Manchester Guardian 1858-1964' *Northern History* 31 (1995) pp. 281-297.

<sup>87</sup> Donald Read, *The Power of News. The History of Reuters* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Oxford 1999) pp. 6, 14, 23-25, 111-112.

<sup>88</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 16<sup>th</sup> January 1905, p. 7, and 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1905, p. 7.

report on the causes of the mutiny later).<sup>89</sup> If there was a large text to be telegraphed, such as the Imperial decree regarding a representative assembly in August 1905, it would be left to Reuter, with Williams sending comment on the developments.<sup>90</sup>

It is clear that Williams had clearly defined responsibilities. This is illustrated by the omission in his coverage of Russian affairs of any comment on the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5. When Williams arrived in Russia the conflict was at its height, and was receiving a great deal of attention in the world press. The siege of Port Arthur, which had gripped the world's attention since July, ended at the beginning of January 1905 when the port fell to the Japanese.<sup>91</sup> The disastrous battle of Tsushima in May, and the peace negotiations leading to the Treaty of Portsmouth at the end of August, commanded a similar degree of attention. The *Guardian* was no exception to this; they printed large quantities of news, mostly sourced from the Press Association War Service, Reuters, or occasionally Laffans news agency. But their correspondent in St. Petersburg rarely touched on the conflict in his despatches.<sup>92</sup> Admittedly, St. Petersburg was not the ideal place to cover the war from – the news agencies had representatives on the spot in Manchuria where the battles were being fought. However, it is also clear that Williams was not in Russia to cover the war, or even to perform the duties that might be associated with a regular correspondent, such as offering notes on politics and foreign policy. Williams was in Russia to chart the progress of the movement for reform, and, if it turned out as such, revolution. He was, as he understood it, 'to continue in the work at least until something like a constitutional

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<sup>89</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 20<sup>th</sup> January 1905, p. 6, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1905, p. 7, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1905, pp. 6-7, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1905, p. 8, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1905, p. 7, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1905, p. 7, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1905, p. 7, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1905, p. 7, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1905, p. 7, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1905, p. 9, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1905, p. 7, 7<sup>th</sup> August 1905, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 19<sup>th</sup> August 1905, p. 9.

<sup>91</sup> J. N. Westwood, *Russia against Japan, 1904-04. A New Look at the Russo-Japanese War* (Basingstoke and London, 1986) pp. 94-115. On *The Times*'s attitude to the Russo-Japanese war, see *The History of the Times: the Twentieth Century Test* pp. 390-392, 406-407.

<sup>92</sup> See for example, *The Manchester Guardian* 4<sup>th</sup> January 1905, pp. 7-8, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1905, pp. 7-8, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1905, p. 7, 5<sup>th</sup> August 1905 p. 5.

government was established in Russia'.<sup>93</sup> This process would take some time. Nevertheless, Williams was right in predicting the critical nature of the situation in Russia. He arrived in St. Petersburg in December 1904, on the eve of a year of unrest and revolution.

On 15<sup>th</sup> / 28<sup>th</sup> July 1904, V. K. Plehve, the Minister of the Interior, had been assassinated. He was replaced by the relatively liberal Prince Sviatopolk-Mirskii, who attempted to push through a series of reforms that would allow for some degree of popular representation. However, it was clear by December that Nicholas II had no intention of implementing them in full; Mirskii was unhappy and had already asked to be dismissed.<sup>94</sup> Meanwhile, the war, the economic situation and the lack of representation in government were causing increasing discontent amongst workers and liberal intellectuals alike. At the zemstvo congress in Moscow, and at a series of banquets held in major cities, speeches were made and resolutions passed demanding a constituent assembly.<sup>95</sup> Williams's early dispatches from St. Petersburg reflected this growing agitation. They appeared under banner headlines such as 'Reform in Russia', 'Russia's Troubles', or 'The Russian Upheaval', and laid emphasis on demands for constitutional reform, on preparations for fresh demonstrations, and on disappointment at the Tsar's response, when it came in the imperial ukaz of 1<sup>st</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> December, which promised some administrative reforms but made no mention of popular representation.<sup>96</sup>

Not long after his arrival in Russia Williams went down to Moscow, to report on a meeting of the Moscow zemstvo. The zemstvo was widely expected to present a demand for a constitution to the Emperor in its opening address; a number of other regional zemstvos that had

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<sup>93</sup> Harold Williams to C. P. Scott, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1905, A/W52/6, Guardian Archive.

<sup>94</sup> Daniel Turnbull, 'The Defeat of Popular Representation, December 1904: Prince Mirskii, Witte, and the Imperial Family' *Slavic Review* 48 (1989) pp. 54-70.

<sup>95</sup> Shmuel Galai, *The Liberation Movement in Russia 1900-1905* (Cambridge 1973) pp. 232-236.

<sup>96</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1904, p. 7, 20<sup>th</sup> December 1904, p. 7, 24<sup>th</sup> December 1904, p. 6, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1904, p. 5, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1905, pp. 5-6, 7<sup>th</sup> January 1905, pp. 9-10.

recently met had done so. The Moscow zemstvo's address was mild by comparison, but on the second day, following the publication of the Imperial ukaz, the zemstvo adjourned in indignation.<sup>97</sup> On the way back to St. Petersburg Williams visited Tver, where an assembly of the local nobility was taking place. This assembly, after heated debate between liberals and conservatives, also issued an address to the Emperor that contained references to the necessity of popular representation.<sup>98</sup> Williams had an invitation to spend Christmas at Vergezha, the Tyrkov family's estate in the province of Novgorod. In a long, descriptive piece for the *Manchester Guardian*, he recounted a conversation he had with Alexei, a woodman in the village. It emphasised how distant, and how pointless the Japanese war appeared to the average Russian peasant.<sup>99</sup>

In early January 1905, a series of dismissals at the Putilov armaments and shipbuilding plant prompted workers there to go out on strike. The already widespread discontent, combined with agitation by the Putilov workers, meant that the strike rapidly spread to other factories in St. Petersburg.<sup>100</sup> The news first reached the *Manchester Guardian* via Reuter - on 19<sup>th</sup> January a telegram appeared amongst the foreign news stating that 50,000 workers in St. Petersburg were out on strike.<sup>101</sup> Williams at this time was still posting his dispatches, rather than telegraphing, and his accounts of the early days of the strike did not appear in the paper until much later. His articles, when they did arrive, included two interviews with the strike leader, Father Gapon. Williams's impression on his first meeting with the priest had been a favourable one. 'His manner was simple, he was evidently thoroughly sincere ... He himself is a man of the

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<sup>97</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1905, pp. 5-6.

<sup>98</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 7<sup>th</sup> January 1905, pp. 9-10.

<sup>99</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1905, p. 8. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 29-30.

<sup>100</sup> Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905 - Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, 1988) pp. 82-3.

<sup>101</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 19<sup>th</sup> January 1905 p. 6.

people'.<sup>102</sup> Later in the week Williams attended one of the workers meetings that Gapon was now holding in various parts of the city, in preparation for a march on the Winter Palace on 9<sup>th</sup> / 22<sup>nd</sup> January. He now began to express doubts. He was concerned by the lack of comprehension amongst the workers of some of the demands they were being asked to march for (these ranged from the right to establish trade unions and the institution of an eight-hour working day, to the termination of the Russo-Japanese war, freedom of speech and of the press, and the convocation of a constituent assembly). He was also alarmed at the oaths that the marchers would fight to the death if necessary.

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 ... what chiefly struck one in Father Gapon's conversation was the careless way in which he spoke of the possibility of his own death or the butchery of his followers, and the lack of a sense of the grave responsibility he was taking upon himself.<sup>103</sup>

The march of 9<sup>th</sup> / 22<sup>nd</sup> January ended in disaster. When the procession failed to obey instructions from soldiers to disperse, the crowd was fired upon by the troops. Hundreds were killed and hundreds more seriously wounded.<sup>104</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> January the *Manchester Guardian* carried a full page spread, dealing with the events of 'Bloody Sunday'. This included a map of St. Petersburg, and telegraphed commentary both from Reuter's correspondent and from Williams. Williams's first telegram, at 5.20 a.m., described a peaceful protest. At 3.55 p.m. he sent the following.

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 [Nevsky] Prospect, followed by shouting workmen. Father Gapon was wounded this morning.

<sup>102</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 24<sup>th</sup> January 1905, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 27<sup>th</sup> January 1905, p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905 – Russia in Disarray* pp. 87-92

The action of the authorities has provoked a terrible crisis. The revolt has begun.<sup>105</sup>

On 28<sup>th</sup> January the *Manchester Guardian* published a longer description from Williams of the day's events. Some extracts from this give a good illustration of the style of articles Williams wrote for the *Guardian*. They invariably started with a description of the weather.

The morning was very fine, the sun shone softly from a sky of pale blue in which there were faint traces of cloud. There was a bracing frost, and a light breeze blew from the north-west. One woke in the expectation of great events, but up till after ten the Nevsky was quieter than on an ordinary Sunday morning. When I went out about half-past eleven with Dr. Dillon, the correspondent of the "Daily Telegraph", the scene had already changed, and scores of people, chiefly working men in black overcoats and black lambskin caps, were streaming northwards in the direction of the Neva. This was astonishing. We knew that troops were posted on the outskirts of the city, and wondered why the men had been allowed to pass. It almost seemed as though the Government were going to allow the demonstration to take its course, perhaps for some ulterior end of its own. But as we passed on further we saw bands of Cossacks riding by, big ruffianly looking fellows, in caps with red bands and beaver overcoats. They sat their horses splendidly, and smiled as though delighting in the prospect of a day's sport.

We approached the Winter Palace from the east, and found the neighbouring streets dense with crowds. Cossacks rode about, and lines of Cossacks and gendarmes kept back the people from the Palace square, which lay white and clear, a few soldiers who were posted in the centre playing at fisticuffs to warm themselves. The great red front of the Palace showed no sign of life, and the balcony on which so many thousands had expected the Tsar would appear to grant his people the gift of freedom was empty; the Tsar seemed very far away.

In the big reading-room of the Public Library the *intelligentsia* (educated literary classes) had improvised a meeting to discuss what was to be done. Someone began reading the workmen's petition, but was interrupted by the arrival of a man who stated that three volleys had been fired upon the crowd in the Alexander Garden, and that many had been killed. "A fight is going on for the streets" he cried, "and it will be an everlasting disgrace to the St. Petersburg *intelligentsia* if it does not go out and join its lot with the workers". And the assembly rose as one man and hurried down to share the workers' fate. They were pale, but they had no fear; lawyers, authors, professors, students, women, old men and young went out to die with the people.

No one could go anywhere near the scene of slaughter. As we drove we were overtaken by a sleigh followed by working men running along bareheaded and shouting out bitterly against the Government. In one of the sleighs was a wounded student, and in another a fearful and sickening sight, the dead body of a student with a big red hole in the left side of his head; his brains had been blown out.

All doubt was over now. The Tsar had given his answer in blood. And the people, who had been so peaceful and confident all the week, now suddenly broke into a fury. All afternoon the riots went on on the Nevsky.

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<sup>105</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1905, p. 7.



The great opportunity came to the Tsar of receiving the unbounded loyalty of his people, and with colossal folly he has rejected it. And of those who were supposed to advise him one cannot write fittingly now. We are simply watching from hour to hour the issues of this tremendous wrong.<sup>106</sup>

The events of January 1905, and indeed of the rest of the year, had a profound effect on Harold Williams. Not long after Bloody Sunday, Williams left St. Petersburg and made his long-awaited pilgrimage to Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy's family estate to the south of the city of Tula. This visit had a string of precedents amongst literary Englishmen in Russia. W. T. Stead had visited in 1888, followed by Emile Dillon in 1890. John Kenworthy had gone to Russia expressly for this purpose in 1895. Robert Crozier Long, the *Daily Chronicle* correspondent, made a series of visits in 1898-9.<sup>107</sup> Each of these men left their own account of their visit and of Tolstoy himself.<sup>108</sup> Harold Williams's account was published in the *Manchester Guardian* on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1905. It has also been re-published more recently, by Irene Zohrab, both in its original form and in a Russian translation.<sup>109</sup> The essentials of the interview were as follows.

Williams reached Yasnaya Polyana from Tula on 20<sup>th</sup> January / 2<sup>nd</sup> February. 'A snowstorm had blown over, and the sun shone from a wind-swept sky on the rising ground upon which stands the plantation enclosing the well-known homestead'. Yasnaya Polyana seemed to Williams, in comparison to the world he had come from, to be a haven of peace.<sup>110</sup> At the house he met Tolstoy, his wife, and Tolstoy's doctor D. P. Makovitskii. Makovitskii described Williams

<sup>106</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 28<sup>th</sup> January 1905, p. 8.

<sup>107</sup> R. F. Christian, 'The Road to Yasnaya Polyana: Some Pilgrims from Britain and their Reminiscences' in W. Gareth Jones (ed.), *Tolstoi and Britain* (Oxford 1995) pp. 185-215.

<sup>108</sup> W. T. Stead, *The Truth about Russia* (London 1888) pp. 393-457, E. J. Dillon, *Count Leo Tolstoy: A New Portrait* (London 1934), John Coleman Kenworthy, *A Pilgrimage to Tolstoy, being letters written from Russia to the New Age in January 1896* (London 1896), Robert Crozier Long, 'Count Tolstoy in Thought and Action' in *The Review of Reviews* (1901) nos 137 and 138.

<sup>109</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 9<sup>th</sup> February 1905, pp. 7-8. Zohrab, 'Leo Tolstoy from the perspective of Harold W. Williams' pp. 14-48. Irene Zohrab, 'L. N. Tolstoi glazami Novozelandskogo zhurnalista' *Russkaia Literatura* No. 4, 1989 pp. 154-5.

<sup>110</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 9<sup>th</sup> February 1905, pp. 7-8.

in his diary as a pleasant, modest, and scholarly young man, who spoke Russian well, but stumbled over his words.<sup>111</sup> Tolstoy himself described Williams, in a letter to his son, as a 'very nice New Zealander'.<sup>112</sup>

Their conversation was held over lunch, later in Tolstoy's study, then over dinner. It was frequently interrupted, and then resumed. It was natural given the circumstances that Williams was anxious to elicit Tolstoy's views on the present crisis in Russia. Tolstoy was, perhaps unsurprisingly, unimpressed with the constitutional movement, which he dismissed as a dangerous and useless diversion. A constitution could not bring freedom, he insisted. A man could only be free when no one could force him to act against his will, and to achieve this it was necessary for every man to abstain from participation in acts of government, and to refuse to serve in the army. 'He would not admit that the particular form of government prevailing in a country made any essential difference in the lives of its citizens.' In England, he pointed out, his friend Vladimir Chertkov, who lived outside Christchurch, was forced to pay a tax for the maintenance of a band which played inside the city, and which he had no wish to hear. Tolstoy was equally scathing about freedom of the press, which he considered to be a small matter. Banishment, which received so much attention abroad, was not nearly so bad as it was perceived to be, since it would not prevent one from living 'the true life'.<sup>113</sup> Tolstoy and Williams also talked of Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche, and of Russian and English literature. Tolstoy complained that although the young Russian writers could write better than either himself or Turgenev, they had nothing to say.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> 'U Tolstogo 1904-1910. "Iasnopolianskie zapiski" D. P. Makovitskogo', kniga pervaya 1904-1905 *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo* (1979) pp. 141-145.

<sup>112</sup> L. N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* seriiia tret'ia – pis'ma, tom 75 (Moscow 1956) p. 207.

<sup>113</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 9<sup>th</sup> February 1905, pp. 7-8.

<sup>114</sup> Harold Williams, *Russia of the Russians* (London 1915, first edition 1914) p. 223.

Makovitskii's notes on the meeting between Williams and Tolstoy give some insight into aspects of the conversation that did not make it into the pages of the *Manchester Guardian*. According to Makovitskii, Tolstoy questioned Williams's choice of career. He commented that there must be few journalists left in England, as it seemed they had all come to Russia to watch the revolution. Williams explained that he had to do something for a living. He had wanted to devote his life to the service of the Maori people.<sup>115</sup> Tolstoy expressed the view that the knowledge of languages was the most Christian knowledge of all, as it brought people together.<sup>116</sup>

As R. F. Christian has pointed out, nothing in what Tolstoy said on politics or on journalism ought to have surprised Williams, who was well acquainted with Tolstoy's writings and beliefs, and had, not long ago, adhered to them closely himself. 'It was not Tolstoy who had changed', Christian writes, 'but Williams who had grown older'.<sup>117</sup> Ariadna Williams also gives the impression that her husband felt he had outgrown Tolstoy.<sup>118</sup> Williams undoubtedly had grown a long way from 'the enthusiasms of 21', as he himself put it.<sup>119</sup> His experiences in Germany and his disappointment with the Tolstoyan movement in Europe had helped to harden his moderate, liberal streak. The events he had witnessed since his arrival in Russia had compounded this. As he wrote to Macie Smith towards the end of the year;

One inevitably grows political with years, and the raging of the Russian revolutionaries is enough to make one moderate for life. I can now understand as I couldn't understand before the value of our English caution and the strict sense of order and justice that come out of the slow growth of centuries.'<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> 'U Tolstogo 1904-1910' p. 142.

<sup>116</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 9<sup>th</sup> February 1905, pp. 7-8.

<sup>117</sup> R. F. Christian, 'The Road to Yasnaya Polyana' p. 209.

<sup>118</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 37-40.

<sup>119</sup> Letter of 28<sup>th</sup> November 1905, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

When Williams told Tolstoy that he worked as a journalist solely in order to make his living, he was not being entirely truthful. He was compelled by the constitutional struggle; since his work in Stuttgart he had clearly felt some obligation to, or involvement with, the liberation movement. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams felt that he was 'inspired' by it.<sup>121</sup> In his despatches it seems that he was inspired and horrified by turns. At times, he wrote, he would 'gladly enough wash my hands of the whole business, retreat into a corner and write and read until the end of my days. But I am caught in the midst of a revolution, and it is wonderful to watch its growth...'<sup>122</sup>

Williams would always regard Tolstoy as his 'ideal old man', and he retained a great deal of respect for his principles and idealism.<sup>123</sup> Near the conclusion of his article for the *Manchester Guardian*, Williams attempted to reconcile his attraction to Tolstoy's view of the world with his experiences of the constitutional struggle.

I left him at midnight, and next morning was back in Moscow, hearing of agitation in the Noble's 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.<sup>124</sup>

Disturbances continued throughout the year. The initial riots in St. Petersburg were accompanied by uprisings in Moscow, Warsaw, and other regional centres.<sup>125</sup> In February the Grand Duke Sergei, Governor General of Moscow and a close relative of the Tsar, was assassinated; the news appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* under a banner headline reading

<sup>121</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 69.

<sup>122</sup> Letter of 28<sup>th</sup> November 1905, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>123</sup> David MacGowan to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1932, Box 6, Folder 'M', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>124</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 9<sup>th</sup> February 1905, p. 8.

<sup>125</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 28<sup>th</sup> January 1905 p. 9, 30<sup>th</sup> January 1905, pp. 7-8.

‘Vengeance’.<sup>126</sup> Williams travelled a great deal during 1905, partly to familiarise himself with different parts of the country, and partly to cover these disturbances. C. P. Scott considered appointing a number of local occasional correspondents, in Moscow, Warsaw, Odessa and Kiev, but this does not seem to have happened, as Williams covered most of these areas himself.<sup>127</sup> In March he was in Warsaw, writing on the strength of the national movement there, and the general dissatisfaction with oppressive Russian rule.<sup>128</sup> Despite the separation of the Russian and Polish people in Warsaw, and the widespread hatred amongst the Poles of all things Russian, Williams did not believe that the Poles wanted total independence from the Russian empire – under present circumstances this would only mean a ‘transfer to the clutches of the German eagle’. What they did want was autonomy; the right to manage their own affairs, and to use their own language.<sup>129</sup> Williams met with Polish socialist leaders, visited the Polish countryside, and sent back descriptions both of politics and of daily life in Poland.<sup>130</sup> In the summer he was at Kiev and Odessa, covering the riots there and the mutiny of the crew of the Battleship *Potemkin*.<sup>131</sup> In October a railway strike brought the Russian transport system to a standstill, and in St. Petersburg a general strike brought the situation to ‘unheard-of dimensions’.<sup>132</sup>

There were also steps towards reform. On 18<sup>th</sup> February / 3<sup>rd</sup> March the Tsar made his first tentative proposals for a constituent assembly in his rescript to Bulygin, the new Minister of the Interior. These were badly received by all elements of the opposition, and Williams joined them in their condemnation. Following the rescript, he wrote in early April, the government was

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<sup>126</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 18<sup>th</sup> February 1905 p. 9.

<sup>127</sup> Williams to Scott, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1905, A/W52/7, Guardian Archive. Letters of 16<sup>th</sup> May and 28<sup>th</sup> November 1905, Box 12, Folder ‘Letters to MLS’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>128</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1905, p. 8, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1905, p. 8.

<sup>129</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1905, p. 8.

<sup>130</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 30<sup>th</sup> March 1905, pp. 9-10, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1905, p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 4<sup>th</sup> July 1905, p. 7.

<sup>132</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 1<sup>st</sup> November 1905, p. 7.

doing all it could 'to efface from the general recollection the fact that a Rescript promising a representative assembly was ever issued.' 'Perhaps it is no coincidence that it is April Fool's Day here'.<sup>133</sup> In May Williams went to Moscow to cover the second Zemstvo congress. This was forced to meet in a number of private houses, having been forbidden by the Minister of the Interior. The congress proceeded on the basis of the assumption that the government intended to convene a representative assembly. The question of universal suffrage was discussed, with a majority in favour of it, despite attempts by the more conservative members to argue against it. The questions of what form the assembly might take, and how the ballot might be conducted were also discussed.<sup>134</sup> As Williams commented to his friends in New Zealand, 'All this will have no effect on the Government of course, but it shows the mind of the clearest headed men in the country. There was some excellent speaking at the congress.'<sup>135</sup>

Bulygin's proposals were issued in August, and as Williams had predicted they bore little relation to the plans discussed at the zemstvo congress. The Duma was to be a consultative body only; the elections would not be direct but would be held in four stages, and qualifications on class and property would exclude much of the *intelligentsia* and all of the working classes from the franchise. When the strikes and riots increased in scale throughout the autumn, the Tsar, under pressure now even from conservative advisors like Count Witte, was forced to issue a manifesto allowing for a Duma with legislative powers, elected on a wide franchise. The manifesto appeared on 17<sup>th</sup> / 30<sup>th</sup> October.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 19<sup>th</sup> April 1905, p. 6.

<sup>134</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 15<sup>th</sup> May 1905, pp. 7-8, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1905, p. 6, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1905, p. 6.

<sup>135</sup> Letter of 16<sup>th</sup> May 1905, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>136</sup> Bernard Pares, *A History of Russia* (New York 1991) pp. 450-2.

The October manifesto divided opinion amongst the opposition to the autocracy. While the more radical elements were still unsatisfied, the moderate parties saw it as real progress.<sup>137</sup> Williams naturally expressed qualifications and reservations about the likely nature of the process of implementation of the manifesto. It is clear, however, that both he and the *Manchester Guardian* regarded this as a significant step in the right direction. Williams's articles were now appearing under headlines such as 'Russia's Joy', and 'In Liberty's Name'. In an article published on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1905, Williams wrote

The difference between St. Petersburg today and yesterday is like the difference between night and morning. It is difficult to believe this is the same city ... The general feeling is one of relief at the opportunity to think, speak, and move in freedom.<sup>138</sup>

If the manifesto of October 1905 meant real progress towards constitutional government in Russia, then it also signalled the beginning of the end of Williams's work for the *Manchester Guardian*. He had, after all, been employed on the basis that he would work until some kind of representative government was established. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams writes of this time

At the beginning of 1906 Harold decided that the Revolution had become stale, and wrote to the editor that in his opinion he was no longer entitled to a salary, since Russia was no longer the centre of world events.

I should like to have seen the editor's face as he read his letter. Of course Harold's request was granted: his salary was stopped.<sup>139</sup>

If such a letter was written, it does not survive in the Guardian archives. Williams did write to C. P. Scott in February 1906 however, asking him to suggest 'some plan of action'. 'According to the news that reaches here English people have lost all interest in Russian affairs. I don't think that can be quite true, but at any rate several correspondents are at a loss to know how

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<sup>137</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia 1855-1914* (London 1952) pp. 222-4.

<sup>138</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 1<sup>st</sup> November 1905, p. 7.

<sup>139</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 69.

best to serve their papers'.<sup>140</sup> Scott's reply does not survive, but it is clear that not long afterwards Williams's appointment as full time correspondent in St. Petersburg was terminated. However, he did continue to provide the *Guardian* with such Russian news as they deemed necessary; for this he was paid at space rates.<sup>141</sup> Scott seems to have been happy to take articles on any subject on which Williams wished to write. In February 1906 articles appeared on Estonia, Finland and the national movements there, and on the political aspirations of the Tartars of the Crimea and the Caucasus.<sup>142</sup> Williams also provided commentary on the political process leading up to the first meeting of the Duma, which was fraught with complications. As Williams commented to Scott in February, the government were taking all sorts of diversionary tactics.

The Government is doing its best to turn the elections in its own favour by arresting prominent members of the opposition parties and by confiscating literature. The Constitutional Democrats have been suffering a good deal.

The Government also thinks of forestalling the Duma by bringing out a Constitution of its own. This may appear in about a fortnight's time...<sup>143</sup>

When the elections were finally held, Williams sent a detailed description of Russia's first polling day.

Winter had lingered long, and had returned many times when it had seemed to have departed, but yesterday a vigorous sun shone from an almost cloudless sky, and winter finally gave place to spring. The polling booths opened at nine, and long before that hour voters were waiting in crowds at the doors, eager to discharge their un-accustomed task. The stream kept up all through the morning, in the afternoon it slackened somewhat, and when the booths closed at nine in the evening the great majority of those who had intended to vote had put their vote on record. The warm day, slush underfoot and a blue sky overhead, the stream of quiet, earnest-looking men, imbued with a sense of a new dignity, the undercurrent of everyday life, with the ringing of tramcar bells, the ejaculations of izvostchiks, the shop windows shining invitingly down the whole length of the Nevsky – there was something almost tantalisingly momentous in it all, something

<sup>140</sup> Williams to C. P. Scott, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1906, A/W52/10, Guardian Archive.

<sup>141</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 69.

<sup>142</sup> *Manchester Guardian* 10<sup>th</sup> February 1906, pp. 9-10, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1906, p. 7, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1906, p. 7.

<sup>143</sup> Williams to C. P. Scott, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1905, A/W52/9, Guardian Archive. On the election campaign and the parties involved, see Terence Emmons, *The Formation of Political Parties and the First National Elections in Russia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1983) pp. 237-353.



strangely remote from the fierce excitement of that January afternoon when Cossacks grinned just here at the sight of the bodies of murdered men; strangely remote, and yet in a way akin.<sup>144</sup>

One issue that has to be addressed in connection with the progress of the elections and Williams's representations of the political parties is his close association with the activities of the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets). This association was strengthened by his relationship with Ariadna Tyrkova. Tyrkova had returned to Russia shortly after the manifesto of October 1905 was issued, and she immediately became closely involved with the organisation of the Kadet party, which had been founded in the summer of 1905 under the leadership of Pavel Miliukov, Ivan Petrunkevich, and Fedor Rodichev.<sup>145</sup> From 1906 she was a member of the party's central committee, which dealt with matters of party policy.<sup>146</sup> It is clear that by the end of 1906 Williams and Tyrkova were living together. During Duma sessions they shared 'a fifth floor flat at the south end of the Taurida Garden'.<sup>147</sup> Tyrkova separated from her first husband, Alfred Borman, in 1897, but neither Tyrkova nor her son Arkadii explicitly mention her marriage to Harold Williams, and it is unclear when, or if, this occurred. In 1911 they were regarded as man and wife by the St. Petersburg police who carried out a search on both their belongings, but British Foreign Office sources at that time seemed certain that they were not married.<sup>148</sup> According to Williams's managerial file at *The Times*, the date of his marriage was 14<sup>th</sup> February 1918, shortly before he and Tyrkova left Russia for England, but again, there is no mention of this in either Tyrkova or Arkadii Borman's accounts, even though the latter is compiled from

<sup>144</sup> *Manchester Guardian* 13<sup>th</sup> April 1906, p. 5.

<sup>145</sup> Pares, *A History of Russia* p. 452, *The Manchester Guardian* 7<sup>th</sup> August 1905, pp. 7-8.

<sup>146</sup> Borman, A. V. *Tyrkova-Vil'iams* pp. 69-76, Tyrkova-Vil'iams, *To chego bol'she ne budet* pp. 362-433. Alfred Borman and Ariadna Tyrkova were married when the latter was 21 – they travelled abroad a great deal, and had a full social life, entertaining, and dancing. On his parents' marriage, Arkadii Borman comments that rather than wondering why they separated, he could hardly understand how they had lived together for seven years. Borman, A. V. *Tyrkova-Vil'iams* pp. 31-35.

<sup>147</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 59.

<sup>148</sup> Sir George Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1911, FO 371/1218.

letters sent to him from her at regular intervals in the early months of 1918.. Tyrkova does make one comment in her biography of her husband about her father's concern about their 'complete freedom from conventions'; in response to a question from Vladimir Tyrkov on this account, Williams apparently made a vague comparison between himself and Ariadna and the Dukhobors, who regarded 'formal external obligations as less binding than the inner law'.<sup>149</sup>

Whether they were married or not, the question remains to what degree Williams's perspective on Russian politics was influenced by Tyrkova in this early period. His sympathy with the Kadet party was apparent throughout the electoral process. They had 'worked splendidly', he wrote, holding regular meetings in all areas of the city, conducting a vigorous press campaign, and winning 'almost every progressive organ' over to their side. 'They proved themselves to be the only party capable of carrying on an electoral campaign, and the effects of their agitation were to be seen in the splendid behaviour of the St. Petersburg voters yesterday. They trusted to frank appeals to reason and to conscience, and their trust has proved not to have been in vain.'<sup>150</sup> It is easy to speculate that Williams's enthusiasm for the Kadets stemmed from Tyrkova's involvement with the party. There is no doubt that Tyrkova was a strong personality; Arthur Ransome described her as 'a woman of dominating character', who 'swept [Williams] with her into the inner circles of the Cadet party'.<sup>151</sup> She was also a prolific entertainer, and writers, politicians and academics frequently met at their St. Petersburg home.<sup>152</sup> Williams did not have to go far to obtain material for his correspondence. To assume that Williams affiliated himself with the Kadet party because his wife did so, however, suggests a lack of independence

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<sup>149</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 108. The 14<sup>th</sup> February date may have been a joke, since it was both Valentines Day and the first day of the new calendar in Russia in 1918. On the other hand, since marriage was probably necessary in order for Tyrkova to leave the country, this does seem a likely time for the ceremony to have taken place.

<sup>150</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 13<sup>th</sup> April 1906, p. 5.

<sup>151</sup> Ransome, *Autobiography* pp. 167, 180.

<sup>152</sup> Norman, 'Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams' p. 279.

of mind and political awareness on his part that is difficult to accept. Williams had been in Russia for a full year before Tyrkova's arrival, and had a chance to form his own opinions. She herself commented that when she met Williams again in Russia she was surprised at his new self-confidence, and his experience and knowledge of the situation in Russia. 'He knew everything and everyone, and everyone knew him'.<sup>153</sup> It would be reasonable to assume that Williams's views on Russian politics had been shaped by the Struve group in Stuttgart, with whom he had effectively cut his teeth in journalism, and from whom he admitted he obtained many of his contacts.<sup>154</sup> But from what we know of Williams's background, it seems unlikely that he would have formed such an attachment to this group and their 'cause' if it had not genuinely appealed to him at this stage of his intellectual development. It was not an unusual position to adopt - many British observers in fact sympathised with the Kadets, whom they perceived as representing the middle ground.<sup>155</sup> It was also a position that fitted well with the general aims and sympathies of the *Manchester Guardian*, for whom he was principally writing. Perhaps it would be fair to say that Williams's friendship and natural affinity with many liberals, Struve and Tyrkova included, helped to shape his outlook and in some senses limited the scope of his appraisal of Russian politics. Certainly he gained more insight, and gave more detail on Kadet policies than on those of the other parties. At this early stage, however, there was no great pressure to take one side or another.

The Duma finally opened in a grand ceremony at the Winter Palace on 27<sup>th</sup> April / 10<sup>th</sup> May 1906. Williams described the scene for the *Manchester Guardian*. On the right of the throne sat the 'red-coated senators, chamberlains blazing with gold braid, generals, admirals and officials of various Ministries in blue, red and gold'; on the left were the representatives of the

<sup>153</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 50.

<sup>154</sup> Williams to C. P. Scott, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1904, A/W52/2, Guardian Archive.

<sup>155</sup> Helen Szamuely, 'British Attitudes to Russia 1880-1918' D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1982) p. 305.

people, 'three hundred strong ... a dark mass, some in dress suits, some in frock coats, peasants in dark smock frocks, many in ordinary jackets – types of sturdy, uncompromising democracy'. Following a speech by the Emperor the Duma representatives left for the Taurida palace to begin their work. 'As they arrived they were greeted with loud hurrahs by the crowd assembled before the building. Once troops dispersed the crowd, but it reassembled and persisted in cheering the members, charging each to demand forthwith an amnesty for political offenders.'<sup>156</sup>

Several days later Williams described one of the early sittings of the Duma.

The sitting is to begin at eleven in the morning, and you hasten. Strict guards examine your ticket of entrance at the door, and you pass under the dome and enter a spacious foyer, lofty and well lit, in which members and their friends are passing to and fro. Walking on, you enter, through the Radical lobby on your right, the Duma hall. The sun shines brightly through the great windows at the rear of the Speaker's chair, and its rays shimmer in the waters of a pond in the garden without. From the chair the seats of the deputies rise gradually, in the form of an ampitheatre, to the back of the hall. The light oak wood in the chair, the white walls and pillars, sunlight, a cheerful neatness and elegance pervading all – here is no dead weight of tradition, the very appearance of the Chamber breathes youth and hopefulness.<sup>157</sup>

This hopefulness was not destined to last. The first Duma, dominated by the Kadets, made proposals for land reform measures and an amnesty for political offenders. These proposals were unacceptable to the Government and the Tsar, and after a couple of months of prevarication the Duma was forcibly dissolved.<sup>158</sup> In protest the Constitutional Democrat and Labour deputies went to Vyborg in Finland and published an appeal to the Russian people not to pay taxes or to send conscripts to the army. Williams went with them, and described the day as 'epoch-making in the history of the Russian emancipatory movement'.<sup>159</sup> Later, however, he was obliged to admit that this tactic had been 'a deplorable political blunder'; there was no response to the

<sup>156</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 11<sup>th</sup> May 1906, p. 7.

<sup>157</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 21<sup>st</sup> May 1906, p. 5.

<sup>158</sup> Seton-Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia* pp. 254-6.

<sup>159</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 24<sup>th</sup> July 1906, p. 7.

appeal from the Russian people, and the signatories, who included many members of the Kadet party, were excluded from participation in future parliaments.<sup>160</sup> The second Duma, which opened in March 1907, again lasted only a couple of months before dissolution. By the opening of the third Duma, whose membership was much more conservative, in November 1907, Williams had lost a great deal of his enthusiasm for the political process.<sup>161</sup> In a letter to Samuel Harper in early 1908, he described the Duma debates as 'heathenish and childish and feeble and vain'. Neither was he impressed with the press facilities. The foreign press were 'shoved away in the gallery and not all of the foreigners have tickets even there. No lobbies. Constant inspection. And general disposition to become S. R. and to borrow weapons of destruction'.<sup>162</sup>

Whether or not Ariadna Tyrkova significantly influenced Harold Williams's political opinions, it seems likely that she did have some influence on the continuation of his career as a journalist. Williams's decision to stay in Russia after the termination of his contract with the *Manchester Guardian*, and to seek employment with other newspapers, mark a turning point in his attitude to his career. Journalism by this time was clearly no longer a purely temporary option. From mid 1907 Williams began to consider making arrangements with another British newspaper. Bernard Pares had suggested he might write for the *Liverpool Courier*, and Williams had also suggested a series of 'Duma letters' to the *Daily Chronicle*.<sup>163</sup> As it turned out, the *Morning Post* were looking for a new St. Petersburg correspondent, and Williams was in negotiations with them for a matter of months in 1907-08.<sup>164</sup> When his appointment was finally confirmed in May 1908, Williams wrote to Scott to terminate his connection with the *Guardian*,

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<sup>160</sup> Williams, *Russia of the Russians* p. 73.

<sup>161</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* 19<sup>th</sup> February 1907, p. 7, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1907, p. 7, 11<sup>th</sup> March 1907, p. 7, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1907, p. 7, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1907, p. 7.

<sup>162</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1908. Box 1, Folder 10, Samuel N. Harper papers, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. 'SR' – a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party.

<sup>163</sup> Williams to C. P. Scott, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1907, A/W52/11, Guardian Archive.

<sup>164</sup> Williams to C. P. Scott, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1907, A/W52/12, Guardian Archive.

and to thank Scott for 'the kind consideration you have shown towards me' ... 'I shall always remember my connection with the *Guardian* with very great pleasure for it was you who really made a correspondent of me'.<sup>165</sup> Williams' connection with the *Guardian* seems to have been revived some time after he left the *Morning Post* in 1912; he was certainly being paid for contributions to the paper in July 1914, and when the *Guardian* sent Morgan Phillips Price to Russia as war correspondent in November 1914, C. P. Scott wrote him a letter of introduction to Williams, whom he referred to as 'our St. Petersburg – I beg its pardon – Petrograd correspondent'.<sup>166</sup>

The *Morning Post* was a very different newspaper from the *Manchester Guardian*, and had very different requirements of its St. Petersburg correspondent. The paper had been founded in 1772; by 1908 it was under the ownership of Lady Bathurst and was edited by Fabian Ware. The newspaper prided itself on its independence from any political party, but its outlook was overwhelmingly conservative.<sup>167</sup> The paper had had a St. Petersburg correspondent for a number of years, and previous occupants of the post included Hector Munro and Maurice Baring.<sup>168</sup> The dispatches Williams was expected to write were short, formal, and factual pieces of telegraphed material. Their content might include diplomatic or imperial meetings, information on the Russian budget or on Russian industry, a change in the line up of Russian ministers, or the death of a prominent Russian figure.<sup>169</sup> Often summaries of the content of the Russian press, or

<sup>165</sup> Williams to C. P. Scott, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1908, A/W52/13, Guardian Archive.

<sup>166</sup> Williams to C. P. Scott, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1914, A/W52/14, and Scott to Williams, A/W52/15. Correspondence between C. P. Scott and Morgan Phillips Price, A/P52/6, 7, 8 and 11, Guardian Archive.

<sup>167</sup> For an account of the politics of the *Morning Post* see Wilfrid Hindle, *The Morning Post 1772-1937 Portrait of a Newspaper* (London 1937), and Keith M. Wilson, *A Study in the History and Politics of the Morning Post 1905-1926* (London 1990).

<sup>168</sup> Hector Hugh Munro (1870-1916) later became famous as a short story writer, working under the pseudonym 'Saki'. Maurice Baring (1874-1945) joined the *Morning Post* in 1904 as war correspondent in Manchuria, and was posted to St. Petersburg in 1905.

<sup>169</sup> For a typical week, see *The Morning Post* 1<sup>st</sup> July 1908, p. 10, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1908, p. 7, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1908, p. 8.

intelligence on foreign policy telegraphed by Williams would form part of a column on European relations consisting of short reports by a number of the *Morning Post*'s foreign correspondents. Occasional long articles on Russian diplomacy or on trends in Russian opinion on foreign affairs did feature, as did long articles on the internal situation, which they were likely to interest a British audience.<sup>170</sup> There was little room for the long, descriptive and very personal pieces Williams had been sending to the *Manchester Guardian*.

This heavy emphasis on foreign affairs was quite natural in a conservative London daily newspaper. By 1908 British interest in Russian politics had waned, but, as Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams points out, Russian foreign policy was at this time 'taking a new turn', a turn that was of interest to British policy makers, if not to the general public.<sup>171</sup> There were a number of reasons for this perceived change in direction. These were years of intense diplomatic rivalry, in which the European powers struggled to maintain and augment their positions through a series of secret and open alliances. Russia and France had concluded an alliance in 1894, and conducted negotiations for a French loan to Russia in 1906. The Entente Cordiale of 1904 had cemented good relations between Britain and France. Russia and England were traditionally bitter rivals, and Germany toyed with alliances with both Russia and England, playing the two off against each other and refusing to commit firmly to either option. Besides the volatile relations between the European powers, Russian foreign policy had to take into account the need to safeguard their influence in areas of strategic interest – the Far East, Persia, and the Balkans.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>170</sup> See for example *The Morning Post* 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1908, p. 5, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1911, p. 7, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1911, p. 5, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1911, p. 8, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1911, p. 7, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1911, p. 7, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1911, p. 7, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1911, p. 8.

<sup>171</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 70.

<sup>172</sup> On this period see D. M. MacDonald, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia 1900-1914* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1992), John Albert White, *Transition to Global Rivalry – Alliance Diplomacy and the Quadruple Entente 1895-1907* (Cambridge 1995), D. C. B. Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War* (London 1983), A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford 1969).

The Tsar's policy of expansion in the Far East, carried out reluctantly by Count Witte, had been discredited after the colossal Russian losses during the Russo-Japanese war. A move away from this policy and towards more traditional concerns was perhaps inevitable. However it was also the case that from 1906 onwards, with the opening of the first Duma, the basis of discussion and expression of public opinion on foreign affairs was widened. Although the Duma had no power to decide policy, it was an important mechanism for raising awareness of public thought on foreign policy. In April 1906 a new foreign minister, A. P. Izvol'skii, was appointed. Izvol'skii was a constitutionalist and a reformer, and welcomed Duma discussion of foreign affairs; he took a number of steps in reforming the foreign ministry to build in public and press opinion to the decision making process.<sup>173</sup> In a retrospective of Izvol'skii's term as Foreign Minister, Williams highlighted the key attributes of his policy.

He abandoned the policy of aggression in the Far East which had led the bureaucracy and the nation to disaster, and, formally and provisionally at least, he secured Russia's position by means of two Conventions with Japan, one relating to fisheries, the other to the *status quo* in Manchuria ... in the Middle East, M. Izvolsky secured Russia's position by putting an end to the rivalry with England, which under the old regime had become traditional. Details of the Anglo-Russian convention have been severely criticized by Russian writers well acquainted with the position in the Middle East, but on the whole the Convention has been accepted by Russian opinion as a most welcome termination of an unprofitable rivalry.

The Anglo-Russian convention, concluded in August 1907, laid the basis for agreement on British and Russian spheres of interest in Persia and the Middle East. Izvol'skii's attitude to England, in Williams's view, had 'from the first been one of wholehearted sympathy', and he had made every effort 'to promote in every possible way a better understanding between the two peoples.'<sup>174</sup> The improvement of relations between Russia and England had, by this time, become

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<sup>173</sup> V. V. Zaitsev, 'The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy on Turkey and the Balkans, 1908-1911' *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, New Series Vol. XXXII (1999) pp. 51-3.

<sup>174</sup> *The Morning Post* 7<sup>th</sup> October 1910, p. 9.



a cause that was particularly close to Williams's heart.<sup>175</sup> *The Morning Post*, fearing German expansion, also now considered Russia 'a welcome partner in defence of the Empire'.<sup>176</sup>

Izvol'skii also favoured a Pan-Slav policy that encouraged friendly relations with Serbia and Bulgaria, at the expense of relations with Austria-Hungary, and which would treat all subject nationalities liberally. However, there were inherent contradictions here. Izvol'skii was, in Williams's view, more liberal than his government. His policies 'assumed the existence of a constitutional situation in Russia', that did not exist. It was difficult to expect the Serbs, Poles, and Ukrainians to react positively to a Pan Slav policy when reactionary elements in the Russian government persisted with repressive measures against the nationalities.<sup>177</sup> Williams criticised the Russian policy in the Middle East and the treatment of Muslims within the Empire. Russia, he felt

... might by an enlightened and humane policy, both within her own borders and in the States on her southern frontier, largely diminish the pain and the friction which accompany the inevitable process of the infusion into Moslem culture of Western civilisation ... for the present, however, Russia's policy in regard to the Mohammedan East is hesitating and inconsistent ... In Persia abuses by Russian troops do not attract any prestige. These are encouraged by reactionaries in Russia, though an aggressive policy in Persia is not desired by Izvolsky or the Foreign Ministry.<sup>178</sup>

The government pursued equally repressive policies towards Finland and Poland. The Government of Finland bill, intended to limit the powers of the Finnish diet and bring Finnish taxation and military matters under the control of the Duma, was passed in 1910. The Western Zemstvo Bill was likewise intended to bring Poland under closer central control.<sup>179</sup> These measures were backed by the conservative third Duma. Williams regarded these developments as

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<sup>175</sup> See chapter three.

<sup>176</sup> Hindle, *The Morning Post* p. 230.

<sup>177</sup> *The Morning Post* 30<sup>th</sup> March 1909, p. 10.

<sup>178</sup> *The Morning Post* 1<sup>st</sup> August 1910, p. 6.

<sup>179</sup> *The Morning Post* 4<sup>th</sup> June 1910, p. 7.

'a distinct set-back in the Russian Constitutional movement'. He accepted that outright hostility to the Government's proposals would only mean the dissolution of the Duma, but doubted whether dissolution would make any real difference to the internal state of Russia. The passage of these two bills constituted 'a triumph for the Reactionaries within the Duma ... the collapse of whatever moral authority the Duma enjoyed ... and a servile display of contempt for principle, law, right, and even mere political expediency on the part of the majority of an assembly which is the sole remaining outward sign and manifestation of Russian Constitutionalism.'<sup>180</sup>

As this last passage demonstrates, it would be wrong to assume that the sober style of correspondence expected by the *Morning Post* left no room for Williams to express his own opinions. There were also occasions on which the *Morning Post* was willing to carry human interest articles or more personal accounts. One example is a peculiar account of a Russian railway journey, entitled 'The Reading of Life', in which Williams recounted a conversation about suicide and the apparent emptiness of life that he had been party to on a train.<sup>181</sup> A long report Williams had written on an Estonian festival he visited in Reval (Tallinn) was published in the *Morning Post* in November 1910; besides a description of the proceedings Williams gave an account of the history of Estonia and of the current cultural and national movements.<sup>182</sup> In January 1911 an article on the history of the Letts and the reasons for their reputation as revolutionaries was published, presumably in response to the Sidney Street siege in London's East End on New Year's Day, in which a number of Latvian refugees were involved.<sup>183</sup>

There were boundaries to what Williams was allowed to write, however. This became apparent in November 1910 when he reported Tolstoy's flight from Yasnaya Polyana. The writer

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<sup>180</sup> *The Morning Post* 25<sup>th</sup> June 1910, pp. 7-8. Geoffrey Hosking, *The Russian Constitutional Experiment. Government and Duma 1907-1914* (Cambridge, 1973) pp. 106-149.

<sup>181</sup> *The Morning Post* 17<sup>th</sup> August 1910, p. 6.

<sup>182</sup> *The Morning Post* 12<sup>th</sup> November 1910, p. 9.

<sup>183</sup> *The Morning Post* 5<sup>th</sup> January 1911, p. 5.

had taken 'the final step demanded by his principles', and had left what he regarded as his life of luxury in order to 'live as a peasant and end his days in solitude'.<sup>184</sup> Williams's reports reflected his belief that Tolstoy had 'long been distressed by the contradiction between the circumstances of his life and his teachings'. 'Those who most deeply honour Count Tolstoy', he wrote, 'are touched and thankful that he has made this final effort to free himself from self-contradiction'.<sup>185</sup>

The saga of Tolstoy's final journey spanned more than a week. On 16<sup>th</sup> November it was reported that his journey had been interrupted at Astapovo, due to serious illness, and that he had been taken in at the stationmaster's house.<sup>186</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> November a Reuter telegram announced Tolstoy's death; this was contradicted the next day by a report from Williams - this rumour had been disproved by a message from Astapovo.<sup>187</sup> Tolstoy's death was finally reported by Williams on 21<sup>st</sup> November. In this dispatch he described how moved the entire nation had been by the writer's last illness, and death.

In the general mourning, party bitterness, which makes nearly every public event an occasion for recrimination, is almost wholly laid aside, and the prevailing feeling, which is one of homage to the genius and character of the great Russian writer, is deep and spontaneous.<sup>188</sup>

Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams also recalled the 'marvellous unity of feeling amongst all classes and all nations of Russia' at this time. There was a renewed sense of sympathy for and interest in Tolstoy's predicament. However, the proprietor of the *Morning Post*, Lady Bathurst, was outraged by Williams's reports, which showed little consideration for Tolstoy's wife, who

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<sup>184</sup> *The Morning Post* 14<sup>th</sup> November 1910, p. 7.

<sup>185</sup> *The Morning Post* 14<sup>th</sup> November 1910, p. 7.

<sup>186</sup> *The Morning Post* 16<sup>th</sup> November 1910, p. 7.

<sup>187</sup> *The Morning Post* 17<sup>th</sup> November 1910, p. 5, 18<sup>th</sup> November 1910, p. 9.

<sup>188</sup> *The Morning Post* 21<sup>st</sup> November 1910, p. 7.

had been treated to a public scandal. Lady Bathurst had never met the *Morning Post*'s St. Petersburg correspondent, but she wrote to him to complain about his dispatches.<sup>189</sup>

In 1911, H. A. Gwynne became editor of the *Morning Post*. His political opinions and journalistic methods fitted well with the conservative nature of the newspaper.<sup>190</sup> When Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams wrote to him in the 1930s to enquire about her husband's work for the newspaper, Gwynne did not remember Williams having worked as a correspondent under his editorship.<sup>191</sup> However, it is clear from Williams's correspondence at the time that the two did not entirely see eye to eye; apparently Gwynne was 'very nervous' about what Williams described as his 'radical views'. They had 'one or two conflicts'; it is not clear what about.<sup>192</sup> In the autumn of 1911 matters came to a head. Following the assassination of the Russian premier, Stolypin, in a Kiev theatre, the Tsarist police began a series of raids in an attempt to uncover other revolutionary plots. Harold Williams and Ariadna Tyrkova had been away in Switzerland, and only returned to St. Petersburg shortly after the shooting.<sup>193</sup> On 20<sup>th</sup> September a police search was conducted at their flat. Williams's account of this incident, which he sent in a telegram to Gwynne, runs as follows.

The police came at three o' clock yesterday morning with the order to search the effects of a Russian lady writer named Tyrkoff, a Constitutional Democrat in politics and wholly unconnected with the revolutionary parties. At the same time, without having any orders to do so and despite protests, they searched the effects of my brother and myself and finally carried off all our correspondence, manuscripts, notebooks and photographs. Special attention was paid to newspaper cuttings. The search lasted five hours. No explanation was given of the motives for this extraordinary proceeding. No arrests were made. The number of police present was sixteen. I complained to the British Ambassador, who promised to take whatever steps might be found necessary. The only explanation possible is that the police in a panic are simply raiding blindly in

<sup>189</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 80-82.

<sup>190</sup> Hindle, *The Morning Post* pp. 235-245, Keith Wilson, *The Rasp of War. The Letters of H. A. Gwynne to the Countess Bathurst 1914-1918* (London 1998) pp. 1-13.

<sup>191</sup> H. A. Gwynne to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, n.d. Box 5, Folder 'G', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>192</sup> Letter of 11<sup>th</sup> April 1913, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>193</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 120-122.

all directions in the hope of finding clues. The police who conducted the search were worn out and declared it was the sixth night they had spent in making perquisitions.<sup>194</sup>

Gwynne protested to the British Foreign Office, who got in touch with George Buchanan, the British Ambassador. Buchanan was endeavouring to get Williams's papers returned to him, and this was eventually achieved, but he pointed out that it would be difficult to protest officially. The visit had initially been paid to Ariadna Tyrkova, not Williams, and the police told Buchanan that they could make no distinction between the papers of a couple who were living as man and wife.<sup>195</sup> Largely as a result of this episode, it seems, Gwynne decided to send Williams to Constantinople to act as the *Morning Post*'s correspondent there. Ariadna Tyrkova arranged to act as Constantinople correspondent of *Rech'* (Speech), the Kadet newspaper, and went with him.<sup>196</sup>

Amongst the material removed by the police were two items which particularly aroused their interest. The first was an account written by an officer who had taken part in the disastrous naval battle at Tsushima, which had been given to Williams by the author Alexei Remizov. The other was a letter from the notorious revolutionary Vera Figner, whom Williams and Tyrkova had met in Switzerland.<sup>197</sup> On the basis of these documents, along with some other pieces of information, including Williams's employment of a Muslim boy who gave him Tartar lessons, the police appear to have put together a case against Williams on the grounds of military espionage. Much of the evidence was supplied by Kurz, the Okhrana agent Williams had clashed

<sup>194</sup> Copy of telegram from Mr. H. Williams, *Morning Post* Correspondent in St. Petersburg, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1911, FO 371/1218.

<sup>195</sup> Sir George Buchanan to Sir Edward Grey, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1911, FO 371/1218.

<sup>196</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 124.

<sup>197</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 123, Pares, *A Wandering Student* p. 181. Vera Figner (1852-1942) had been a leader of the terrorist group 'The People's Will', and was involved in planning the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. Alexei Remizov (1877-1957) was a novelist and playwright. There is a list of the items removed from Williams's flat in the police file on him: fond. 102, 7-e deloproizvodstvo, 1911, delo 2094, GARF. I am very grateful to Paul Simmons for providing me with information on material in these files. He has published some documents relating to Williams's later run-ins with the Tsarist police, in 1915, in 'Ia – Anglichanin, liubiashchii Rossiiu' Garol'd Vil'iams v Petrograde 1915-1916 g.' *Istoricheskii arkhiv* No. 6 (2003) pp. 114-127.

with in the Foreign Press Association. The extent of the allegations became apparent during a visit paid to Zuev, the chief of police, by Ariadna Tyrkova, and a visit paid by Bernard Pares to the Minister of the Interior, Makarov. After pressure from Pares and from George Buchanan, Williams was allowed to return to Russia to answer the charges against him. He, Tyrkova and Pares spent a day compiling a written report in answer to the charges, which were eventually dropped. As Pares put it, 'It was quite easy to tell this stupid story in such terms as could have been no use to the Russian Police Department'. Pares also recalled Sazonov, the Foreign Minister, asking him 'What's all this rubbish about Williams? Mackenzie Wallace has got a far better collection of papers'.<sup>198</sup>

Williams and Tyrkova stayed in Constantinople for approximately nine months. Harold Williams found Constantinople 'immensely interesting in every way. It was something to live so long in such an absolutely [oriental] spot and to see something of the East, to talk Turkish and read Armenian and chatter Modern Greek and to watch all the strange movements of life in the Levant was a constant delight to me.'<sup>199</sup> This was a fascinating period in Turkish politics; since the restoration of the Turkish constitution in 1908 the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), or Young Turk party as it was popularly known, had been battling for influence in the Turkish parliament and attempting to push through reforms. There was much discussion of the relative benefits of nationalism and liberalism, conservatism, Ottomanism, and Islamism.<sup>200</sup> Hussein Djahid, the editor of the *Tanin*, the CUP's principal newspaper, described the Young Turks to Ariadna as 'the Cadets of Turkey'.<sup>201</sup> Harold Williams often gave accounts of the views

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<sup>198</sup> Pares, *A Wandering Student* pp. 181-3, Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 126-131. Donald Mackenzie Wallace was an acknowledged British authority on Russia. See chapter three.

<sup>199</sup> Letter of 11<sup>th</sup> April 1913. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>200</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge 1977) Vol. II, Reform, Revolution, and Republic: the Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975 pp. 273-334.

<sup>201</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 135.

represented in the *Tanin* in his own reports.<sup>202</sup> Besides Hussein Djahid, Williams and Tyrkova befriended other members of the Turkish literary and political scene; Halide Edib, a journalist, author, and leading advocate of women's rights, Akhmet Hikmet, a novelist, and a Tartar novelist and playwright named Gaiaz Izhakov. In the summer they rented a house on the island of Prinkipo, and in the evenings they entertained and talked about politics and literature.<sup>203</sup> Arkadii Borman, who on one occasion in 1912 attended the Turkish parliament with Harold Williams, was struck by the way that the latter was greeted from all sides in the lobby, and talked easily with many of the Turkish politicians.<sup>204</sup>

Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams felt that the time they spent in Constantinople was the most care-free time in her husband's life. In Russia he was caught up in the struggle for political reform, and in his own work in furthering Anglo-Russian relations. In Constantinople he was purely a journalist, and his telegrams and articles did not take up much of his time. 'He wrote his telegrams standing by the counter in the narrow, dirty post-office at the Rue de Pera. The bustle, the noise and the slamming of doors did not disturb him ... He seldom took more than ten minutes to frame a telegram. An article of a column in length took him about two hours. And he did not write or wire every day.'<sup>205</sup> Idyllic as this life-style sounds, it seems unlikely that either Williams or Tyrkova would have been happy with it for long, given the sense of duty and responsibility they shared in their involvement in Russian, and Anglo-Russian affairs. Williams himself professed that he would have loved living in Constantinople if he had felt 'more at home

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<sup>202</sup> See for example *The Morning Post* 19<sup>th</sup> July 1912 p. 9, 26<sup>th</sup> July 1912, p. 7.

<sup>203</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 134-138. On Halide Edib, see *The Memoirs of Halide Edib* (New York 1926).

<sup>204</sup> Borman, *A. V. Tyrkova-Vil'iams* p. 96.

<sup>205</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 133.

in the Morning Post'. Ultimately, however, he found it 'impossible to get in with' H. A. Gwynne, and in August 1912 he resigned and returned to Russia.<sup>206</sup>

Williams had no permanent employment between the time he returned to Russia in August 1912, and the outbreak of the First World War two years later. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams commented that, although her husband was an excellent worker, he was hopeless at securing work, or haggling over terms.<sup>207</sup> He kept himself busy, however, writing as a freelance for the *Manchester Guardian* and other papers, and working on a book he had been commissioned to write for Pitmans, on 'Russia of the Russians'. He also suffered several bouts of illness in the winter of 1912-13; first with appendicitis, for which he was operated on, and then with an attack of pleurisy. He admitted that it was 'my wife [who] has been keeping us financially above water this winter'.<sup>208</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova had become one of the editors of *Russkaia mol'va* (Russian Talk), a new, non-party paper which she and other Kadets felt was necessary in order to provide a forum for issues that were being ignored both by *Rech'* and by the party's central committee.<sup>209</sup> Williams apparently occasionally wrote in this newspaper. He also wrote in *Russkaia mysl'* (Russian Thought), a monthly publication edited by Petr Struve. His contributions to this were usually on ethnographical or literary questions, and in the aftermath of his time in Constantinople they concentrated on his observations of Turkish life. Contributions included 'Islam and its study', 'Muslim journals in the Russian language', and a series of articles on 'Greeks in Turkey'.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>206</sup> Letter of 11<sup>th</sup> April 1913. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>207</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 69.

<sup>208</sup> Letter of 11<sup>th</sup> April 1913, Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>209</sup> Melissa Stockdale, *Paul Miliukov and the Quest for a Liberal Russia 1880-1918* (Ithaca 1996) p. 198.

<sup>210</sup> H. Vil'iams, 'Islam' i ego izuchenie', *Russkaia mysl'* (November 1910) v' Rossii i za granitse pp. 187-189. 'Musul'manskii zhurnal' na russkom' iazik'. *Russkaia mysl'* (June 1911), v' Rossii i za granitse pp. 6-8. 'Potomki - Greki v' Turtsii', *Russkaia mysl'* (March 1913) pp. 33-51. 'Potomki - Greki v Turtsii' *Russkaia mysl'* (April 1913) pp. 38-54.



Williams also wrote occasional articles and letters for the *Helsingin Sanomat*, one of Helsinki's leading newspapers, with whom he had had a connection since 1909. He had initially been commissioned to write a letter a week by Emil Gråsten, who felt that Williams's British matter of fact style would suit the paper – his letters would be to the point, but he would not send alarmist reports.<sup>211</sup> This was of course a time of great concern for Finland, and there was a lot to write about. Williams also encouraged his brother, Owen, to send some contributions to the *Helsingin Sanomat* from New Zealand.<sup>212</sup> Williams liked the *Helsingin Sanomat*'s liberal stance, and felt that he could write freely in the paper. He also felt that through his friendship with Eero Erkkö, the editor, he had a 'living contact' with the people of Finland.<sup>213</sup> However, the *Morning Post* do not seem to have liked Williams writing for other papers, and so by 1910 he was sending only occasional contributions. He sent a few articles from Constantinople, and on his return, on political life in Turkey and the Balkans, and on cultural issues.<sup>214</sup>

In August 1914, on the outbreak of the First World War, Harold Williams was appointed as correspondent to the *Daily Chronicle*. The *Chronicle* was a relatively young paper, having become a daily in 1869, and its editor, Robert Donald, was fond of innovation and new journalistic techniques. Donald did not write for the newspaper himself, but devoted his time to planning its content and policy.<sup>215</sup> The paper's correspondents, on the other hand, were given plenty of room to air their opinions. Dispatches from foreign correspondents, including Williams,

<sup>211</sup> Emil Gråsten to Eero Erkkö, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1910, Paivalehden Arkistosaatio. I am very grateful to Kati Blom for her help in reading these Finnish letters.

<sup>212</sup> Harold Williams to Eero Erkkö, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1910, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1910, 14<sup>th</sup> February 1911, Paivalehden Arkistosaatio.

<sup>213</sup> Harold Williams to Eero Erkkö, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1910, Paivalehden Arkistosaatio. The Erkkös became good friends of Harold Williams and Ariadna Tyrkova. They helped Arkadii Borman when he left Russia via Finland in 1918, and in the 1920s, when Williams was at *The Times*, he corresponded with Eljas Erkkö who was at the Finnish Foreign Office and later ran the *Helsingin Sanomat*. See their correspondence in the Paivalehden Arkistosaatio.

<sup>214</sup> Harold Williams to Eero Erkkö, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1912, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1912, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1912, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1913, Paivalehden Arkistosaatio.

<sup>215</sup> Robert Donald (1860-1933). See H. A. Taylor, *Robert Donald: being the authorised biography of Sir Robert Donald, GBE, LLD, journalist, author and friend of statesmen* (London 1934). Dennis Griffiths (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of the British Press 1422-1992* (New York 1992) pp. 204-5.

frequently made it to the front page, where they appeared under banner headlines announcing the main news stories. One of these banners, in the summer of 1917, announced 'RUSSIA'S AGONY: VIVID DISPATCH BY DR. HAROLD WILLIAMS'.<sup>216</sup> Correspondents' names appeared both above and below their articles. Long dispatches by the chief correspondents also featured on the leader page, where they could express their opinions and personal experiences at more length. The extent to which Williams was able to give expression to his own style of correspondence is illustrated by a couple of extracts from articles of his published in the *Daily Chronicle* in 1914.

The guns were silent, strangely silent, after all the din and turmoil of the eight days' battle. My companions had fallen asleep, weary of the long waiting for the wounded who did not come. The skipper had gone across the river with a message for a general, and the crew were snugly at rest somewhere under the hatches. How still it was! I strolled about the deck alone, for there was more rest in the space and the silence and the darkness than in the stuffy cabins down below. And then there was the Vistula, flowing broadly and dimly, with a faint lapping at the steamer's side and on the branches that drooped from the shore.

An army was crossing the river a mile or two away. Searchlights were playing on either bank; steamers towing rafts and barges threaded their way almost noiselessly along the borders of light and shadow. From far across the water floated a call, a shout, a barely audible cry – not the bustle and clamour of the heyday of Toil, but the weary expostulations of men whose task was almost ended. A light mist hung over the river, and from the trees along the bank moisture was dripping like a whisper of rain. And that was why the bivouac fires in the woods were so cheerful. They were glowing caverns of warmth and comfort in the chilly darkness. And how jolly the soldiers were, resting in the firelight, bending over their kettles and throwing armfuls of wood on the flames! Sometimes I could hear them singing. And I envied them then, although I knew what a long, long march they had just made from Galicia.<sup>217</sup>

We rode into the pine-wood at night. The air was still, there was not a rustle, not a sound, but the clink of bridles and the soft beat of the horses' hoofs on the sandy track. The slender trunks of the trees, the figures of my companions were barely discernible in the starlight that filtered down through the protecting darkness of the upper branches. But on the ground there was a strange, dim, glow, a glow as of scores of windows succeeding one another at intervals of a few yards and stretching far away into the depths of the wood. The wood was a camp. Russian soldiers were living there underground, and the blurred squares of light were made by candle rays fumbling their way through the sacking that hung before the doorways of these primeval dwellings.

We passed out beyond the wood and overhead shone all the glory of the stars in the frosty night. Orion's sword was drawn and gleaming, and the battalions of the heavenly host were

<sup>216</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 24<sup>th</sup> July 1917, p. 1.

<sup>217</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1915, p. 4.

massed for their long watch and ward as from the beginning of time. We approached the front, but no sound of human conflict broke in on the radiant silence of the stars. Only now and then a rocket leapt up into the sky – a German candle burning away redly in a slow, sidelong flight, or a Russian rocket flashing suddenly from high in the air in a far-spreading, sparkling fountain. The batteries were silent, and there was not even a rifle shot to break the stillness. I thought of the Germans waiting wearily across the river, and of the Russians sheltering in the soil they were patiently defending. And looking up, I thought that the stars were nerve-centres, points of intelligence in the great dim semi-conscious organism of the world. And what had they to do with this war of ours? Perhaps our war was some world crisis, a cataclysm, a violent bursting forth into a new era whose progress and term is known in the radiance that passes swiftly from star to star, known to all those silent stars who have watched the beginning and will see the end, who have followed all the painful purpose of our earthly struggle.<sup>218</sup>

Williams's articles were also now reaching a wider audience, as the *Daily Chronicle* had syndicate arrangements with the *Daily Telegraph* and with the *New York Times*, which meant that correspondence sent to the *Chronicle* was often used in those papers as well.

In the ten years between 1904 and 1914 – between the ages of 28 and 38 – Harold Williams had come a long way in terms of his own personal development, his political attitudes, and in his sense of his role in life. He had moved away from his idealism and preoccupation with Tolstoy and Christian Socialism, and had come to accept his own politicisation and to accept a liberal, or perhaps in Russian terms a radical liberal position, aligning himself broadly with Petr Struve, Pavel Miliukov and Ariadna Tyrkova. By 1907 Williams had also accepted journalism as a career. This acceptance seems to have been partly due to the change in his own aspirations, and in his domestic situation, but also stemmed to some degree from a realisation of the possibilities of journalism. Williams maintained his instinctive need to work for 'a cause', but he came to see journalism as a means of doing this. The object of journalism was never, in his view, purely to supply accurate news. Journalism could be used to fight for a particular cause; to convince an audience of a particular point of view. Whether this cause was the establishment of a constitutional government in Russia, the furthering of Anglo-Russian relations, or later the cause

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<sup>218</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 6<sup>th</sup> April 1915, p. 6.

of Allied intervention in the Russian civil war, journalism could be used as a means to a particular end, rather than being the end in itself.

### 3. Britain, Russia, War and Revolution 1907-1917

Harold Williams's journalistic work gained a new significance in the light of the marked rapprochement that took place in relations between Britain and Russia in the period from 1906 to the outbreak of the First World War. Prior to the Russo-Japanese war the diplomatic outlook had seemed bleak – the preceding decade had seen a steady deterioration in Anglo-Russian relations, and British attempts to reach some kind of accommodation with Russia had been fruitless.<sup>1</sup> Since the British had recently concluded an alliance with Japan, and the precise details of the Franco-Russian alliance were unknown, the outcome of the Russo-Japanese war seemed to threaten not only the chances of a British agreement with Russia but also the existing British agreement with France and the entire status quo in Europe. As it turned out, the defeat of Russia by Japan, while Britain and France managed to remain neutral, made conditions more favourable for an Anglo-Russian rapprochement.<sup>2</sup> When Sir Edward Grey was appointed to the Foreign Office at the end of 1905, one of his first priorities was the initiation of negotiations for an agreement with Russia. Sir Arthur Nicolson, who was sent to St. Petersburg as the new British ambassador in May 1906, wasted no time in getting the negotiations underway.<sup>3</sup> The convention, signed in August 1907, laid down a clear agreement on British and Russian spheres of interest in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet, and signalled a resolve on both sides to maintain the status quo in the Near East. For Grey

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar. British Policy and Russia, 1894-1917* (Oxford 1995) pp. 148-235.

<sup>2</sup> Keith Neilson, '“A Dangerous Game of American Poker”: The Russo-Japanese War and British Policy' *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 12 (1989) pp. 63-87.

<sup>3</sup> Beryl Williams, 'Great Britain and Russia, 1905 to the 1907 Convention' in F. H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge University Press 1977) pp. 133-147. Keith Neilson, '“My Beloved Russians”: Sir Arthur Nicolson and Russia, 1906-1916' *The International History Review* IX, 4 (1987) pp. 517-554.

the agreement with Russia was the 'natural complement' to the alliance with France. A triple entente would be solid and would provide a means of checking German expansion if necessary.<sup>4</sup>

In many respects the convention marked the beginning of the negotiation of the Anglo-Russian rapprochement, rather than its conclusion. A great deal of diplomatic effort was needed in order to prevent the agreement from breaking down.<sup>5</sup> Sir George Buchanan, later British Ambassador in Petrograd, clearly felt that the convention was of more use as a basis for a wider understanding than in terms of the details contained within it.<sup>6</sup> In the years between 1907 and 1914, the broader alliance was cemented by an exchange of Royal visits (that of Edward VII to Reval (Tallinn) in 1908, and that of Nicholas II and Izvol'skii to Cowes in 1909), and by the exchange of parliamentary delegations in 1909 and 1912. If there was no real co-operation in European affairs, at least the two foreign offices endeavoured to make sure that antagonism was kept to a minimum. Arthur Nicolson played a key role in smoothing over relations with the Russian government.<sup>7</sup>

In parallel with the diplomatic rapprochement, a co-ordinated effort was made by some writers and journalists to orient British public opinion in favour of the agreement. This was no easy task. Although the late nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century had seen a marked increase in information on and debate about Russia in Britain, much of this was informed by publicity from émigré revolutionaries such as Petr Kropotkin and Sergei Stepniak, and by sympathetic British groups such as the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, led by Robert Spence Watson. The debate centred on the harsh nature of the Russian government, its treatment

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<sup>4</sup> Williams, 'Great Britain and Russia, 1905 to the 1907 Convention' pp. 133-4.

<sup>5</sup> D. W. Sweet and R. T. B. Langhorne, 'Great Britain and Russia, 1907-1914' in Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* pp. 236-255.

<sup>6</sup> Sir George Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia and other Diplomatic Memories* 2 vols. (London 1923) Vol. 1 p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> Harold Nicolson, *Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart. First Lord Carnock. A Study in the Old Diplomacy* (London 1930) pp. 202-321. Neilson, 'My Beloved Russians' pp. 517-554.

of political prisoners in exile in Siberia, and the grievances of the Jewish population.<sup>8</sup> This debate, and the growing awareness of the revolutionary movement, facilitated a split in the perception of Russia in the British mind. Russia was no longer a repressed and backward whole, relatively unknown and generally disliked. There were now two entities, two Russias; the oppressive state, and the oppressed, possibly backward but good hearted and loveable Russian people.<sup>9</sup> By 1905 the British press had adopted an overwhelmingly hostile attitude to the Russian government.<sup>10</sup> In the period leading up to and after the signing of the 1907 convention, there were two branches of opposition to the entente. Some imperialists felt that the British had signed away too much in the agreement on the Near East. Radical critics of the Tsarist regime, among whom H. N. Brailsford and Lucien Wolf were particularly vocal, held that by offering the Tsar moral and, worse, financial support, Britain was effectively condoning Russia's autocratic government.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most high profile and diligent protagonists of the Anglo-Russian entente was Donald Mackenzie Wallace, the acknowledged 'father' of Russian studies in Britain. Wallace's two-volume work *Russia*, first published in 1877 and based on six years of travel and study in the Russian Empire, had established his reputation as an expert on all things Russian. Wallace had been Foreign Editor of *The Times*, and was by 1907 a close advisor to Edward VII on

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<sup>8</sup> On Kropotkin, Stepniak and Spence Watson, see B. Hollingsworth, 'The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom: English Liberals and Russian Socialists, 1890-1917' *Oxford Slavonic Papers* New Series 3 (1970) pp. 45-64, David Saunders, 'Stepniak and the London Emigration. Letters to Robert Spence Watson, 1887-1890' *Oxford Slavonic Papers* New Series 13 (1980) pp. 80-93. British and American exposés of and comments on the Siberian exile system included Henry Lansdell, *Through Siberia* 2 vols. (London 1882), George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System* (New York 1891), and Harry De Windt, *Siberia As It Is* (London 1892).

<sup>9</sup> Helen Szamuely, 'British Attitudes to Russia 1880-1918' D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1989) pp. 9-10, and pp. 8-68 on wider trends in opinion before 1905.

<sup>10</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>11</sup> Szamuely, 'British Attitudes to Russia 1880-1918' pp. 104-110

international affairs.<sup>12</sup> In 1906 he was urged by both Arthur Nicolson and King Edward to go to St. Petersburg, to assess the stability of the Tsarist regime, and to further the cause of Anglo-Russian understanding. Wallace disapproved of the British journalists in St. Petersburg, who in his opinion presented an unbalanced and unnecessarily alarmist picture of the position in Russia. Wallace was scathing about the Kadet party, and saw the Duma as a centre of revolutionary, rather than reform activity.<sup>13</sup> On this basis it seems safe to assume that he included Harold Williams amongst the objects of his disapproval. While Wallace placed his faith in Stolypin and the moderate third Duma, Williams dismissed Stolypin as 'a fool', and regarded the third Duma as weak and reactionary.<sup>14</sup>

Williams, along with his close colleague Bernard Pares, belonged to a younger generation, who favoured Anglo-Russian friendship, but envisaged this friendship developing between the liberal Russians, i.e. the Kadets and members of the other Duma parties, and the British government, or on a wider scale between the Russian and British peoples. They emphasised the more liberal aspects of Russian life which were likely to appeal to the British public, and stressed that Russia's move towards constitutionalism could be furthered by friendship with England. Conveniently, the more liberal segments of Russian society were the ones that tended to favour Anglo-Russian co-operation. Williams and Pares have been characterised by Michael Palmer as the centre of a 'British nexus', 'a small group of educated Britons who were committed to the study of Russia, to informing the British public about Russia, and to encouraging the development of Russia as a constitutional monarchy'. Palmer sees Mackenzie Wallace, Stead and Maurice Baring as the elder and less political generation of this

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<sup>12</sup> Douglas G. Morren, 'Donald Mackenzie Wallace and British Russophilism 1870-1919'. *Canadian Slavonic Papers* Vol. XI, No. 2, (1967) pp. 171-183.

<sup>13</sup> W. Harrison, 'Mackenzie Wallace's View of the Russian Revolution of 1905-1907' *Oxford Slavonic Papers* New Series 4 (1971) pp. 74-5.

<sup>14</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1908, Box 1, Folder 10, Samuel N. Harper papers.



group, while Williams and Pares were their successors, embracing the constitutional movement.<sup>15</sup> Pares himself says that there were 'four of us who worked more or less together': himself, Williams, Maurice Baring and Samuel Harper.<sup>16</sup> Of course these men did not form a homogeneous group. Their opinions, perspectives and interests naturally differed. Williams, for example, was readily identified as a devoted follower of 'the Movement', ie: the constitutional struggle, and, at least in his early years in Russia seems to have been in greater sympathy with the radical revolutionary cause than Pares.<sup>17</sup> There was enough common ground for these men to work together, for causes in which they were mutually interested.

Pares and Williams first met outside a meeting of the Zemstvo Congress in Moscow in July 1905. According to Pares they spent the rest of the day together, and 'spent the whole night standing on the terrace of the Kremlin discussing the morality of revolutionary terrorism', to which Pares was absolutely opposed, while Williams took a 'less definite view'. They parted as friends and 'already colleagues for life'.<sup>18</sup> For Pares, as for Williams, Russia was a lifelong commitment. His mission, according to his son, was to 'interpret Russia to the English speaking world, and even to bring the two worlds into political partnership with each other'.<sup>19</sup> He had done badly in his Classics degree at Cambridge, and had spent some years pursuing a career as a schoolteacher. The fact that this was not his chosen career probably made him more determined when he did find his vocation. His first visit to Russia in 1898 marked the beginning of his life's

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<sup>15</sup> Michael R. Palmer, 'The British Nexus and the Russian Liberals, 1905-1917' Ph.D. thesis, University of Aberdeen (2000) p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Pares, *My Russian Memoirs* p. 115.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Henry Nevinston, *More Changes, More Chances* (London 1925) p. 111, and Bernard Pares' account of his first meeting with Williams in *My Russian Memoirs* pp. 90-1.

<sup>18</sup> Pares, *My Russian Memoirs* pp. 90-91.

<sup>19</sup> Introduction by Richard Pares, in Pares, *A History of Russia* pp. vii-xiv. For more biographical information on Pares, see *My Russian Memoirs*, *A Wandering Student*, and Michael Hughes, 'Bernard Pares, Russian Studies and the Promotion of Anglo-Russian Friendship 1907-1914' *Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 78, No. 3, (July 2000) pp. 510-535.

fascination with the study of the country, its language, and its people. Many of Pares's friends and colleagues in England found his obsession with Russia something of a trial, and could only stand hearing so much about the country.<sup>20</sup> According to Arthur Ransome, Pares's enthusiasm for the cause of Anglo-Russian understanding could occasionally wear thin even on his colleagues in Russia.

Nothing could make him see that it was hardly fair to interrupt Williams in the middle of writing his telegram to the *Daily Chronicle* by insisting on reading aloud to him plans, for example, for the establishment of a chair of Russian in some university not yet so blessed, and when Pares, loudly singing on the stairs of the Hotel Continental where [William] Peters and I were living, announced his arrival in Petrograd, we used, by sharing Pares between us, to try and keep him occupied and so give the kinder-hearted Williams the chance of getting through his work.<sup>21</sup>

When in Russia Pares spent much of his time travelling, making copious notes in his diary as he went, and marking his journeys in red ink on a map of the country. According to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, who once saw this map, the lines 'ran in all directions, touching small towns and out-of-the-way villages where perhaps no foreigner had ever been before'.<sup>22</sup> Pares's achievements in encouraging the study of Russia in England were considerable. In 1906 he was appointed unsalaried Reader in Modern Russian History in the University of Liverpool, and he threw his energies into the establishment of a School of Russian Studies there, with financial support from a number of wealthy members of Liverpool's commercial community. Besides its regular lecturing staff the School had a number of associated members, who included Donald Mackenzie Wallace, Maurice Baring, William Birkbeck and Aylmer Maude. Harold Williams was given an honorary research fellowship in Ethnography, although for obvious reasons he had

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<sup>20</sup> Introduction, by Richard Pares, in Pares, *A History of Russia* p. xi. Samuel Harper, *The Russia I Believe In – the memoirs of Samuel N Harper 1902-1941* edited by Paul V. Harper (Chicago 1945) p.74.

<sup>21</sup> Ransome, *Autobiography* pp. 188-9.

<sup>22</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p.71.

little to do with the day to day running of the school.<sup>23</sup> In collaboration with Williams, Harper and Baring, Pares also launched a journal, the *Russian Review*, intended as a 'centre for the growing movement towards a better understanding between Britain and Russia'.<sup>24</sup> The journal first appeared at the beginning of 1912, and although not a financial success, it was taken by the British Foreign Office, and did help to raise the profile of Russian affairs and Anglo-Russian relations in Britain to some extent. It was Pares also who organised the 1909 visit to Britain of a delegation of Duma members, and the reciprocal visit in 1912 of a British delegation to Russia.<sup>25</sup>

Samuel Harper (1882-1943) was an American academic who paid frequent visits to Russia for the purposes of private study, in the breaks from his teaching responsibilities in the Russian department at the University of Chicago. Harper had been familiar with Harold Williams's work before meeting him - along with Bernard Pares and Maurice Baring, Williams was one of several 'interpreters of Russia' whose work Harper had come to know and respect during 1905. It seems likely that the two men met when Harper made an extended trip to St. Petersburg in 1906. During this visit Harper cultivated the friendship of the British, French and American newspapermen in St. Petersburg, as he was anxious to gain access to their observations of the Duma and the day to day situation in Russia.<sup>26</sup> Harper met Bernard Pares in the lobby of the Duma, and on discovering that their aims were closely related - 'we both wanted to promote the study of Russian history and institutions in our respective countries, and both of us had decided that frequent trips to Russia were essential to the success of our efforts' - the two men

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<sup>23</sup> Hughes, 'Bernard Pares, Russian Studies and the Promotion of Anglo-Russian Friendship'.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 520.

<sup>25</sup> Pares's efforts at achieving a wider Anglo-Russian understanding are dealt with at length in *My Russian Memoirs* and *A Wandering Student*, and in Hughes, 'Bernard Pares, Russian Studies and the Promotion of Anglo-Russian Friendship', Palmer, 'The British Nexus and the Russian Liberals', and Szamuely, 'British Attitudes to Russia' pp. 349-374.

<sup>26</sup> Harper, *The Russia I Believe In* p. 29.

agreed to work together systematically.<sup>27</sup> They conducted interviews with leading political figures together, one man taking notes while the other asked questions. They travelled together in the provinces, keeping a joint diary of their experiences. Each summer between 1907 and 1909 they would go first to St. Petersburg, to the Duma, and then begin their travels. In the autumn they returned to Liverpool and Chicago to teach.<sup>28</sup> Harper's political outlook seems to have been closer to Williams's than to Pares's, however; he maintains that he was less conservative than Pares, and in correspondence between Williams and Harper it seems that the two men shared the same views. Between 1911 and 1913 Harper worked with Pares at the University of Liverpool, lecturing on Russian legal and institutional history. He left, however, when he began to feel that the work of the School of Russian Studies had become 'somewhat "official", because of the close relationship of the school with the British-Russian agreement.'

Our reports to the British foreign office, were in the main, the work of Pares, of course; but I had a certain association with them. The Anglo-Russian Committee which Pares organized, and which arranged reciprocal visits of groups of public leaders and businessmen, was a kind of work that did not appeal to me but which seemed to be a major interest of the head of the school. Even the Russian Review became somewhat propagandist. Later international developments fully justified the direction which Pares gave to the work of the school, but at the time I was not in sympathy with it.<sup>29</sup>

Harold Williams clearly valued Samuel Harper's friendship and co-operation. In all his letters to Harper when the latter was not in Russia, Williams expresses regret that Harper has left, and hopes that he will soon return. He missed having Harper to consult with. They seem to have assisted each other in various ways while Harper was in America, however; Williams would send books and journals that Harper required for the University of Chicago or for personal use, and Harper put Williams in touch with American publishers who might be willing to take his work.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. pp. 37-8.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. pp. 75-76.

When Charles Crane, a friend of Harper's father, was coming to Russia in 1917, Harper asked Williams to 'give him as much time as you can spare. I do not need to emphasize that it will help matters considerably on this side'. By return, when the actress Vera Kommisarzhenskaia was planning a trip to America in 1908, Williams asked Harper to 'help her up, if you have the opportunity. She deserves it'.<sup>30</sup>

Maurice Baring's relations to this group are more difficult to understand. He worked on the *Russian Review*, and it is apparent from Pares's memoirs that he collaborated with Pares and Williams in some ways. His constant movements make him difficult to pin down, however; when Harold Williams arrived in St. Petersburg in December 1904, Baring had just returned to London to work on dramatic criticism for the *Morning Post*. In August 1905 he was in Mongolia, and he spent the winter of 1905-6 in Moscow, with occasional visits to St. Petersburg, during which it is possible that he met Williams. He spent the duration of the first Duma (May to July 1906) in St. Petersburg, and returned there again in October 1906 as correspondent of the *Morning Post*. In December 1907 he returned to London. Baring was included in Pares's 1912 visit of Britons to Russia, and he seems to have remained in Russia until 1914, but he was no longer doing journalistic work. His books on Russia included *With the Russians in Manchuria* (1905), *A Year in Russia* (1907), and *The Mainsprings of Russia* (1914).<sup>31</sup> Baring in a sense summed up the fascination that Russia held for 'experts' like himself, Pares and Williams, when he had a character in one of his novels comment that Russia was 'an "infectious" country ... Once the microbe gets into one's blood – the Russian microbe, I mean – the disease never dies; it is like a

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<sup>30</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1908, Box 1, Folder, 10, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1914, Box 2, Folder 3, 10<sup>th</sup> November 1914, Box 2, Folder 5, 24<sup>th</sup> February 1915, Box 2, Folder 9, Samuel Harper to Harold Williams 9<sup>th</sup> April 1917, Box 3, Folder 14, Samuel N. Harper papers.

<sup>31</sup> On Baring's career, see Emma Letley, *Maurice Baring, Citizen of Europe* (London 1991), and Maurice Baring, *The Puppet Show of Memory* (London 1922).

love-philtre, and to the end of your life you will say, "Russia, what is there between you and me?"<sup>32</sup>

Harold Williams was clearly associated with this group before 1914, but until that point his work for Anglo-Russian friendship was largely un-coordinated, or, where it was coordinated, was directed by Bernard Pares. Williams had no political contacts of any note in the early stages of the entente, and does not appear to have sought any.<sup>33</sup> His literary work was probably his most significant contribution. His journalism, of course, was a means of influencing and educating British opinion on Russia. He was a co-editor of the *Russian Review*, and his permanent residence in Russia meant he was in a position to organise contributions on the Russian side. He also contributed a number of articles to the *Review* himself; one in the first number of each volume between 1912 and 1914. All three focused on the nationalities of the Russian Empire. The first, 'The Russian National Problem', outlined some of the problems faced by such a large empire consisting of so many subject nationalities, and compared the diversity of the Russian Empire to that of the British Empire. The primary problem, as Williams saw it, was the necessity of creating a genuine spirit of unity and patriotism amongst all groups. Williams offered no solution to this problem because, as he made clear, no policy had been framed in Russia on this subject. It is clear from the text however that he favoured a decentralised system that would celebrate the diversity of the Empire rather than the policy of Russification which had been employed in the past and was still being used by the present government. (Williams privately described this policy as 'insane'.<sup>34</sup>) It was important, he stressed, that the solution be one 'in the direction of the enrichment of civilization'.

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<sup>32</sup> Maurice Baring, *Tinker's Leave* (London 1927) pp. 70-71.

<sup>33</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 70.

<sup>34</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1908, Box 1, Folder 10, Samuel N. Harper papers.

For the Russian Empire means not only Pushkin and Tolstoy and Chaikovsky; it means Mickiewicz and Slowacki, and the Little Russian Shevchenko; it means the Kalevala and Sibelius; it means the Russian *byliny* and the Little Russian *dumy*, and Lettish and Esthonian folk-songs, and Kirghiz heroic songs about Er Targyn, and the mediaeval Georgian poem about the Man in the Panther Skin, and all kinds of charming products of the young literatures of peoples who are just learning to express themselves – they symbolic drama *Fire and Night*, for instance, of the Lettish poet Rainis, and Arvid Jaerfeldt's Finnish novel *Fatherland*. And this same broad and rich conception includes 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 suggestions 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.<sup>35</sup>

The second article was entitled 'The Case of the Letts', and gave an outline of the history of the people of Latvia under German and Russian rule. The Latvians, as Williams pointed out, were little known and indistinguishable to most westerners, and had only really been brought to the world's attention by an outbreak of revolutionary activity in 1905-6, and by the siege of Sidney Street in East London in January 1911. The harsh treatment meted out to the Latvians by their German conquerors had allowed a national movement to develop, which had begun to flourish in the nineteenth century under Russian influence. Williams felt that it was 'highly improbable that they will attain any large measure of autonomy', and that they could not dream of attaining political independence. What they did have was an individual character and healthy developing national culture, making them a 'gifted, shrewd and energetic people'.<sup>36</sup>

The third and final article, 'The Russian Mohammedans', described some aspects of the national culture of Russia's Muslim population; the degree to which Tartar words and names had become assimilated into the Russian language, the work of Ismail Gasprinski in reforming Muslim education, the development of the Musulman party, which cooperated with the Kadets in the first and second Dumas, the nature of Russia's Muslim newspapers, and the work of several

<sup>35</sup> Harold Williams, 'The Russian National Problem' *Russian Review* Vol. 1 No. 1 (1912) pp. 32-40.

<sup>36</sup> Harold Williams, 'The Case of the Letts' *Russian Review* Vol. 2 No. 1 (1913) pp. 122-137.

poets and authors, including Ghaiaz Ishkahov, with whom Williams had been friendly during his time in Constantinople.<sup>37</sup>

Williams returned to the theme of Russia's subject nationalities in a paper he gave at a meeting of the Cambridge University Extension summer programme in August 1916, which was organised by Bernard Pares and was devoted entirely to the subject of Russia. Williams outlined the history of some of the Russian Empire's nationalities – the Ukrainians, Finns, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians – and attempted to stress the underlying unity that the Empire contained despite the surface conflicts. Other speakers included Pavel Miliukov, Petr Struve, and Roman Dmowski.<sup>38</sup> The conference was considered an important step in encouraging interest in and knowledge of Russian affairs in Britain, and it was supported by the Foreign Office, who paid the travel expenses of the Russian scholars involved. Harold Williams was apparently responsible for co-ordinating the arrangements at the Russian end.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to his newspaper articles, and occasional contributions to relevant journals, Williams made a significant contribution to British knowledge of Russia through his book *Russia of the Russians*, which he was commissioned to write in 1913 as part of Pitmans' 'Countries and Peoples' series. Other titles included *Italy of the Italians*, *Turkey of the Ottomans*, and *Scandinavia of the Scandinavians*. The authors seem to have been given relative freedom about the topics they chose to cover. Williams's book was first published in March 1914, and it received very positive reviews in the English press, the best of which compared the book to

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<sup>37</sup> Harold Williams, 'The Russian Mohammedans', *Russian Review* Vol. 3 No. 1 (1914) pp. 100-119.

<sup>38</sup> Harold Williams, 'The Nationalities of Russia' in J. D. Duff (ed.), *Russian Realities and Problems* (Cambridge 1917) pp. 123-152. Thomas Riha, *A Russian European. Paul Miliukov in Russian Politics* (Notre Dame and London, 1969) p. 257. Paul Miliukov, *Political Memoirs 1905-1917* edited by Arthur P. Mendel (Ann Arbor, 1967) p. 369.

<sup>39</sup> Correspondence relating to the Cambridge summer meeting, FO 395 / 26.



Mackenzie Wallace's *Russia*.<sup>40</sup> *Russia* had been published almost forty years earlier (although revised editions were brought out in 1905 and 1912), and had become the classic English text on Russia. The only real similarity between Mackenzie Wallace's book and Williams's was that they both dealt broadly with the characteristics of Russian life, rather than adding to the debate on the more controversial issues, as had often been the case with English literature on Russia, or attempting to justify Russia to the British as an ally, as became the case in a genre of books published in the early years of the First World War.<sup>41</sup> Mackenzie Wallace's is a very engaging book; he uses his own experiences to illustrate his observations on Russian life, but backs these up with thorough research. For example, his observations on the life of the Russian clergy are drawn from a village priest in whose village he spent a number of months living; his description of the emancipation of the serfs is enhanced by an account of the attitudes of the German overseer of an estate, Karl Karl'itch, and his discussion of Russia's Tartar tribes is based on his experience living with the Bashkirs. Mackenzie Wallace spent years researching these subjects in the libraries of St. Petersburg and Moscow, but it is his anecdotes that bring his account to life.<sup>42</sup>

Harold Williams's book is also based on personal experience, but this is much less obvious. Williams admitted that he struggled to write entertaining accounts of his own experiences, presented as such, and this became apparent later on in his and Ariadna's joint attempt to write a novel about the Russian Revolution.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, in *Russia of the Russians* he dealt comprehensively with the issues which interested him and on which he had first hand knowledge. In the first chapter, 'The Growth of Russia', an account of the history of the Russian

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<sup>40</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams to Scribners, n. d. Box 4 BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 143.

<sup>41</sup> See for example James Young Simpson, *The Self-Discovery of Russia* (London 1916), Charles Sarolea, *Europe's Debt to Russia* (London 1915), and Mackenzie Wallace's own *Our Russian Ally* (London 1914).

<sup>42</sup> Donald Mackenzie Wallace, *Russia* 2 vols. (London 1877).

<sup>43</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1908, Box 1, Folder 10, Samuel N. Harper papers. See chapter four.

state, Williams outlined his thesis about the country's development. The process of Russian expansion across a plain that afforded no natural limits, and the gradual diffusion of Russian power until such limits could eventually be reached, was for Williams the key to Russia's history and contemporary situation.<sup>44</sup> In contrast with England, which had built its empire across the seas from the security of an island base, and which had therefore been able to develop socially and politically at an early date, in Russia all such considerations had been subordinated to the need for security and the constant expansion that this entailed.<sup>45</sup> The second chapter, 'The Bureaucracy and the Constitution', details the relations between these two forms of government in Russia, and the development of the struggle between them since 1905. This was contemporary history that Williams himself had witnessed at close quarters. His account contains many details that were personal to him, although they were not presented as such. The scenes he had witnessed in St. Petersburg on Bloody Sunday, the granting of the constitution, the first meeting of the Duma, and the Vyborg appeal are all described, and although Williams was presenting this narrative at a distance of as many as ten years from some of the events, his opinions and enthusiasms are clear. He gave accounts of the parties in the Duma, and of the Kadet leaders, including Miliukov, whom he described as an academic who often overreached himself in trying to be practical, but who was characterised by 'a sort of downright doggedness'.<sup>46</sup>

In the following chapters Williams dealt with a number of the features of Russian life which interested him. In a chapter on the press he gave an account of the chief publications, their orientations and the restrictions upon them. In a chapter on the Intelligentsia he attempted to describe this 'band of high-minded, enlightened, humane and keenly sensitive men who passed

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<sup>44</sup> Williams drew heavily here from the Russian historian V. O. Kliuchevskii (1841-1911). See his five volume *History of Russia* translated by C. J. Hogarth (London, 1911-31), and Robert Byrnes, *V. O. Kliuchevskii- historian of Russia* (Bloomington, Indiana 1995) pp. 140-152.

<sup>45</sup> Williams, *Russia of the Russians* p. 1-2.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 89

through the strange and bitter experience of living under an autocracy'.<sup>47</sup> The following chapter deals with the relations of the church and the people in Russia, including the various groups of dissenters. Williams then discussed literature, including his own discussions with Tolstoy on the subject in 1905, and the work of his friends Viacheslav Ivanov and Alexei Remizov.<sup>48</sup> Music, the theatre, painting and architecture occupy the following chapters. Chapter eleven, 'Peasants and Proprietors', was heavily based on the village at Vergezha, and other villages nearby, and it includes descriptions and photographs of the life of peasants and landowners there. One photograph, under the caption 'A Russian Country Gentleman (Old Type)' shows Ariadna Tyrkova's father, Vladimir Tyrkov, on his estate.<sup>49</sup> A brief account of the development of Russian trade and industry follows, and the book closes with a description of the capital city, St. Petersburg, and its relations with Moscow.

The most glowing review of *Russia of the Russians* came from H. G. Wells, who had recently made Williams's acquaintance, and was impressed by the independent perspective Williams brought to his study of Russia. He put this down to Williams's New Zealand roots.

A long unsuspected function of the remoter colonies becomes apparent. They delocalise the imagination. They break with tradition. The English mind goes away there and detaches itself from all sorts of clinging parochialisms. It comes back in the next generation invigorated, emancipated.

As examples he gave Gilbert Murray, the cartoonist Will Dyson, and Mrs. Pember Reeves. Now Williams had provided 'a generous-spirited and understanding vision of Russia, such as perhaps no home-trained Englishman, saturated in a long tradition of unintelligent hostility, could have written'. The book was free from 'the bitter grudge of the Pole, the practical

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 137.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. pp. 211, 216, 223.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. pp. 332-372.

hatred of the Jew, or the apology of the Orthodox'. The Finnish, Polish and Jewish problems which attracted so much publicity normally were reduced to their actual proportions as part of a bigger picture. 'There is scarcely more space given in this book to pogroms than we should find given to lynchings in a general book on America or to the sufferings of militant suffragettes in an account of the British Empire'. He continued, 'In a series of twelve brilliant chapters Doctor Williams has given as complete and balanced an account of present-day Russia as anyone could desire ... it is the most stimulating book upon international reactions and the physical and intellectual being of a State that has been put before the English reader for many years'.<sup>50</sup>

Besides his literary output, Williams had a practical role to play in facilitating British understanding of Russia. As he was permanently resident in St. Petersburg, he was in a good position to introduce new and sometimes important visitors to Russia to the right people, and to make sure that they saw the aspects of Russia that Pares, Williams and their group deemed it important that they see. Helen Szamuely casts Pares in this role, but this seems unlikely since much of Pares's time was spent either travelling in Russia or at home in Liverpool.<sup>51</sup>

Ernest Poole, one of the many American writers who visited St. Petersburg in 1905 in order to witness the Russian Revolution, was given a helping hand by Harold Williams. Poole's sympathies were with the Socialist Revolutionaries, and he had been given a sum of money by some Russians in New York, to give to 'revolutionists' in Russia. He passed the money on to Williams, who promised to see that it would 'go where it belonged'. Poole was under the impression that Williams had 'lived in Russia for years', but in actual fact he can have been in Russia little more than six months at this time. Williams took Poole around the offices of a liberal newspaper, to visit a cartoonist who worked for the underground press, and to the home of a man

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<sup>50</sup> H. G. Wells, 'Russia of the Coming Years' *The Daily News and Leader* 20<sup>th</sup> May 1914, Box 32, Folder 'Reviews of Russia of the Russians by Harold Williams', BAR MS Coll.. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>51</sup> Szamuely, 'British Attitudes to Russia' p. 286.

whom Poole describes as 'a well-known Socialist leader'.<sup>52</sup> When Kellogg Durland, another American writer arrived in Russia to research a book in 1906, Williams took part in his 'adventures'.<sup>53</sup> Durland's book, published in 1907, gave an account of the meeting of the first Duma, of Durland's travels in European Russia, Poland, and the Caucasus.<sup>54</sup>

Arthur Ransome, who came to St. Petersburg in the summer of 1914, was introduced to Williams by Michael Lykiardopoulos, Secretary of the Moscow Arts Theatre. Ransome felt that Williams opened doors for him that he 'might have been years in finding' for himself. The two men became close friends, and in early 1915 were lunching or dining together at least three times a week.<sup>55</sup> It was at Williams's urging that Ransome went to Moscow, where it was felt that he would be able to learn more of Russia than in St. Petersburg. Williams also invited Ransome to Vergezha, the Tyrkov family's estate in the province of Novgorod. This, Ransome commented, 'opened for me, as I think Williams had planned that it should, a window into quite another side of Russian life'.<sup>56</sup>

Vergezha was an important part of what seems to have been Williams's standard introduction to Russia. The Tyrkovs' estate was around five hours away from St. Petersburg by train and then by steamer in summer, or by sledge in winter. The house stood on the banks of the river Volkhov, about half a mile away from the small village associated with it.<sup>57</sup> The Tyrkov family was large, and the inhabitants of Vergezha were constantly changing. Vladimir Tyrkov and his wife were always there, as was their son Arkadii, who had returned to the family estate after twenty years of exile in Siberia. Other sisters, cousins, Ariadna Tyrkova's children, and any

<sup>52</sup> Ernest Poole, *The Bridge - My Own Story* (New York 1940) pp. 116-120.

<sup>53</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1908, Box 1, Folder 10, Samuel N. Harper papers.

<sup>54</sup> Kellogg Durland, *The Red Reign - the true story of an adventurous year in Russia* (New York 1907).

<sup>55</sup> Diary, 1915, Arthur Ransome papers, Brotherton Library, Leeds.

<sup>56</sup> Ransome, *Autobiography* pp. 167-182.

<sup>57</sup> Williams, *Russia of the Russians* pp. 334-352.

number of nieces or nephews regularly came and went. Pares and Harper were regular visitors at Vergezha. Arthur Ransome, who spent some weeks there recuperating from an illness, remembered a long round of traditional Russian celebrations, discussions at the dinner table, music, chess and *gorodki*, a form of skittles.<sup>58</sup> H. G. Wells, who met Williams on his first visit to Russia during the winter of 1913-14, was also invited to Vergezha. In one of his novels, *Joan and Peter*, he recorded some of his impressions.

A sledge drive of ten miles along the ice of a frozen river, a wooden country house behind a great stone portico, and a merry house party that went scampering out after supper to lie on the crisp snow between the tree-boughs; the chanting service in a little green cupolaed church and a pretty village schoolmistress in peasant costume...<sup>59</sup>

Two more examples from *Joan and Peter* show that Wells's treatment of Russia owed quite a lot to the impressions he gained from Williams. In St. Petersburg Wells has two of the characters, Oswald and Peter, being shown around the Duma by an Englishman, Bailey, who knew Russia.

The three visitors watched the proceedings from a little low gallery wherein the speakers were almost inaudible. Bailey pointed out the large proportion of priests in the centre and explained the various party groups; he himself was very sympathetic with the Cadets. They were Anglo-maniac; they idealised the British constitution and thought of a limited monarchy – in the land of extremes...<sup>60</sup>

Peter's assessment of the relationship between Russia and Great Britain bears a striking resemblance to the comparison that Williams makes in the opening chapter of *Russia of the Russians*.

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<sup>58</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 105-114. Ransome, *Autobiography* pp. 179-183. Ransome seems to have had an open invitation to Vergezha – in the front of his diary for 1915 he noted the time of the train from St. Petersburg, and that he was to give them four days warning. Diary, 1915, Arthur Ransome papers.

<sup>59</sup> H. G. Wells, *Joan and Peter* (London 1974, first edition London 1918) p. 269.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 274.

They had a closer parallelism with each other than with France or Italy or the United States or Germany or any of the great political systems of the world. Russia was Britain on land. Britain was Russia in an island and upon all the seas of the globe. One had the dreamy lassitude of an endless land horizon, the other the hard-bitten practicality of the salt seas. One was deep-feeling, gross, and massively illiterate, the other was pervaded by a cockney brightness. But each was trying to express and hold on to some general purpose by means of forms and symbols that were daily becoming more conspicuously inadequate. And each appeared to be moving inevitably towards failure and confusion.<sup>61</sup>

Harold Williams's friendship with H. G. Wells also helps to illustrate his attitude to the increasing need for close Anglo-Russian co-operation around the time of the outbreak of the First World War. Williams obviously valued his friendship with Wells; he had read Wells's 'Anticipations' in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1901, and at the time had felt that Wells wrote 'very wisely on the possible scientific, social and political developments of the near future'.<sup>62</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams felt that Wells's 'English intellectual restlessness' was refreshing for Williams, and that the two men understood each other at 'half a word, at a glance even'.<sup>63</sup> But Wells was also an important contact to have in England, with a great deal of influence on the British public, and Williams was anxious that Wells should see the Anglo-Russian alliance as he himself saw it. Wells, for his part, was keen to encourage a better understanding of Russia in Britain. In late February, after his return to Britain, Wells published an article in the *Daily News* entitled 'Russia and England: A study in contrasts'.<sup>64</sup> In it he touched upon the Jewish question. Williams wrote to congratulate him upon it. 'Several of us simply jumped for joy when we saw your letter in last Saturday's Daily News'. He urged him, however, not to deal with this issue at the expense of others.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Harold Williams to the Lovell-Smiths, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1901. Box 12, Folder 'Letters to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>63</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 112.

<sup>64</sup> David Smith, *H. G. Wells – Desperately Mortal* (New Haven and London, 1986) p. 233.

The Russian people are splendid, but the Russian government is base and one of its chief crimes is that it does perpetually make the Jews fill up the air with their wailing so that it is difficult to hear the great, rich sounds of all the spaces of Russia. They are bound to wail, they have a right to wail, but I am very thankful that you are going to make it possible to hear Russia, too.<sup>65</sup>

In the summer of 1914, Williams and his wife paid a brief visit to England, and spent a weekend with H. G. Wells and his wife at their house at Dunmow. It was in England that they heard the news of the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, about which Williams made what Michael Palmer refers to as 'the perceptive, if not profound comment; '“H'm, this will lead to trouble”.<sup>66</sup> Williams had returned to Russia by the time that country declared war on Germany. He sent a telegram to Wells, which read 'For God's sake appeal England fight and make this the last European war shall be eternally disgraced if we don't'.<sup>67</sup> In a series of letters in the early weeks of the war he expressed the feeling that Wells was 'the one man I should like to be talking with now.'<sup>68</sup> He was anxious to impress upon Wells the improved condition of Russia since the outbreak of war. 'You wouldn't recognise the old querulous Russia', he wrote. 'It's all alive and hard at work and determined to win'. H. G. Wells was writing a series of articles on various aspects of the war in the *Daily Chronicle*, and Williams was pleased with Wells's efforts to rally British spirit in favour of the war. 'I'm delighted to see that you went for all that wrong-headed grocer's pacifism that made the Radical papers so insufferable when the war broke out. It was humiliating to read those numbers of the Daily News and the Chronicle that reached here. Why didn't they dare to see the new world dawning?'<sup>69</sup> Wells's articles, he insisted, were 'real

<sup>65</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Wells, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1914. Wells-1 W 307, H. G. Wells Archive, Rare Book and Special Collections Library, University of Illinois.

<sup>66</sup> Palmer, 'The British Nexus and the Russian Liberals' p. 68. Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 145. Harold Williams to Mrs. Wells, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1914. Wells-1 W 307.

<sup>67</sup> Telegram from Harold Williams to H. G. Wells, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1914, Wells-1 W 307.

<sup>68</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Wells, 9<sup>th</sup> August 1914. Wells-1 W 307.

<sup>69</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Wells, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1914. Wells-1 W 307. See for example Wells's articles 'Looking Ahead – Hands off the People's Food' *The Daily Chronicle* 13<sup>th</sup> August 1914 p. 2, and 'Looking Ahead – The Need of a New Map of Europe Now' *The Daily Chronicle* 15<sup>th</sup> August 1914 p. 2.



fighting'. 'Only please be good to Russia. She really does deserve it this time. Russia is thoroughly civilised at this moment, and full of fine morale'.<sup>70</sup> He also asked Wells to write, if possible, a few lines for a new illustrated weekly called 'The People's War', which hoped to give a lot of space to English affairs. Williams felt it was important to 'keep fresh liberalising English influence streaming in ... a few warm lines from you would be very bracing for the Russians just now'.<sup>71</sup>

H. G. Wells later condemned his attitude and his literary output in these early months of the war as belligerent and misguided, but in early 1914 both he and Williams were convinced of the necessity for and the just nature of 'the war to end war'.<sup>72</sup> No trace of Williams's Tolstoyan belief in non-resistance remained. He was unimpressed with the attitudes of British radicals, who were concerned about the British alliance with Russia. As Morgan Phillips Price put it, 'We were supposed to be crushing Prussian militarism and "making the world safe for democracy", and yet we were in alliance with the most reactionary and tyrannical power in Europe'.<sup>73</sup> For Williams the war had changed the Russian situation entirely. 'The fact is there is no government', he wrote. 'It is the nation that is fighting and fighting nobly for a big unselfish liberty and it's thoroughly petty of English radicals and Labour men to baulk at Russia now.' There were also problems with the Russian radicals, who were 'most at home when they are criticizing or exposing something'. He wanted to get together a round robin of views from English writers about Russia, 'to hearten the Russians who are a little puzzled and [distressed] by English aloofness – which, thank Heaven, is not as bad now – to provoke comments here, and so to keep the ball rolling backwards

<sup>70</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Wells, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1914. Wells-1 W 307.

<sup>71</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Wells, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1914. Wells-1 W 307.

<sup>72</sup> Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *The Time Traveller. The Life of H. G. Wells* (London 1973) p. 298-300.

<sup>73</sup> Morgan Phillips Price, *My Three Revolutions* (London 1969) p. 23, cited in Szamuely, 'British Attitudes to Russia' p. 123.

and forwards. The worst thing that could happen would be any coldness between England and Russia.<sup>74</sup>

These sentiments were echoed in letters to Samuel Harper, in which Williams urged him to come back to Russia as soon as he could.

This is just the place where you ought to be now ... There are lots of things you won't understand later if you don't come now. You wouldn't know Russia. Everyone is cheerful and full of life. Suicides have stopped, and life has grown worth living now that it is worth dying for.<sup>75</sup>

In a long article for the *Daily Chronicle* on Anglo-Russian friendship, Williams made it clear that in his opinion Germany and pro-German sympathies were chiefly responsible not only for any coldness between England and Russia, but also for the worst accounts of Russia's internal situation.

I think this is a point that should not be lost sight of by those Englishmen who are anxious about the internal situation in Russia. German agents are almost certainly making the most of all rumours of defects in Russian internal affairs. It is their way of agitating in England. It is their way of playing on the feelings of reformers, their special method of chilling with doubt our enthusiasm for our new ally ...

Russia is with England heart and soul, in spite of the whispered insinuations of a small pro-German coterie. And Russia is living richly, greatly, the whole nation is being morally regenerated by the unexampled effort and sacrifice, in spite of the persistence of some of those administrative abuses whose maintenance is so dear to the heart of that same coterie of pro-Germans. The atmosphere of Russian public life has never been so healthy and stimulating as it is now. The nation is at the front. The whole nation is at war. That is the cardinal fact in Russian existence at the present moment, and not the malignity or the stupidity of some incorrigible jacks-in-office.<sup>76</sup>

Williams spent the first year of the war following the front, and sending dispatches to the *Daily Chronicle*. Robert Donald had made a request to the Foreign Office in early September 1914 that, when the Russian Government decided whether foreign correspondents were to be

<sup>74</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Wells, 26<sup>th</sup> September 1914, Wells-1 W 307.

<sup>75</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 10<sup>th</sup> November 1914, Box 2, Folder 5, Samuel N. Harper papers.

<sup>76</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 26<sup>th</sup> March 1915 p. 6.

allowed to accompany the Russian army in the field, Harold Williams's name might be put forward.<sup>77</sup> As it turned out only one British correspondent was allowed, and the Foreign Office eventually allocated this responsibility to Pares.<sup>78</sup> Correspondents in the field played an important role in informing British opinion on the Russian contribution to the war. Williams spent the first year of the war travelling 'to and fro between St Petersburg and Warsaw wander[ing] about on the Polish front, occasionally seeing battles'. Ariadna Tyrkova and her children, Sophia (Sonya) and Arkadii, were working in an ambulance column beyond Warsaw. As Williams wrote to Harper, 'There are people who think of other things besides the war, but not in our house'.<sup>79</sup> According to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, the war made 'patriotic enthusiasm' a part of Williams's life.<sup>80</sup> The initial Russian victories in the autumn of 1914 gave him much good material. His early articles for the *Daily Chronicle* are full of enthusiasm for the Russian war effort, the bravery of the Russian soldiers and their victories in the battles around Lemburg (Lviv), Warsaw and Lodz.<sup>81</sup> Any animosity between the Polish population and the Russians had entirely disappeared, he reported; 'Poles treat Russian soldiers like brothers, and the soldiers find difficulty in making the trades-people accept money for the goods they buy ... Formerly it was the Polish habit to refuse to speak to a Russian; now all who can speak Russian gladly'.<sup>82</sup> The home front also received glowing reports. Moscow, 'the heart of Russia', was receiving the wounded soldiers 'as a mother receives her children'. Hospitals were being set up in the most

<sup>77</sup> Robert Donald to Sir Edward Grey, 9<sup>th</sup> September 1914. FO 371/2194.

<sup>78</sup> Pares's experiences at the front are recorded in his *Day by Day with the Russian Army* (London 1915).

<sup>79</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 24<sup>th</sup> February 1915, Box 2, Folder 9, Samuel N. Harper papers. See Sophia's account of her experiences as a Red Cross nurse on the Eastern front, which is dedicated to her stepfather: Sophia Botcharsky and Florida Pier, *They Knew How to Die: being a narrative of the personal experiences of a Red Cross sister on the Russian front* (London, 1931).

<sup>80</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 150.

<sup>81</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 8<sup>th</sup> September 1914, p. 1, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1914, p. 7, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1914, p. 1, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1914, p. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1914, p. 7.

<sup>82</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 15<sup>th</sup> October 1914 p. 3.

unlikely places, and crowds of volunteers offered their services in the relief effort.<sup>83</sup> Williams praised the spirit and strength of character of the Russian soldiers, who were still full of enthusiasm for the war when they returned home maimed and injured.

Splendid fellows they looked, sturdy, well-knit, with firm features and frank and kindly eyes. They have passed through terrible battles, they have seen their comrades fall by scores around them; many are suffering great pain. But they are as simple and unassuming as ever, and they do not dream they are heroes.<sup>84</sup>

And in another account,

Amazing men these soldiers were! I asked some of them about the march. Not one complained. "It was hard", they said; - "but what does it matter so long as we beat the Germans?" Their sturdy cheerfulness puzzled me for a moment, and then I understood. It was a Polish peasant who opened my eyes. He was tramping along beside a baggage-cart, a sharp-featured, elderly fellow in a sheepskin cap and a sheepskin coat. He and his horse and cart had been requisitioned for transport work somewhere near Ivangorod, and here he was, following on without a murmur in the far wandering of war. He did not wear a uniform, but he was proud to be tramping in the great ungainly procession. He had been caught in the torrent. He was one of the embattled millions. When he trudged along over the muddy roads, it was not a mere lonely old Jan from Demblin who was fumbling his way through the dusk. It was the purpose of a great nation sweeping in strength against Germany. He was not alone, and the infantryman, Stepan, from Chernigov, was not alone, nor was the Cossack, Yegor, from the Kuban. This was a nation gone out to war.<sup>85</sup>

In April 1915 Williams went into the Carpathians with a Zemstvo ambulance unit led by Prince Paul Dolgorukov. From here he reported on the positions, routines and morale of the soldiers on this mountainous portion of the front.

Down a mountain path came a file of soldiers, treading heavily, and muddy and weary, with brown greatcoats frayed, torn, and patched. They had been living for days on a mountain top in trenches waterlogged by melting snows and flowing springs.

The heights were so steep that it had been impossible to supply them with warm food, and they had lived on bread, tinned meat, and tea. But they trudged along with a stolid cheerfulness that was amazing.

Russian batteries roared and reverberated from hill to hill; German batteries replied, and the din was multiplied in the throbbing, booming confusion of mountain echoes. Yet here, in the

<sup>83</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 28<sup>th</sup> October 1914, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 5<sup>th</sup> September 1914, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1915, p. 4.

sunny valley, there was infection in the atmosphere, serenity and confidence. That is the true atmosphere of the Carpathian war.<sup>86</sup>

These were powerful images, and as much as they were honest and heart-felt on Williams's part, they were also intended to give his English readers a real sense of the struggle, the commitment and the strengths of their ally. Williams did not subscribe to the popular English view of the unbeatable Russian 'steamroller', which shocked him when he became aware of it during a visit to England.<sup>87</sup> What he attempted to do was offer a detailed, personal account of activities on the Russian front, to encourage real understanding and empathy. When the Russians suffered severe reverses in 1915, Williams reported them honestly, and gave moving descriptions of the plight of the many refugees in Poland. His reportage was not always optimistic, but it did always carry a positive message, of unity, and perseverance. The Polish refugees, he contended, endured their sufferings because they had 'hope of the brighter days that are coming'.<sup>88</sup>

Some Russians were also alive to the possibilities of this kind of reporting as a method of propaganda. In a letter to A. V. Krivoshein, the Minister of Agriculture, in August 1915, Petr Struve recommended Williams as a possible means of reaching British public opinion, and getting whatever message it was felt was currently needed across to the British public.<sup>89</sup> Williams's attitude to the role of journalism in the war is clear in a letter to Paul Dukes in 1917, in which he wrote, 'I have just seen some sensational photos of Russian panic in the Daily Mirror. Nothing could be worse for mutual relations. Surely here at least the censor should act.'<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 27<sup>th</sup> April 1915 p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> Szamuely, 'British Attitudes to Russia' pp. 126-8. Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 170-171.

<sup>88</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 4<sup>th</sup> February 1915 p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Petr Struve to A. V. Krivoshein, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1915. in S. V. Kulikova (ed.), *A. V. Krivoshein i obshestvennyye deiateli v gody pervoi mirovoi voyny: pis'ma A. I. Guchkova, A. D. Protopopova, P. B. Struve*. 5 (St. Petersburg 1994) pp. 52-3. Cited in G. Bongard-Levin (ed.), *Skifskii Roman* (Moscow 1997) p. 462.

<sup>90</sup> Harold Williams to Paul Dukes, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1917, FO 395/106. Paul Dukes (1889-1967), later famous for his work for the British secret service in Russia in 1918-19, was employed as a junior member of staff in the Anglo-

Given the wartime conditions, it was clearly mutual relations, rather than objective reporting, that were Williams's priority.

Harold Williams's dispatches conveyed to the readers of the *Daily Chronicle* his enthusiasm for and belief in the Russian commitment to the war. There was also a growing necessity, however, for clear information in Russia about events on the Western Front, and the British and French role in the war. From the earliest days of the conflict, after the initial enthusiasm that followed the British declaration of war, the British community in St. Petersburg had been inundated with questions about the British contribution to the war. 'Where is the British Navy? What is the British Army doing? When our soldiers are beaten back, when they are killed in hundreds of thousands and ten thousands, what are the English soldiers doing sitting in their trenches?' Meriel Buchanan, the British Ambassador's daughter, found these questions 'very hard to endure in patience, and very hard to answer when the questioners would not understand or try to see the reason and logic in our reply'.<sup>91</sup> When Williams wrote that anti-English talk was confined to 'vapid babblers' and pro-Germans, and that 'Russian correspondents in the West write glowingly of the organisation of our army, the appearance of our men, and their exploits in the field',<sup>92</sup> he was not presenting an entirely truthful picture. Resident Russophiles like Williams and Pares naturally tried to counter any anti-English sentiment and answer any questions about English intentions as best they could with the means they had at their disposal.

It was in this connection, in early 1916, that Williams first made contact with Robert Seton-Watson, an expert on Balkan affairs who had been working to publicise the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak causes in Britain. Williams was aware of Seton-Watson's work, and felt that there

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Russian Commission in 1916-17. See his book *The Story of ST 25: adventure and romance in the secret intelligence service in Red Russia* (London 1938).

<sup>91</sup> Meriel Buchanan, *Ambassador's Daughter* (London 1958) pp. 41-2.

<sup>92</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 26<sup>th</sup> March 1915 p. 6.

was a close connection between it and what he and Pares were trying to do in Russia. The settlement of the Balkan question, in both Williams's and Seton-Watson's estimations, was the chief common interest of Russia and Britain in the war. In his first letter to Seton-Watson, Williams wrote

The nearer we come to this settlement the more I feel the need of getting into touch with you. I have often wanted to meet you because you are a pioneer in the study of the nationalities question in which I am specially interested. But now there is a very practical reason for my asking you to be so very good as to allow me to enter into correspondence with you. We are busy here in trying to make clear the principles of Anglo-Russian political co-operation. The Balkan question is so important in this work that we really very badly need your help. Professor Pares, who knows you well and constantly speaks of you, spends most of his time at the front, and while he is away I do what I can to carry on our common work here.

Seton-Watson had evidently sent some Serbian and Croatian representatives to Russia, where Williams had arranged for them to see a number of important Russians. Williams urged Seton-Watson to come himself though, stressing that his presence would be 'exceedingly useful'.

Russians are very anxious to see and talk with representative Englishmen, and I can think of no Englishman at the present moment who could better explain to the Russians than you could our point of view on certain questions of vital interest to both countries. If you could come I should not only be personally delighted to see you, but it would be a great pleasure for me to arrange for your meeting the leading public men here and in Moscow.<sup>93</sup>

In May, Bernard Pares went to England, and saw Seton-Watson several times. He urged him to come to Russia, to help with the Anglo-Russian propaganda effort. Samuel Hoare, who was then organising British intelligence in Russia, was also keen. They particularly wanted someone who knew 'the ins and outs of Austria-Hungary'. This plan seems to have been aborted by the British Foreign Office, however, on the grounds that Seton-Watson's presence in Russia

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<sup>93</sup> Harold Williams to Robert Seton-Watson, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1916, SEW/17/31/1, Seton Watson papers, School of Slavonic and East European Studies.

'might create the impression that the British Government was favourable to the Yugoslav cause, and arouse undue hopes in certain quarters'.<sup>94</sup>

There was also a growing official recognition of the problem of Russian perceptions of the British and their role in the war. Sir John Foster Fraser, who visited Russia in the summer of 1915, was alarmed at 'the widespread feeling that France and England were not doing their share in the war'; a feeling that resulted, he felt, largely from ignorance. It was generally felt in the British Foreign Office that some means of placing more British news in the Russian newspapers was desirable.<sup>95</sup> Sir John Foster Fraser's suggestion was that a capable journalist should be sent to Russia, to write special articles dealing with British involvement in the war, and to place them in the Russian press. Harold Williams's name was mentioned in this connection.<sup>96</sup> Sir George Buchanan, however, was doubtful about the efficacy of employing any one journalist. In his opinion until the British and French were in a position to undertake a 'serious offensive' in the west, there was little that could be done to convince the Russian public that the British were 'rendering Russia the assistance on which she had counted in her hour of trial'. He also had specific objections to Williams.

I am of opinion that it will be waste of money sending out Harold Williams or indeed anyone else as I do not see how he can possibly influence press. Williams moreover is married to a Russian lady of very advanced views and as reported in my telegram No. 53 of February 13<sup>th</sup> 1912 had his papers seized by police on her account. Though matter was subsequently arranged he may possibly be viewed with suspicion.

Considering that the Russian losses numbered four million men, it was natural that they

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<sup>94</sup> Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe* pp. 173-4.

<sup>95</sup> Robert Cecil to Sir George Buchanan, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1915, and report by Sir John Foster Fraser, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1915, FO 271/2566.

<sup>96</sup> Report by Sir John Foster Fraser, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1915, Robert Cecil to Sir George Buchanan, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1915, FO 271/2566.



should consider British losses as 'trifling'.<sup>97</sup> Buchanan preferred to wait and see what effect the articles being prepared for propaganda purposes by John Buchan might have when translated and placed in the Russian press. Officials at Wellington House, the Government's organisation for propaganda in allied and neutral countries, acknowledged that without Buchanan's say-so the plan could not go ahead, but stated that in their view

there is the widest difference between the preparation of ... articles in England by people who are not in daily constant touch with the Russian people, and with the Russian editors, and the kind of relation which would spring up if a representative on the spot were listening to Russian gossip, reading Russian papers as they appear, lunching and dining with Russian editors and preparing on the spot topical articles or sending us instructions for the preparation either of telegraphic or postal matter. It is the second approach which is advocated by every authority on Russia whom we have consulted at this time in view of the present state of opinion in Russia.<sup>98</sup>

By the beginning of 1916, Buchanan appeared to have come around to the idea of bringing someone out to Russia, not purely to write articles for the Russian press, but to direct propaganda of all kinds. This sort of work was now taking up a lot of his own time.<sup>99</sup> On January 22<sup>nd</sup> Arthur Ransome submitted to Buchanan a plan he had drawn up in consultation with Robert Bruce Lockhart, the Consul General at Moscow, for a 'strictly unofficial news agency', which would place news about the British role in the war in the Russian press. They envisaged this organisation being headed by Michael Lykiardopoulos, a mutual friend and the secretary of the Moscow Arts Theatre. Lykiardopoulos was already well known to many Russian newspaper editors, and it was felt that he might earn their trust more readily than an Englishman.<sup>100</sup> This plan was approved by both Buchanan and the Foreign Office, but became bound up in the plans for establishing some kind of propaganda outfit in Petrograd. Buchanan was anxious to have

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<sup>97</sup> Sir George Buchanan to the FO, 7<sup>th</sup> August and 9<sup>th</sup> August 1915, FO 371/2566.

<sup>98</sup> Schuster to Montgomery, 13<sup>th</sup> August 1914, FO 371/2566.

<sup>99</sup> Robert Cecil to Buchanan, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1916, Buchanan to Cecil, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1916, Cecil to John Buchan, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1916, Buchanan to Cecil, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1916, FO 371/2824.

<sup>100</sup> Ransome, *Autobiography* p. 189.

Maurice Baring involved, but Baring was occupied elsewhere in war work and would not come. In the absence of Baring, Buchanan suggested Hugh Walpole, a young and successful novelist who had spent some time with the Russian Red Cross. He also put forward the name of Major C. J. M. Thornhill, who had been in Russia since May 1915 doing intelligence work. Pares had suggested Williams's name to him, but Buchanan was still sceptical; '... though I think Thornhill may with advantage seek his assistance on account of his great knowledge of Russians I do not consider it would be advisable to give him leading role on account of trouble which he got into with police some years ago'. Buchanan consulted Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, who had no objection to Williams serving in a subordinate role. Williams had offered his services gratis, but added that if he found the work interfered with his work for the *Daily Chronicle* he might require remuneration.<sup>101</sup>

As a result of these negotiations, two organisations were set up; the news agency at Moscow, and a more official British propaganda organisation, initially known as the Anglo-Russian bureau, in Petrograd. Although their nature and functions were similar, in character they were very different. Walpole arrived in Petrograd in February 1916, to head the operation. He was to work in conjunction with both Williams and Thornhill.<sup>102</sup> The bureau's first office consisted of one room in a building on the Morskaia, which Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams described with some contempt.

The British Committee which was to serve as a link between two great nations was housed in a small room where the best part of the furniture was a large bronze bedstead covered with a pink silk eiderdown. It was discreetly hidden by a screen.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Cecil to Buchanan, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1916, Buchan to Cecil, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1916, Cecil to Buchan, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1916, Buchanan to Cecil, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1916, Buchanan to Cecil 31<sup>st</sup> January 1916. FO 371/2824.

<sup>102</sup> Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole* (London 1997, first edition 1952) p. 151. For accounts of the establishment of the Anglo-Russian Bureau see also Palmer, 'The British Nexus and the Russian Liberals' pp. 199-227, and Keith Neilson, 'Joy Rides?: British Intelligence and Propaganda in Russia, 1914-1917' *Historical Journal* 24 4 (1981) pp. 885-906.

<sup>103</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* (London 1935) p. 168.

The bureau was to have responsibility for 'counteracting German propaganda in Russia and supplying the Russians with correct information about the aims and activities of Great Britain in the war and about the life and institutions of the British Empire.'<sup>104</sup> After surveying the work that needed to be done, the workload was divided not particularly evenly between the three men; Thornhill was to continue the work he had been doing with the Russian army, disseminating information and placing articles in the army papers. Williams was to deal with the Russian side of things; getting in touch with editors and arranging for the placement of suitable material in their papers. Walpole was to handle contacts with England, and it was arranged that he should return to England at regular intervals, in order both to keep in touch with the Foreign Office, and to collect suitable publicity materials.<sup>105</sup> Arthur Ransome also appears to have been helping Williams, who had 'far too much to do', voluntarily in Walpole's absence. He was at the Bureau's offices every day, and the two men were 'getting through arrears as hard as we can go'.<sup>106</sup> Walpole returned from his first visit home in April 1914, and found that a great deal had already been done.

Mr. Williams had, during my absence, worked extremely hard at the Russian end of our business. He had established a complete connection, both personal and official, with all the Russian journals. They, on their side, showed themselves extremely anxious to do everything in their power to assist us.

A staff of translators were already at work translating British war novels, such as Ian Hay's *The First Hundred Thousand* and Boyd Cable's *Between the Lines*. Articles on British subjects were being placed in the Russian papers. Major Thornhill was 'doing fine work in the

<sup>104</sup> The Anglo-Russian Commission, report by Hugh Walpole, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>105</sup> Report on British Propaganda Work in Russia, January – July 1916, by Hugh Walpole, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1916, FO 395/25.

<sup>106</sup> Arthur Ransome to Edith Ransome, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1916. Arthur Ransome papers.

Russian army, visiting the fronts, distributing great numbers of copies of Chukovsky's book on "The English Tommy", and getting article after article on English subjects into the army papers.'<sup>107</sup> A Captain Bromhead had begun touring the provinces and the Russian fronts showing English war films, in conjunction with the cinema committee of Wellington House. His films were apparently 'immensely appreciated and were asked for again and again'.<sup>108</sup> By the summer Walpole was able to report considerable progress, and pronounced himself confident that 'every Anglo-Russian question that arises in Russia comes to us'. Williams, he reported to the Foreign Office, had been indispensable, and 'by his exceptional Russian experience, his perfect knowledge of the Russian language, his friendship with every type of Russian, is quite invaluable in this propaganda work'.<sup>109</sup>

Popular British propaganda pamphlets on subjects such as 'Gallipoli', 'Edith Cavell', and 'What we have done in the war' were also being circulated. Harold Williams drew up several memoranda on this subject for the Foreign Office, detailing the sort of material that was required. Episodes in the war, which were unlikely to be dealt with at length in the newspapers on the grounds that they were out of date, could be covered to good effect in cheap pamphlet form. There was a great ignorance in Russia of many of the most dramatic episodes in which the British had been involved.

So much has been done on our side of which the average Russian has only the vaguest conception. The magnificent story of the Gallipoli struggle, for instance was very imperfectly described in the Russian Press at the time and it is hardly likely that newspapers will return to it now that it has passed into history. Of such brilliant episodes of the war as the retreat from Mons and the fight of the Canadians at Ypres the Russian public are almost entirely ignorant. The work of our fleet has not yet been brought to the popular imagination in Russia. As to our munitions effort, our

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<sup>107</sup> Report on British Propaganda Work in Russia, January – July 1916, by Hugh Walpole. 25<sup>th</sup> July 1916, FO 395/25.

<sup>108</sup> On Bromhead's film tours see M. L. Sanders, 'British Film Propaganda in Russia, 1916-1918' *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* Vol. 3, No. 2, (1983) pp. 117-129.

<sup>109</sup> Report on British Propaganda Work in Russia, January – July 1916, by Hugh Walpole. 25<sup>th</sup> July 1916, FO 395/25.

voluntary recruiting system and our Red Cross organisation the majority of Russians are extremely ill-informed.<sup>110</sup>

Descriptive pamphlets dealing with episodes in the war such as 'With the Machine-Guns in Gallipoli' might reach a wide circulation in the army, he concluded, while argumentative pamphlets, dealing with the causes of the war, diplomacy, economics and the possible terms of peace would obtain a more limited circulation in the monthly journals. They should also be supplied to all Russian newspapers for reference purposes, for use when Russians were composing their own articles. These pamphlets were of equal value, but were needed in different quantities.<sup>111</sup> If pamphlets were available at around the same time as Bromhead's films were being shown, they would help to extend and deepen interest. This interest might then impact upon the newspapers, which were generally 'shy of trying to create a new interest', and preferred 'to make their appeal to an interest already existing.' A public enlightened on English affairs would demand from the newspapers a more comprehensive news service.<sup>112</sup>

Despite his initial condition that he would take remuneration if the work took up too much of his time, Harold Williams never received any payment for the work he did for the Anglo-Russian bureau, or for the British Embassy more generally. This was not so unusual in the context of the war, as many people volunteered their services for war work for which they were particularly trained or skilled. It might also be true that it was not appropriate for Williams to take money for the work he was doing, given that he did in fact have a full time position with the *Daily Chronicle*. In the light of what we know of Williams's character however it seems natural that he should volunteer for work which served a cause about which he was passionate; in this

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<sup>110</sup> 'Publication of English war literature in Russia' by Harold Williams, FO 371/2824.

<sup>111</sup> Memorandum on pamphlets, by Harold Williams, FO 395/25.

<sup>112</sup> 'Publication of English war literature in Russia' by Harold Williams, FO 371/2824.

case not only the cause of the British war effort, but of close Anglo-Russian co-operation. As

Pares later wrote to R. W. Seton-Watson,

Williams is a funny fellow. He is absolutely altruistic, and whether financed himself or not financed there are certain things which are his life's work and which he always goes on doing, with unlimited readiness to help and collaborate with others.<sup>113</sup>

The work of the Anglo-Russian bureau fitted neatly into the work Williams was already doing, through his journalism and other means, to further the cause of Anglo-Russian understanding. In this spirit he threw his enthusiasm and energies into the enterprise, and seems to have taken on a large proportion of the workload himself.

The initial success of the Bureau led to an expansion of its activities. In the summer of 1916, when Hugh Walpole made his second trip back to England, he brought with him proposals for a considerable expansion of the activities of the bureau. George Buchanan was in complete agreement with Walpole's proposals, and cabled to Sir Edward Grey to this effect. If the bureau were to prove effective, he insisted, both the staff and the premises needed to be enlarged, and the 'field of operations extended'. He acknowledged the 'self-sacrificing' efforts of Walpole, Williams and Thornhill, but stated that it was impossible for them to do any permanent good with the limited means at their disposal. The expansion would mean a considerable increase in expenditure, but Buchanan assured Grey that he would not support the scheme were he not 'convinced that this expenditure is absolutely necessary if we are to attain the ends which we have in view'.<sup>114</sup> Walpole himself stressed the importance of being able to answer the demands presented to them by Russians in an organised fashion. 'We are now incessantly bombarded with urgent questions in connection with the deeper development of our propaganda', he wrote, 'and

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<sup>113</sup> Bernard Pares to R. W. Seton-Watson, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1921, SEW/17/20/1.

<sup>114</sup> Buchanan to Grey, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1916, FO 395/25.

most of these questions we are compelled at present to leave on one side'. What was needed were larger offices, suitable for the reception of Russian guests, and a member of staff free to devote themselves to this duty. Three or four rooms in total would be ideal, and the offices should be central, with 'an imposing appearance'. The bureau had been operating in temporary premises on Admiralty Quay, but eventually suitable larger offices were found on the Fontanka. At least one addition to the staff would be necessary immediately, with the possibility of two more later. 'As a model of what we should finally wish to present', Walpole wrote, 'we have in mind the admirable Maison de la Press in Paris'.<sup>115</sup>

The autumn of 1916 marked the zenith of the Anglo-Russian bureau, or at least, it did so in the estimate of Walpole, Buchanan and the Foreign Office at the time. In October Walpole reported to the Foreign Office that, 'the Bureau is simply buzzing. This isn't mere optimism – it is really true.'<sup>116</sup> In November he made plans to make another visit to England; 'the place here is now in such splendid swing that I can leave it for a month with confidence'.<sup>117</sup> A favourable article about the bureau in *Russkoe Slovo* had led to a mountain of correspondence. A committee had been formed, which met weekly on Tuesday evenings, and consisted of the bureau's staff and a number of prominent members of St. Petersburg's British community. Two permanent additions had been made to the staff; Denis Garstin, who was in charge of military propaganda, and issued a weekly military bulletin as well as undertaking duties such as the reception of visitors at the bureau, and D. Dickinson, who acted as secretary. Williams was in touch with the editor of *Russkoe Slovo*, who had promised that a regular space would be allotted to material sent to him by the bureau. He was negotiating with a number of other papers. The issue of finding the right material was under discussion, and the possibility of sending a member of staff to the FO to

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<sup>115</sup> Memorandum by Hugh Walpole on the expansion of the Anglo-Russian Bureau, FO 395/25.

<sup>116</sup> Walpole to Montgomery, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1916, FO 395/25.

<sup>117</sup> Walpole to Montgomery, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1916, FO 395/25.

advise on this was mooted.<sup>118</sup> It was felt that the material should include information on art, literature, and 'the varied aspects of English life'. Garstin had a scheme for encouraging British firms to advertise in the Russian press, which he felt would promote trade and increase goodwill, and might also stimulate debate about the relative merits of British and German produce.<sup>119</sup>

In November the title of the bureau was changed to the 'Anglo-Russian Commission', both in an attempt to give the organisation an 'official tone', and in order to avoid the unhappy associations of the title 'bureau', which in Russia was usually applied to 'typewriting and translating offices, establishments where domestic servants were engaged and the businesses of undertakers'.<sup>120</sup> A library of war and other English literature was established at the Commission's offices, for the use of Russian visitors. The Commission also began to host its first lunches, a weekly event that Walpole regarded as being 'of the very first importance' in raising the Commission's profile.<sup>121</sup> Speeches were given, by Buchanan at the British Flag Society, and by Williams at the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce; the latter on 'Why the English are interested in Russia'.<sup>122</sup> Williams and Garstin had also established a connection with the French publicity bureau in Petrograd, to see how far the two organisations could work together. Co-operation was also established with the Anglo-Russian Society (the successor of the British Flag Society) run by Pavel Vinogradov. Williams and Walpole were members of this organisation's

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<sup>118</sup> Walpole to Montgomery, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1916, and minutes of a meeting of the Anglo-Russian Bureau held on 10<sup>th</sup> October, enclosed in this file. Also Walpole to Montgomery, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1916 FO 395/25.

<sup>119</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the Anglo-Russian Bureau held on 24<sup>th</sup> October. Memorandum by Garstin on advertising campaign, FO 395/105.

<sup>120</sup> Minutes of meetings of the Anglo-Russian Bureau, 14<sup>th</sup> November 1916 and 21<sup>st</sup> November 1916, FO 395/25.

<sup>121</sup> Walpole to Montgomery, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1916, FO 395/25.

<sup>122</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the Anglo-Russian Commission, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1917, and enclosed list of articles published in the Russian press, FO 395/105.



sub-committee for propaganda. The society was providing help with the translation and publication of English texts.<sup>123</sup>

The increasingly high profile, official and public nature of the bureau did not please everyone. Lykiardopoulos and Lockhart, who had been quietly working at their bureau in Moscow since May 1916, sent in a report on their progress to the Foreign Office in October. This report emphasised the clear differences in approach adopted by the Petrograd and Moscow institutions. The Moscow bureau, which was in charge of distributing news to the provincial press, had, Lockhart wrote, 'been working quietly and unobtrusively', and had 'thoroughly justified its existence'. Lykiardopoulos's report laid stress on the necessity of not advertising the existence of this propaganda work. There was no point, he argued, in sending out circular material or articles which would be seen by the Russians as 'booming' or advertisement. 'The Russians', he wrote, 'as I can assure you by my own experience as a Russian journalist, are afraid of and deeply mistrust every sort of official or semi-official press agency work.' It was imperative that the work be kept as quiet as possible. It was also important that each newspaper should get its own news. To deal with this Lykiardopoulos had adopted a system of producing three bulletins of news, A, B and C. If a newspaper was the only one in a provincial town it would receive bulletin A. If there were two, one would receive A and the other B, and so on.

What we must be very careful of is not to awaken a mistrust or wrong suspicion about our intentions and under no conditions must the Russians think we are trying to win their attention or are in need of it.<sup>124</sup>

Although Lykiardopoulos was talking about the work of his own bureau in Moscow, there

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<sup>123</sup> Minutes of meetings of Anglo-Russian Commission, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1916 and 5<sup>th</sup> December 1916, and report by Walpole on progress of the Anglo-Russian Commission September 1916-January 1917, FO 395/25.

<sup>124</sup> Lockhart to Buchanan, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1916, transmitted to the FO, and enclosed report by Lykiardopoulos, FO 395/25.

was clearly a negative comparison in his eyes with the official bureau in Petrograd. In fact, Lockhart, in transmitting the report to Buchanan and to the Foreign Office, had omitted a paragraph in Lykiardopoulos's report which referred to the article in *Russkoe Slovo* about the bureau, with which Walpole had been so pleased. It is unclear what derogatory remarks this paragraph made, but Lockhart admitted that this article had 'not been very favourably received in Moscow and excited a certain amount of sarcastic comment amongst both Russians and Englishmen here'.<sup>125</sup>

Ultimately the Moscow bureau was the subordinate body, however, and it became clear that both Buchanan and the Foreign Office preferred the methods adopted in Petrograd. There was some discussion of appointing an Englishman as head of the Moscow bureau, although it was admitted that this must be done with tact, as Lykiardopoulos was 'an energetic man who has done very good work'. The decision was eventually taken to phase the Moscow bureau out, with Lykiardopoulos being retained as a press agent to the Moscow consulate. The Petrograd bureau would take over the supply of news to the provincial press. Lockhart, perhaps surprisingly, raised no objection when this matter was raised, and agreed that it would be better to centralise the work in Petrograd.<sup>126</sup> In a meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> October / 7<sup>th</sup> November in Petrograd, Buchanan raised the question of the relative merits of what he termed the 'two schools of propaganda – the German or "subterranean" method, and the English or "open" method.' He personally was in favour of continuing as they were, but wanted to hear the views of the committee. Those present were overwhelmingly against the former method; Wilton dismissed it as 'un-English' and impossibly costly, and Walpole stressed the English reputation for being open and above board. It was

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<sup>125</sup> Lockhart to Buchanan, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1916, transmitted to the FO, and enclosed report by Lykiardopoulos, FO 395/25.

<sup>126</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the Anglo-Russian Bureau, 19<sup>th</sup> October 1916, and notes on this file, FO 395/25, Minutes of meetings of the Anglo-Russian Commission, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1917 and 16<sup>th</sup> January 1917, and Buchanan to Walpole 17<sup>th</sup> January 1917, FO 395/105.

minuted that 'the committee, as presently constituted, would probably find themselves hopelessly lost if called upon to adopt German methods'. It was unclear where the suggestion of changing tactics had come from, but there was a vague idea that it had come from Moscow.<sup>127</sup>

This row over the nature of the Petrograd bureau and the success of its overt methods of propaganda was echoed years later in the memoirs of many of those involved. Robert Bruce Lockhart criticised the Petrograd bureau implicitly, if not outright, when he described its 'special offices' and 'proper staff'. The Moscow bureau, under his control, was run by contrast 'without any flourish of trumpets and without the knowledge of the outside world. In this way I was able to bring considerable influence to bear on the local newspapers without their feeling that they were being inundated with official propaganda'.<sup>128</sup> In his autobiography, Arthur Ransome described how the 'Anglo-Russian Bureau that I had planned to be a deliberately unobtrusive supply of English news for the Russians, grew under Walpole and Thornhill to be a more and more expensive and obvious propaganda bureau employing a large staff. It was useful as a club for friendly Russians who, naturally, paid no subscription. It organised a certain amount of hospitality and in the end became a joke'.<sup>129</sup> Both Walpole and Ransome's biographers accept the verdict that the bureau developed, under Walpole's influence, into 'something grievously like a joke', and that its 'utility to the war effort, or to Anglo-Russian understanding, was nil'.<sup>130</sup> The work of the bureau was also the cause of a quarrel between Ransome and Walpole, as early as June 1916, which lasted a number of years. Ransome had apparently written an article for the *Daily News* that made it clear that he did not take the bureau very seriously. Walpole told Ransome that the article would upset Williams, since it contradicted a report they had sent to the

<sup>127</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the Anglo-Russian Bureau, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1916, FO 395/25.

<sup>128</sup> Robert Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent* (London 2002, first edition 1932) p. 144.

<sup>129</sup> Ransome, *Autobiography* p. 190.

<sup>130</sup> Rupert Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole* (London 1952) p. 151. Hugh Brogan, *The Life of Arthur Ransome* (London 1984) pp. 107-8.

Foreign Office. There followed an argument of 'the most childish kind', with Ransome attempting to remove the paper in order that Williams might not see it, and Walpole screaming at him to put it down.<sup>131</sup>

At any rate, the bureau was, in 1916 at least, considered to be a success by the Foreign Office and by most of those involved. It is difficult to measure its success in real terms, but the regular lists compiled by Paul Dukes from the Russian press showed that the Commission's bulletins were being used, and that an increasing number of articles on English subjects were being published. These covered topics such as the 'spirit of the English nation', the careers of Asquith and Lloyd George, the 'real causes of the war', and the increase in female labour in Britain.<sup>132</sup> In terms of the dissemination of pamphlets and books there was no real way of registering exact results. The distribution of this material could only be regarded as 'bread cast upon the waters'.<sup>133</sup> It is clear that officials at the Foreign Office were impressed with the development of Walpole's bureau. In August 1916 Sir Edward Grey sent a message to Buchanan expressing his appreciation of the 'zeal and ability' with which Walpole and his associates were carrying on the work assigned to them. In the notes to Walpole's July report on the progress of the work, it was minuted that the Russian bureau might possibly serve as a valuable model for similar British organisations in the countries with which Britain was allied; France, Italy and Japan.<sup>134</sup> When Buchanan and Walpole asked for more money for their enterprise, it was instantly granted.<sup>135</sup> In a later report on the Commission's activities, Walpole wrote that

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<sup>131</sup> Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole* p. 154, Brogan, *The Life of Arthur Ransome* p. 109. Entry for 1<sup>st</sup> June, Diary, 1916, Arthur Ransome papers.

<sup>132</sup> List of press extracts relating to England, November and December 1916, FO 395/105.

<sup>133</sup> The Anglo-Russian Commission, report by Hugh Walpole, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>134</sup> Grey to Buchanan, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1916, and notes on this file, FO 395/25.

<sup>135</sup> Walpole to Buchanan, 31<sup>st</sup> August 1916, FO 395/25.

It may be said with some truth that at no moment during the war was England more popular in Russia than during the last months of 1916. There were no anti-English articles in the press, the old complaints that England was doing nothing had entirely ceased and the one question everywhere discussed was whether, owing to the suspected policy of the ancien regime, Russia herself would be able to do her part.<sup>136</sup>

The work of the Commission also merited attention in the German newspapers. An article by Wolfgang Sorge which appeared in the *Berliner Lokal Anzeiger* on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1916, launched a lengthy attack on the Commission, and an even lengthier attack on Harold Williams. It is unclear who exactly Sorge was, but it seems he had a reasonable knowledge of the ins and outs of the bureau and of Williams and his social circle.

The manager of the Fraternity Bureau is a well-known type of International Petersburg society – Herr Williams, who in his capacity of English agent has for twenty years worked against the Russian Government. Big, grey, black-eyed, this Herr Williams impressed people wherever he appeared, and he really appeared everywhere. In the card-playing clubs he became acquainted with the lebewelt, at the races the other half of the lebewelt and at the library with the students. He sought the society of all kinds of reds and revolutionaries, associated with Miliukoff, made clear to him England's interest in the freeing of the Tsar empire and offered him, so to say, the choices of a ministerial portfolio. His telephone number was entered on the table calendars of everybody, he advised always, helped always, and knew why he did it.

Williams had 'knocked about the whole world' before coming to Russia, the article continued. Upon his arrival in St. Petersburg he lost no time in associating himself with the British Embassy, and with their money and contacts behind him, 'gladly supported every plot against the Russian government until, some time ago, English policy reversed and it became possible to betray former friends to new allies'.

Since then this English knower-of-Russia has led a still darker coloured existence and his new task of convincing the Russians of the overwhelming greatness of England will no doubt appear to him to be wonderfully harmless. However, he has risen in esteem, and the English Ambassador, who formerly avoided the society of this being of somewhat doubtful past, now lets himself be seen very often in the new Information Bureau as, so to say, "the great attraction" which is to draw the

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<sup>136</sup> Report on the work of the Anglo-Russian Commission, February to June 1917, by Hugh Walpole, FO 395/106.

guests. Thus do the times change. Perhaps noone marks it so much as that Williams and company who always sow discord even when they want to win friendship.<sup>137</sup>

Sorge was quite right in saying that Williams was in *de facto* charge of the Commission. By 1917 Walpole and Williams were acting as joint directors (although Williams's services were still voluntary), and Walpole's frequent absences in England meant that Williams shouldered much of the responsibility. Walpole commented in a report in 1917 that there was inevitably some overlap in the two men's functions, but that 'when important decisions have to be taken personal friendship between the present directors facilitates mutual understanding'.<sup>138</sup> Walpole's biographer, Rupert Hart-Davis, contends that any success the bureau had was down to Williams. In letters to his mother Walpole gave frequent indications that he felt out of his depth making decisions about matters he really did not know enough about. His knowledge of Russian was still elementary. Walpole 'would never have been able to make even a show of efficiency had it not been for the tact, experience and kindness of Williams ... the only member of the party who ever knew what was happening anywhere, or what was likely to happen'.<sup>139</sup> Hart Davis wonders that Williams never once attempted to usurp Walpole's position as titular head of the enterprise, but even without considering the objections of the Foreign Office, this would hardly have been in character.

Sorge makes another perceptive point, however, when he comments that George Buchanan, who had previously 'avoided' Williams, had now made him something of a favourite. There was a marked change in Buchanan's attitude to Williams, and this seems to have come about during 1916 when the two men were brought into closer touch with each other through the work of the Commission. In 1915, as we have seen, Buchanan was not keen for Williams to be

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<sup>137</sup> Translation of article from the *Berliner Lokal Anzeiger*, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1916, FO 395/25.

<sup>138</sup> The Anglo-Russian Commission, report by Hugh Walpole, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>139</sup> Hart-Davis, *Hugh Walpole* p. 151.

given official work, and he opposed the idea of giving him a senior position in the bureau on the grounds of his 1911 encounter with the Russian police, and his connections with people of 'advanced views'. Bernard Pares suggests that Buchanan and Williams had not been properly introduced until he arranged for them to meet each other in February 1916. 'Sir George became very much attached to this gentle and selfless man', and when Williams was troubled by the Russian police again Buchanan 'took the matter up warmly and wrote to Sazonov, asking for an assurance that 'Williams should no longer be worried, as he was very necessary to him'. According to Pares, Williams became 'the chief source of information on Russian internal politics for the British Embassy'.<sup>140</sup> This statement is difficult to verify from the Foreign Office records, especially because few of the papers of the St. Petersburg embassy survive. Buchanan makes scant reference to any of his subordinates in his own memoirs, but he did once say in a statement to the Foreign Office that Williams had 'always held himself at my disposal'.<sup>141</sup> When Williams was taking a holiday after illness in the middle of 1917, Buchanan wrote to the Foreign Office asking for some remuneration for Bernard Pares, since during Williams's absence he was the only person through whom Buchanan could have 'any sort of contact with extreme parties'.<sup>142</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams was always amused by the way in which Williams would put off any other work he was doing if the ambassador required his services. She could tell by the tone of his voice and the change in his expression, when he was talking to Buchanan on the telephone.<sup>143</sup> Samuel Hoare's analysis of the relationship is perhaps the most interesting. 'At first', he writes,

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<sup>140</sup> Pares, *My Russian Memoirs* pp. 366-367.

<sup>141</sup> Sir George Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia and other Diplomatic Memories* 2 vols. (London 1923). A note by Sir George Buchanan to the FO of 8<sup>th</sup> September 1919, cited in a letter from Robert Vansittart to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 9<sup>th</sup> November 1932. Box 7, Folder 'U-V', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>142</sup> Buchanan to the FO, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>143</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 164.

‘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.’<sup>144</sup> According to Hoare, Williams managed to gradually propel Buchanan into a wider circle of acquaintances. He describes how, in late 1916, Williams persuaded Buchanan to make the acquaintance of ‘some of the more moderate liberal leaders’. The men in question, Miliukov and Maklakov, were to attend one of the lunches held by the Anglo-Russian Commission.

The Ambassador was at first horrified at the idea of meeting men whom he regarded as revolutionaries ... Buchanan came to the luncheon in a mood that would have been justified by his entry into a secret conclave of terrorists. Throughout the proceedings he was obviously ill at ease with politicians whom he did not understand. He had lived so continuously in conservative and official circles that all parties of the left, whether they were Cadets or Social Revolutionaries, seemed to him to be equally dangerous. It was not surprising that a luncheon held in such an atmosphere of suspicion was not a social success. But Williams had succeeded in bringing Buchanan into touch with the outer world, and the contact once made, developed into an intercourse that, as the months passed, became essential to any British ambassador.<sup>145</sup>

Hoare himself had relied heavily on Williams for his early contacts in Russia. He had arrived in March 1916 when he had been sent out to assess the intelligence work that was being done there. He had read *Russia of the Russians* before his arrival, and recalled that he ‘hastened to make [Williams’s] acquaintance and ask his advice’.<sup>146</sup> From July of that year he took over the intelligence mission from Thornhill, who had been made military attaché at the British Embassy.<sup>147</sup>

Towards the end of 1916, Williams’s influence began to extend even further. As we have seen, the autumn of 1916 was considered by all at the Anglo-Russian Commission to be a high

<sup>144</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare, *The Fourth Seal – the end of a Russian chapter* (London 1930) p. 241.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. pp. 241-2.

<sup>146</sup> Draft by Samuel Hoare from his unpublished memoir ‘A Watchman Does His Rounds’ Box 26, Folder – ‘Manuscripts by unidentified authors (2)’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>147</sup> J. A. Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare. A Political Biography* (London 1977) pp. 43-47.



point for English influence on the Russian press and the Russian people. However, there were evidently growing problems in the higher ranks of the Russian government. There was increasing concern amongst the Duma members and in the press about purportedly pro-German influences that were acting upon the Tsarina; the monk Rasputin, the Prime Minister and from July Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sturmer, the Minister of the Interior, Protopopov, and a 'financial adventurer', Manassein-Manuilov.<sup>148</sup> In November 1916, at the height of the controversy about these 'dark forces', Harold Williams began a correspondence with Lloyd George, who was at that time Minister of Munitions. The two men must have met in the summer of that year, when Williams was in England attending the Cambridge Summer Meeting on Russia. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams recalls Williams's concern at the apparent obsession he observed in England with the 'steam-roller', and his worry that a sudden disillusionment about the strength of the Russian army might turn feeling in England against Russia, preventing any real rapprochement or understanding.<sup>149</sup> It seems likely that Williams had expressed his concern about the way internal politics were developing in Russia.

In his first letter, written on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1916, Williams remarks, 'you were kind enough when I was in England to ask me to write to you occasionally on the state of affairs in Russia. The present seems, for many reasons, to be a fitting moment to do so'.<sup>150</sup> Williams was plainly anxious to impress upon Lloyd George the danger represented by the pressure on the Russian war effort from several internal sources. The first of these was the severe difficulty of

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<sup>148</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, *From Liberty to Brest Litovsk: The First Year of the Russian Revolution* (London 1919) p. 2. Pares, *A History of Russia* pp. 479-486.

<sup>149</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 170-1.

<sup>150</sup> The first two of these three letters are typescript copies, with no signature or author on them. Michael Palmer identifies them as being from Williams, and it seems almost certain that he is correct. Both are written in the same style as the third letter, which is signed, and they deal with the same issues, often using the same phrases. Moreover, in the third letter Williams begins with 'since I last wrote to you', a clear indication that this is not his first letter to Lloyd George. See Palmer, 'The British Nexus and the Russian Liberals' p. 136.

procuring food, particularly in the towns, and the ridiculously high prices associated with this. 'It is painful to see the meat lines, the bread lines and the sugar lines in Petrograd and Moscow'. There had already been riots and anti-war processions in Moscow, and Williams was worried that the food situation might lead to more serious trouble during the winter. However, he stressed that the food trouble was only the occasion for these disorders. 'The real cause of the disturbance was the provocatory work of suspicious characters who for all appearance were agents of the Secret Police ... the obvious conclusion from the whole of this curious episode is that there are people in the Government who are interested in provoking disturbances in order to have an excuse for making peace'. Williams expressed his dissatisfaction with the actions of senior figures in the Russian government, particularly Stürmer, the Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs – 'a more corrupt, cynical, incompetent and lying functionary it would be difficult to find in the Russian Empire'. The actions of Protopopov, the Minister of the Interior, could most charitably be explained by an assumption of insanity. As for the position of the English in Russia, it was clear that 'the governing clique is our enemy, and takes little pains to conceal it'. The people and the army, however, 'are our friends'. The situation was dangerous, and there were constant rumours of 'a mysterious interchange of messages' with Germany. 'But when it comes to the point', Williams wrote, 'I do not believe Russia will stand it'. He hoped, in his next letter, to be able to write of a healthy reaction against this pro-Germanism.<sup>151</sup>

The second letter was written shortly after the opening of the Duma session in which Miliukov made his famous speech accusing Stürmer of treason. 'The sensation of the day was Miliukov's speech the like of which has not been heard in any Parliament for the last fifty years at least'. Williams outlined the main points; that since Stürmer had been made Minister for Foreign Affairs Russian secrets had been made known to the enemy, that he was deliberately

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<sup>151</sup> Letter of 4<sup>th</sup> November 1916, E/3/25/4, Lloyd George papers, House of Lords Record Office.

destroying Russia's relationship with her allies, and that he was 'at the head of the campaign now being carried on in this country against England'. The view of the men whom Williams regarded as the most responsible in the country was that the situation must now come to a head, and that there were three possibilities. 'Either the Government will yield or there will be a coup d'état, or, if neither of these things happens, Russia will have to stop fighting and make peace, with disastrous consequences'. The Duma had generally shown a warm feeling of friendship towards England, however, and repeatedly cheered the British ambassador. 'By a curious coincidence England has become openly identified, by sheer force of circumstances, with the Russian nation in its bitter struggle against a corrupt government that is betraying the nation's cause in the greatest war it has ever waged'.<sup>152</sup>

The final letter was written on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1916, after Lloyd George had become Prime Minister. Williams congratulated him on his appointment, which he said was very popular in Russia. The letter went on to describe yet more political intrigue, and the polarisation of public opinion against the Rasputin clique. Apparently even the Council of the Empire and the United Association of Nobles had aligned themselves with the Duma against the bureaucracy.

All this means that the gang are left without a shadow of support anywhere. What the common talk is you may easily conceive. To call it seditious would be a euphemism, and it is fed daily by new scandals. No one has the faintest idea what the Emperor will do. He has been at Tsarskoe Selo for some days, but the only thing that has been done is to appoint a Minister for Foreign Affairs, mainly I suppose because there had to be a minister to reply to the German peace proposals. The new Minister [Pokrovsky] is a very honest and hard working man, though he is not a diplomat. He will certainly not take any part in separate peace talk, and altogether I think that for the moment the idea of a separate peace is knocked on the head. But if Miliukoff and the other Duma speakers had not smashed Sturmer God only knows what might have happened. On the whole the general feeling is cheerful. The country is united and absolutely determined. The gang is cornered, its intrigues are exposed, and it seems impossible that the fate of such a huge Empire should remain much longer at the mercy of the plotting of a hysterical woman with a depraved peasant.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Letter of 16<sup>th</sup> November 1916, E/3/23/5, Lloyd George papers.

<sup>153</sup> Harold Williams to Lloyd George, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1916, F/59/1/3, Lloyd George Papers.

Sturmer had been dismissed by the Tsar on 10<sup>th</sup> / 23<sup>rd</sup> November, and replaced by Alexander Trepov. Rasputin was finally assassinated by Felix Yusupov and Vladimir Purishkevich on 17<sup>th</sup> / 30<sup>th</sup> December. Protopopov, however, remained in power, and the Tsar appeared to be becoming increasingly isolated from both the political and military situation. Events continued at high pressure throughout the winter. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, trying to describe this period of time in Russia, wrote that

there are moments in political life when it becomes difficult to breathe. Clouds gather ever lower and lower. Gusts of wind are succeeded by a deadly calm. The sultry heat awes and oppresses, and one longs for the flash of lightning, for the crash of thunder. Such was our life from November to the beginning of March.<sup>154</sup>

On 25<sup>th</sup> February / 10<sup>th</sup> March Williams reported mild street demonstrations.<sup>155</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> February / 11<sup>th</sup> March was a Sunday, and all day the street demonstrations continued. During the morning of 27<sup>th</sup> February / 12<sup>th</sup> March Ariadna Tyrkova received a telephone call to the effect that a revolution had begun; the soldiers of the Volynsk regiment had joined in the general protest.<sup>156</sup> Both Williams and Tyrkova spent the rest of the day ('one of the longest and most tiring in our life') at the Taurida palace.<sup>157</sup> Not until 16<sup>th</sup> March did the *Daily Chronicle* carry a full page spread with the banner headline 'Successful Russian Revolution'. A dispatch from Williams, sent on 2<sup>nd</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> March, gave the news of the revolution.

The wonderful and incredible thing has happened. The old Russian regime has fallen, through its own folly and incapacity; and to-day the Government of free Russia is coming into being. The one great anxiety that clouded the future of the war is being removed. There are difficulties ahead, but the Russian people has shown its marvellous power.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *From Liberty to Brest Litovsk* p. 4.

<sup>155</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 13<sup>th</sup> March 1917 p. 1.

<sup>156</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *From Liberty to Brest Litovsk* p. 1, *Cheerful Giver* p. 178.

<sup>157</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 179.

<sup>158</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 16<sup>th</sup> March 1917, p. 1.

In the following weeks, Williams's dispatches stressed the healthy atmosphere in Petrograd following the revolution, and sought to pacify fears that the revolution might lead to Russia's withdrawal from the war. For Williams, the revolution was the best thing that could have happened, for Russian politics, for the war effort, and for Anglo-Russian relations. The new government, when it was formed, consisted of Kadet, Octobrist and Labour deputies, many of whom Williams had known since his earliest days in Russia, or even in Stuttgart. Prince Lvov, the president of the Zemstvo union, was Premier, and Minister of the Interior. Miliukov was Minister for Foreign Affairs, Guchkov was Minister for War, and Shingarev was Minister for Agriculture. As Bernard Pares put it, 'These were my friends. Of the twelve new Ministers, seven were actually collaborators of my *Russian Review* in Liverpool.'<sup>159</sup> Williams described the novelty of calling on Miliukov in his new offices in the building opposite the Winter Palace, when he had been 'accustomed to see him in his simply-furnished flat in the south end of the town in the days when we travelled home in the same tram'.<sup>160</sup> The new government was composed of 'the best men in the country'.<sup>161</sup>

By Williams's estimation, the revolution ought to have removed the final barrier to complete Anglo-Russian co-operation. However, there were a number of complicating factors. Many of these were caused by the new freedom of information. For one thing, Williams was concerned about the attitude that was being adopted in England to the new government, and the way this would be interpreted in Russia. In late March he sent a telegram to the *Daily Telegraph*, (which was now receiving his *Daily Chronicle* dispatches through a syndicate arrangement)

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<sup>159</sup> Pares, *My Russian Memoirs* p. 413.

<sup>160</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 20<sup>th</sup> March 1917 p. 2.

<sup>161</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 21<sup>st</sup> March 1917 p. 3.

which was repeated to the Foreign Office, stressing the necessity of stopping the expressions of sympathy for the Tsar which had been appearing in the British press.<sup>162</sup>

In terms of British propaganda in Russia, the March revolution also 'altered in one week the whole horizon'.<sup>163</sup> It gave an entirely new character to the work that needed to be done by the Anglo-Russian Commission. Although it might seem that the revolution ought to have made the Commission's task easier, it in fact complicated matters in several ways. In the initial period, the Commission restricted itself to making available quotations from the British press that offered general support to the revolution and the new government.<sup>164</sup> Walpole was very concerned, however, that the Commission, and the English in general, should not appear to be 'teaching the Russians their business', and negative comments or those which seemed to amount to interference in Russia's internal affairs had to be played down. Within a matter of months, however, it became apparent that the Commission was faced with a number of serious problems. Walpole outlined these to the Foreign Office as follows.

Firstly, there was a determined attitude on the part of the more extreme socialists to attack the British Government on the ground that it was Imperialistic and was pursuing the war mainly for capitalistic ends.

Secondly, the Council of Workmen and Soldiers Delegates put forward its programme of a peace without annexations and without indemnities.

Thirdly, the Labour papers without exception made it plain that they expected the allies to make a new statement of peace terms that would be in line with the new Russian programme.

Fourthly, there was an increasing tendency on all sides to forget the original causes of the war, to argue about internal questions of party policy that had arisen out of the revolution and to claim that Great Britain was not paying sufficient attention to the real character of the revolution.

Fifthly, there was an increasing amount of obvious German propaganda connected, in the main, with the extreme socialist, Lenin, and having many ramifications through all classes and parties in Russia. This German propaganda was supplied with an apparently limitless flow of money.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Extract from telegram from Harold Williams to the Daily Telegraph, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1917, FO 395/108.

<sup>163</sup> Report on the work of the Anglo-Russian Commission, February to July 1917, by Hugh Walpole, FO 395/106.

<sup>164</sup> Minutes of a meeting of Anglo-Russian Commission, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1917, FO 395/105, and Report on the work of the Anglo-Russian Commission, February to June 1917, by Hugh Walpole, FO 395/106.

<sup>165</sup> Report on the work of the Anglo-Russian Commission, February to June 1917, by Hugh Walpole, FO 395/106.

This increased hostility, so much more easily expressed, made much of the propaganda work the Commission had been doing effectively useless. Buchanan cabled to the Foreign Office in May that it was necessary to alter and to radically extend the Commission's operations.

Army workmen and peasantry are so utterly ignorant that they know nothing about origin of the war or aims for which we are fighting while they believe implicitly all lies told them by countless agitators who are poisoning their minds against the Allies and advocating peace on any terms.<sup>166</sup>

Buchanan asked for, and secured, a further ten thousand pounds for propaganda work. Albert Thomas, now the French representative in Petrograd, had asked his government for the same amount, and while Buchanan admitted that it was a large sum, he stressed that it was 'insignificant if compared with what [the] Germans are spending here'. It was an indication of how seriously the British Government now took the question of propaganda in Russia that the extra expenditure was immediately agreed to by Lloyd George, who made it clear that even larger sums would be forthcoming if they were found to be necessary.<sup>167</sup> More staff were sent for, in order that the work might be expanded, and the new recruits included Aubrey Williams, who was removed from the New Zealand Expeditionary Force for this purpose. He was listed on a report on the bureau's staff as an 'assistant for journalistic work at the press agency'.<sup>168</sup>

In order to meet the altered conditions, several new methods were adopted. Firstly, greater co-operation with the other Allies was established, in the hope that a really co-ordinated front might be presented. An Allied Propaganda Committee was established, which met weekly, and on which representatives of the Anglo-Russian Bureau, including Williams, sat, along with representatives from the French committee, Chevilly and Viguiier, and the Americans, Wright and

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<sup>166</sup> Buchanan to the FO, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1917, FO 395/105.

<sup>167</sup> Buchanan to the FO, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1917, and notes on this file, FO 395/105.

<sup>168</sup> Williams to Walpole, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1917, Walpole to Williams 6<sup>th</sup> September 1917, and a report on the staff of the Anglo-Russian Commission, FO 395/106.

Harper. Since their recent entry into the war the Americans had launched a considerable propaganda effort in Russia, most notably in the provinces.<sup>169</sup> The Allied Propaganda Committee launched a new 'million pamphlet' scheme, which planned to publish a million copies of a new pamphlet every day for three months.<sup>170</sup> The pamphlets included copies of speeches by Kerensky on the continuation of the war, 'The letter of a French Soldier', 'How an English Soldier Sees the War', and 'The Serbian Appeal'.<sup>171</sup>

There was also a great deal more co-operation with specific Russian groups, notably middle class Russians and those who were associated with the Provisional Government, who were essentially working for the same cause; to keep Russia in the war. Prior to the revolution any attempt to align the propaganda effort with one group had been discouraged (for example when the British Flag Society was felt to be too heavily represented by the Kadets). There was now clear co-operation with those groups who were 'definitely on our side'. A Russian committee associated with *Novoe Vremya* were responsible for distributing the Allied Propaganda Committee's pamphlets. The Committee were also financing work done by the Duma Committee for Relations with the Army, who were organising lectures and pamphlets in favour of the continuation of the war. A committee headed by Colonel Engelhardt, with which Bernard Pares was also associated, was organising speakers in the factories.<sup>172</sup>

Propaganda was now primarily dealing with the stated causes and objects of the war, with particular emphasis on the 'rights of the small nations'. Harold Williams and Bernard Pares had been given specific responsibility for this, given that they had both 'given long and deep study to

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<sup>169</sup> Report on the work of the Anglo-Russian Commission, February to June 1917, by Hugh Walpole, and minutes of a meeting of the Anglo-Russian Commission, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>170</sup> Report on the work of the Anglo-Russian Commission, February to June 1917, by Hugh Walpole, and minutes of a meeting of the Allied Propaganda Committee, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>171</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the Allied Propaganda Committee, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>172</sup> Minutes of meetings of the Anglo-Russian Commission, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1917 and 10<sup>th</sup> July 1917, FO 395/106.



these questions.<sup>173</sup> The exposure of German atrocities was abandoned as a tactic, as it no longer had any real effect, arousing only morbid curiosity. Emphasis was to be placed instead on German attacks on Russian ideals.<sup>174</sup>

1917 saw the expansion of propaganda work more comprehensively into the provinces, or at least the beginnings of this, now that the Petrograd bureau was fully in charge of this work. Williams sent out letters to all the British Consuls in Russia asking for suggestions or feedback regarding local propaganda. He asked also for the names of Englishman in each place who might be willing to undertake the work. The responses were mixed. T. H. Hall at Murmansk, Thomas Preston at Ekaterniburg and P. Bagge at Odessa were all happy to help and to do the work themselves.<sup>175</sup> H. M. Grove, at Helsinki, put the Commission in touch with Professor Cotter at Helsinki University, who made plans to open a reading room in Helsinki, with English papers and translated pamphlets. He would also give lectures on England.<sup>176</sup> George Lingner was to open a branch at Tiflis, the headquarters of the Caucasian army staff.<sup>177</sup> On the other hand, Charles Blakey in Kharkov stressed that in small towns like Kharkov 'ostentatious friendship would arouse suspicion'.<sup>178</sup> V. H. C. Bosanquet at Riga recognised the urgent need for propaganda there to counteract the heavy German influence, but he was unwilling to undertake this task himself for fear of what might happen if the Germans took Riga. He cited the example of a French consul at Libau who had been condemned to death for possessing literature outlining German responsibility for the war.<sup>179</sup> Harold Williams put forward the idea of sending someone

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<sup>173</sup> Report on the work of the Anglo-Russian Commission February to June 1917, by Hugh Walpole. FO 395/106.

<sup>174</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the Allied Propaganda Committee, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>175</sup> Extracts from letters from T. H. Hall, Thomas Preston, and P. Bagge to Harold Williams, FO 395/106.

<sup>176</sup> Extract from a letter from H. M. Grove to Williams, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1917, and minutes of a meeting of the Anglo-Russian Commission, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>177</sup> D. Dickinson to Paul Dukes, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>178</sup> Extract from a letter from Charles Blakey to Harold Williams, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>179</sup> Extract from a letter from V. H. C. Bosanquet to Harold Williams, FO 395/106.

out from the Commission to tour the provinces and ascertain local needs. Bernard Pares would have been ideal, but no-one was entirely sure where he was.<sup>180</sup> Plans were made to print pamphlets in Latvian, German, Finnish and Swedish.<sup>181</sup> One of the more outlandish proposals for regional propaganda, put forward by Major Scale, was that the headmen of small villages in the more populous parts of Russia should be taken to visit England and the British front in France. The Commission were dubious about this, given the massive amount of organisation that would be involved, and the problem of knowing what sort of reception they might currently receive in England. The Foreign Office were delighted with the idea however; one clerk noted that this would be 'a magnificent means of propaganda' – 'they would be more than astounded at the sights they saw. They would be heroes on return ... and would publish their impressions far and wide'.<sup>182</sup>

A great deal of energy was also put, during this period, into the establishment, in conjunction with the Allied Committee, of a new telegraph agency which would provide special services of telegrams direct from the Foreign Office. The reasoning behind this was that since the revolution, the amount of English news getting into the Russian press had been very unsatisfactory.

The extreme socialistic papers have refused to publish practically any English news at all, have refused to publish our own answers to their lies and fables and have generally shown to us, whether officially, privately or anonymously a blind-wall hostility. The other papers have taken our telegrams when they have been first in the field and sufficiently interesting, but they have been so often late and have dealt so frequently with news that could not possibly interest a revolutionary Petrograd public that they have been turned down.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the Anglo-Russian Commission, 20<sup>th</sup> July 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>181</sup> Minutes of meetings of the Anglo-Russian Commission, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>182</sup> Minutes of meetings of the Anglo-Russian Commission, 29<sup>th</sup> August and 11<sup>th</sup> September 1917, and notes on these files, FO 395/106.

<sup>183</sup> Walpole to Montgomery, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1917, FO 395/106.

In the establishment of this agency the Commission and their allies came the closest they had at any point to adopting what they had previously referred to as 'German methods'. The telegraph agency was to be run as far as possible as a Russian agency, and although it was stressed at meetings of both the Anglo-Russian Commission and the Allied Propaganda Committee that it would be quite impossible to keep the official connections of the agency hidden, the agency seems to have remained fairly low key.<sup>184</sup> Guy Beringer, Reuters Correspondent in Petrograd, who had access to Foreign Office telegrams through Reuters, actually cabled to his boss, Roderick Jones, to remark on the similarity of the new agency's telegrams to Foreign Office material. He wondered whether there had been some kind of leak.<sup>185</sup> The agency was given an entirely unofficial name, Kosmos, and was to be run by a journalist, Mahomet Bek, who was employed at Walpole's insistence. Bek in fact was the cause of many of the news agency's problems. Walpole had been given to understand that he was 'a journalist of 35 years standing' who had not only been recommended by the Foreign Office but was well known in Petrograd as being 'energetic and trustworthy'.<sup>186</sup> However, while Walpole was away in England in the summer of 1917 a number of problems became apparent. At meetings of the Allied Propaganda Committee Bek made several suggestions which aroused the indignation of the other members of the committee; notably that a number of Russian public men ought to be attached to the agency for information gathering purposes, and that the agency might consider paying left-wing papers like *Pravda* at advertising rates to print the agency's material.<sup>187</sup> Neither the French nor the Americans trusted him, and it also became apparent that he was virtually unknown in journalistic circles. As Williams wrote to Walpole, 'His connections with the press

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<sup>184</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the Allied Propaganda Committee, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1917, and minutes of a meeting of the Anglo-Russian Commission, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>185</sup> Roderick Jones to the Foreign Office, n. d., FO 395/106.

<sup>186</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the Allied Propaganda Committee, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>187</sup> D. Dickinson to Hugh Walpole, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1917, FO 395/106.

were a myth, and he didn't even take the trouble to make any. I made enquiries in several papers; no one had heard of Bek or even of the agency'.<sup>188</sup> It was initially suggested that Bek might be kept on nominally as manager of the office, with Chukovskii being installed as literary director and a committee of Russian journalists to act in an advisory capacity, but all of the latter refused to have anything to do with the agency while Bek was involved.<sup>189</sup> Williams was dissatisfied with the work of the agency, as very little of its material appeared to be getting printed, and when the decision was taken in August by the Allied Committee to dismiss Bek, Williams confronted him about his failure to deliver the work that had been demanded of him. In response Bek launched into a diatribe against the English, declaring them all, with the exception of Walpole, to be 'knaves and scoundrels'. The Ambassador was the particular object of his anger. It subsequently emerged that Bek had taken the premises which the agency was using in his own name, and he refused to vacate them. Not only was he claiming 150,000 roubles compensation, but he had drawn 5,500 roubles already from the bank for his own purposes. On top of this, it was discovered that Bek was known in the past to have been involved in a scheme for exploiting Muslims who wished to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. 'Altogether', Williams informed Walpole, 'a more accomplished scoundrel it would have been hard to find'. The Allied committee were extremely angry, and a great deal of time and money had been wasted. 'I don't want to rub anything in', he wrote, 'but I must say, Hugh, that you are very largely to blame in all this, how

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<sup>188</sup> Harold Williams to Hugh Walpole, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>189</sup> D. Dickinson to Hugh Walpole, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1917, Minutes of meetings of the Allied Propaganda Committee, 4<sup>th</sup> June and 30<sup>th</sup> July 1917, and Harold Williams to Hugh Walpole, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1917, FO 395/106. Kornei Chukovskii (1892-1969), author of Russian children's literature, and of the wartime novel 'the English Tommy', circulated by the Committee (see above).

far none of us can tell, because you did all the negotiation with Bek, and we don't exactly know what grounds you had for insisting on engaging him'.<sup>190</sup>

The Kosmos agency was eventually put on to a sounder footing; Frank Golden was put in charge, and Paul Dukes was sent over to London to co-ordinate the matter being sent. By September Williams was able to report that the agency was working well and that its telegrams were appearing in the papers.<sup>191</sup> Ultimately, however, there was little that the British propaganda effort could do to counteract the development of events – the problems that they faced in counteracting anti-war sentiment and in keeping Russia committed to the causes for which the war was being fought were simply too great, and were certainly now out of their control.

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<sup>190</sup> Harold Williams to Hugh Walpole, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1917, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1917, and 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1917, Paul Dukes to Frank Golden, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1917, FO 395/106.

<sup>191</sup> Minutes of a meeting of the Allied Propaganda Committee, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1917. FO 395/106

#### 4. From Revolution to Intervention, 1917-1921

Harold Williams was not blind to the problems and difficulties presented by the new political situation in Russia in the spring of 1917. Neither did he keep these difficulties from his readers entirely. However, he was careful about what he chose to tell them, and the way he expressed his views. Harvey Pitcher sums up Williams's early attitude to the revolution perceptively when he writes, in *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution*;

More than any other witness, [Williams] feels a sense of responsibility towards the Revolution. He desperately wants it to succeed, and he wants public opinion in Britain, and the British Government, to help make it succeed. What he tells the Ambassador is not the same as what he tells the readers of the *Daily Chronicle*. To them he is comfortably reassuring: difficulties lie ahead, granted, but they will be overcome; there have been a few excesses, true, but in the circumstances it is quite remarkable how well everyone has been behaving.<sup>1</sup>

The revolution represented, essentially, the culmination of all that Williams had worked for during his time in Russia. It had brought to power a government composed of many of his closest political acquaintances; men whose political opinions he shared. It should also, by his reckoning, have made possible an even closer and more durable understanding between Britain, as a liberal democracy, and the new Russia. In short, there were more important priorities for Williams than pure journalistic objectivity and truth.

However, the events of the summer and autumn of 1917 made it at first difficult and eventually impossible for Williams to remain 'comfortably reassuring'. He was faced with a growing realisation as the year drew on that the threats to the stability of the regime he had worked so hard for were real. This realisation forced a new honesty into Williams's dispatches,

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<sup>1</sup> Pitcher, *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution* p. 66.

and it eventually left him despairing, struggling to present any coherent picture of the political forces at work in Russia.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> / 16<sup>th</sup> April 1917, Lenin arrived at St. Petersburg's Finland Station, having travelled from Switzerland via Germany in a sealed railway carriage, with the permission of the German General Staff. Williams did not witness his arrival, but he duly reported it on 18<sup>th</sup> April. He outlined Lenin's demands for immediate peace, and for civil war against the government and the army, but stressed that Lenin was being vigorously attacked, not only by his opponents but by members of his own faction. Williams insisted that the Bolshevik leader was absolutely without supporters.<sup>2</sup> He also drew attention to the collusion of the German army in Lenin's arrival, and used this as evidence that the latter was in fact a 'German agent'. Neither of these attitudes was atypical of Western observers, and indeed liberal Russians at this time. Both Lenin and Trotsky were widely accused of being in the pay of the German Staff, and even left-wing observers such as Morgan Phillips Price, writing for the *Manchester Guardian*, attested that while Lenin drew applause when he spoke at meetings, when he had finished his listeners would immediately begin to pull his arguments apart.<sup>3</sup> Williams's attitude was unique, however, in that, while we know that his knowledge of Russian revolutionary groups of all political shades was considerable, and that he was certainly aware of Lenin's existence and beliefs prior to 1917, he seems to have chosen at this stage not to attempt to learn more about his programme or intentions, and certainly not to explain them to his readers. Williams had never met Lenin, but Ariadna Tyrkova had, in Geneva in 1904, when visiting her old school friend Nadia Krupskaya, now Lenin's wife. On this

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<sup>2</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 20<sup>th</sup> April 1917 p. 3. Many of Williams's dispatches from 1917 onwards appeared in the *New York Times* as well as the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Daily Telegraph*, by a syndicate arrangement. As it was a more accessible source, I have often used the *New York Times* rather than either of the other two papers. Where I have located the articles in more than one paper I have given the details for both. However, the punctuation and syntax often differed in the various papers, as this was inserted by sub-editors in the newspaper office. The newspaper which appears first in my references is the one from which the quote, including punctuation, was obtained.

<sup>3</sup> Robert D. Warth, *The Allies and the Russian Revolution* (Durham, North Carolina 1954) pp. 42-43. Pitcher, *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution* p. 110.

occasion Lenin had promised that after the successful revolution he would *lanterner* her (have her hung from a lamp-post, as in the French Revolution), for her liberal convictions. Williams, usually among the first to secure an important interview (for example his secret interview with Father Gapon in 1905), never actually met Lenin or saw him address a meeting. On several occasions he asked his wife, slightly guiltily, whether he ought not to go and hear Lenin speak – apparently he sighed with relief when she assured him that he need not.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it seemed unnecessary initially – the Provisional Government, in Williams's and Tyrkova's estimation, were the masters of the political situation. Williams gave little attention initially even to the activities of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. By the time it was clear that Lenin and his supporters were to play a significant role, Williams's attitude to them and their political programme had hardened into a dislike and distrust that was unlikely to be softened by closer contact.

At the beginning of May Williams took a six week holiday in the Caucasus, to recover his health 'after the first rush of the revolution'.<sup>5</sup> There were changes upon his return; Miliukov's resignation, forced as a result of his tactless statements regarding Russia's rights to Constantinople, which were hardly in keeping with the anti-imperial mood of the moment, had brought about a reshuffle in the government, with Tereschenko taking over as Foreign Minister, and Kerensky now in charge of the War Office and the Admiralty. Williams also perceived a marked change in the atmosphere in Petrograd. 'The frank joy of the early state of the Revolution', he wrote in the *Daily Chronicle*, 'has given place to bitter party strife and growing resentment against the extremists and disturbers of order'.<sup>6</sup> There may have been growing

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<sup>4</sup> See chapter two, and Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 89-90, p. 190. On Williams's attitude to Lenin see also Pitcher, *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution* p. 254.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Ransome to Edith Ransome, 27<sup>th</sup> May 1917, Arthur Ransome papers.

<sup>6</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 11<sup>th</sup> June 1917, p. 3.



resentment in government circles against the disturbances, but these disturbances were destined to become more severe, rather than less. A peaceful demonstration on 1<sup>st</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> July was followed by violent protests and rioting in the following days. Strikers marched with banners calling for an end to the war, the resignation of Kerensky, and condemning capitalism in general. Williams described these protests as an 'insane and preposterous adventure', organised by petty conspirators whom he believed to have been paid by the German general staff. He was sceptical about the intentions of the demonstrators, who, he declared, had no idea themselves what the demonstrations were about.<sup>7</sup>

However, the reports that reached London regarding the progress of the revolution in Russia were causing some concern, not least because of fear that anti-war sentiment might force Russia to negotiate a separate peace. Lloyd George was anxious to allow Russia access to Britain's pro-war socialists, in order to prove Britain's democratic credentials and good intentions, and to create a community of feeling between the two groups. In June 1917, the Prime Minister sent Arthur Henderson, a Labour member of the War Cabinet, to Russia with the authority to replace Sir George Buchanan. The French had recently replaced their ambassador, Paléologue, with the socialist Albert Thomas, and it was generally felt that a Labour man might be better able to win the confidence and support of those in power in Russia.<sup>8</sup> Lloyd George was also considering whether or not to give his consent to British participation in the Stockholm Conference, at which it was proposed that socialist leaders from around Europe should meet to discuss possible terms of peace. Henderson was to test the water on this subject in Russia. Williams was assigned to Henderson as an escort and interpreter, along with Robert Bruce Lockhart. He assisted at interviews Henderson conducted with Prince Lvov, Kerensky, Miliukov

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<sup>7</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 19<sup>th</sup> July 1917, p. 1, *The New York Times* 19<sup>th</sup> July 1917, p. 3, *The Daily Chronicle* 21<sup>st</sup> July 1917, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Chris Wrigley, *Arthur Henderson* (Cardiff 1990) p. 114.

and Tereschenko, and escorted him on a trip to Moscow.<sup>9</sup> Henderson was visibly disturbed by what he saw in Russia, and he returned determined to support the Provisional Government in any way he could, and convinced of its loyalty to the Allies. He was determined that Buchanan should stay, since Buchanan had the support of Russia's leaders, and to replace him would be to undermine them.<sup>10</sup> He also returned committed to the idea of the Stockholm Conference, though unfortunately for Henderson, Lloyd George's ideas had been moving in the opposite direction.<sup>11</sup> Williams, meanwhile, had made a lasting impression on Henderson's secretary, G. M. Young, a historian and fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. Williams's immense knowledge of Russian history, politics and ethnology, and 'commanding serenity' in the face of the events of 1917, deeply impressed him. As he wrote to a friend at the time, '[Williams] knows Russian as Bywater knows Greek. And he seems to know everything else as Bywater knows Greek – including Russia, which at this moment of history is harder to understand than its language'. Young made extensive notes from conversations with Williams in the summer of 1917, which, although they were not used for whatever purpose he had intended them, gave him 'a sense of intimacy with Russia' that faintly reflected what he saw as Williams's own 'incomparable insight' into the country's problems.<sup>12</sup>

When Prince Lvov resigned, and the government was re-formed with Kerensky as Premier, Williams gave it his support, though he was sceptical about the abilities of some of the

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<sup>9</sup> Extract from a note by Sir George Buchanan, 8<sup>th</sup> September 1919, cited in a letter from Robert Vansittart to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 9<sup>th</sup> November 1932, Box 7, Folder 'U-V', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Pares, *My Russian Memoirs* pp. 470-1. F. M. Leventhal, *Arthur Henderson* (Manchester 1989) p. 65. Minutes of a meeting of the Allied Propaganda Committee, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1917, FO 395/106. Mary Agnes Hamilton, *Arthur Henderson, A Biography* (London 1938) p. 126. Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent* pp. 186-188.

<sup>10</sup> John Grigg, *Lloyd George – War Leader* (London 2002) pp. 201-207. Wrigley, *Arthur Henderson*, pp. 114-116. Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia* Vol. 2 pp. 143-147.

<sup>11</sup> Grigg, *Lloyd George – War Leader* pp. 208-209.

<sup>12</sup> George Young to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 14<sup>th</sup> February, n.d. [but circa 1933] Box 26, Folder 'Manuscripts by Various Authors 3' BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

ministers. Kerensky, at least, had 'energy and fire'.<sup>13</sup> However, the early autumn brought more disappointment and confusion. Deteriorating relations between Kerensky and the Commander in Chief, General Kornilov, resulted in Kornilov's arrest for what Kerensky perceived to be a coup d'état. A Democratic Assembly held in Moscow at the end of September depressed Williams with its 'mental and moral slackness'.<sup>14</sup> As he became increasingly disillusioned, his dispatches took on a new form; they were full of imagery, rather than analysis, feeling rather than fact. They were still often accompanied by a prophecy that Russia would surmount her problems in the long run, but Williams had come to admit that the prospects for the immediate future were not encouraging.

Life in Russia is a troubled dream. One sleeps to see in fresh and bewildering disorder the visions of the day, and one wakes to find the phantoms of the night, tangible and audible, continuing their irrational play to the very light of the sun.

There is a deep logic in events – the logic of history – but there is little in Russia now that lends itself to the calculations of a narrow, practical reason.<sup>15</sup>

Williams confessed that at times he found himself reluctant to recount the events of the day.

There are moments when one would prefer to be silent about what is happening in Russia. The bright hopes of the revolution are being darkened, the collective energy of the people paralysed, and the whole life of the nation entangled in a network of almost insoluble contradictions.<sup>16</sup>

Neither Harold Williams nor Ariadna Tyrkova were in Petrograd when the Bolshevik seizure of power took place. Tyrkova had been ill, and had gone to rest in Kislovodsk in the

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<sup>13</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 24<sup>th</sup> July 1917, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 5<sup>th</sup> October 1917, p. 3. Pitcher, *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution* pp. 177-8.

<sup>15</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 5<sup>th</sup> September 1917, p. 2, *The New York Times* 5<sup>th</sup> September 1917 p. 2, *The New York Times* 21<sup>st</sup> September 1917 p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *The New York Times* 30<sup>th</sup> September 1917, p. 2.

Caucasus. In late October Williams went down to meet her, and they travelled back together.<sup>17</sup> At Kislovodsk they heard 'wildly contradictory, exciting and alarming' rumours of the Bolshevik rising, but travelling back through the Kuban territories, Rostov and Novocherkassk, they found alternate states of panic and complete calm. One common feature was the lack of sympathy for Kerensky or the Provisional Government almost everywhere they went. On reaching Moscow they heard of the days of fighting, houses destroyed, and thousands killed.<sup>18</sup>

Back in Petrograd, Williams found it difficult to give an accurate account of any of the events which rapidly followed one another. His dispatches conveyed, more than anything else, his confusion and disorientation in the new situation.

We correspondents are sometimes reproached with failure to present to our readers the real Russia. I should very much like to state accurately, without bias, the realities of Russian life, but the trouble is that it is so supremely difficult under present conditions to seize hold of and reproduce anything like tangible realities.

Russia, as I understand it, has passed into a latent condition. Nothing could give a stronger impression of the illusoriness of all its phenomena than the present state of this mysterious country. Events are disconnected. They seem to have no cumulative power. Things happen, then do not happen. Cause and effect are confused. The mind misses natural sequences, stumbles and gropes in a vain effort to grasp the whole. What seem realities crumble at the touch. The process is catastrophic, but it is extraordinarily fascinating, as when from a shaking stepping stone one watches a turbulent stream in full flood rushing on to a fall.<sup>19</sup>

These powerful images came to replace any meaningful analysis of events, which Williams now found impossible. 'Here we are all Blondins', he wrote in November, 'balancing on a tightrope over an abyss ... In the abyss we see glimmering forms and dim outlines, and are learning that even the abyss is not a void.'<sup>20</sup> He described the Bolshevik movement as 'a curious jumble of conflicting elements ranging from the purest idealism to German intrigue and

<sup>17</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 194-5.

<sup>18</sup> *The New York Times* 18<sup>th</sup> November 1917, p. 2, *The Daily Chronicle* 4<sup>th</sup> December 1917, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *The New York Times* 26<sup>th</sup> December 1917, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> *The New York Times* 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1917, p. 3. *The Daily Chronicle* 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1917, p. 5.

reactionary monarchism'.<sup>21</sup> The situation in Russia, he declared, was not socialism. 'Looked at coldly apart from all views and persons and parties, it is simply rapid disintegration. Petrine Russia has gone to pieces. The country is fast slipping back into the Middle Ages'. He followed the peace negotiations at Brest Litovsk, but found it 'difficult to talk sober sense' about them. 'The Germans, having created a Frankenstein for their own purposes, seem to be considerably perplexed by his antics. They are in the position of a medieval knight playing a weird game of chess with supernatural powers'.<sup>22</sup> It became increasingly difficult to write as the events became more personal - the dissolution of the constituent assembly in January, the murders of Andrei Shingarev and Fedor Kokoshkin. Shingarev personified much of what Williams had hoped for for Russia. 'It is difficult to write of this loss just now. I have rarely known a man more scrupulously honest and more transparently single-minded than Shingaroff. He was a democrat through and through, absolutely devoted to the interests of the people, and never wavered from his principles'.<sup>23</sup> In a special cable to the *New York Times*, for whom he was now corresponding via a syndicate arrangement with the *Daily Chronicle*, Williams tried to explain how difficult it was to elucidate the situation. 'We have not the time or the space to tell of the myriad events of the day. If you lived here you would feel in every bone of your body, in every fibre of your spirit, the bitterness of it all'.<sup>24</sup>

At the beginning of March 1918 the Allied embassies and legations began to leave Petrograd. The city's residents also began to leave en masse, amidst fears that the Germans were coming to occupy the city, as part of a secret clause in the peace treaty. For those who remained, St. Petersburg had a ghostly, deserted feel.

<sup>21</sup> *The New York Times* 5<sup>th</sup> December, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> *New York Times* 7<sup>th</sup> January 1918 p. 1

<sup>23</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> January. 1918, *The New York Times* 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1918, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> *The New York Times* 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1918, p. 5.

For the last few months a muffled bell has been tolling in the whirlwind, and in the knell one heard the echo of the grim prophecy of the Old Believers to Peter the Great: "St. Petersburg will be a desert". Perhaps this is mere fancy, perhaps after the catastrophe and deluge St. Petersburg will shine forth again in pride and glory, but today there is inexpressible sadness in this once imperial city.

The streets are very quiet now. They have never been so quiet since the beginning of the war, and in the evenings the stillness of the dimly lighted thoroughfares is fraught with foreboding. The turbulent emotions of the year of revolution are exhausted; the fever is sickening, the pulse of life is very slow, and the depression and foreboding are inarticulate. They cannot be summed up as dread of any definite calamity, as fear of the Germans, as fears of unrestrained anarchy. They are gloomier, because they are inarticulate, because they come of a sense of emptiness, of the ebbing away of life.

By this time, most of the British colony had left. Amongst those that remained, the only conversation was when and where they would be going.<sup>25</sup>

Harold Williams and Ariadna Tyrkova took the difficult decision to leave Russia at the beginning of March 1918. Tyrkova's son, Arkadii, had gone to the Don region, where General Alekseev was making the first attempts to form an army against the Bolsheviks; besides his own desire to be involved in the struggle Arkadii was trying to get details of the character and intentions of the small army for Harold Williams and the *Daily Chronicle*.<sup>26</sup> Williams had wanted to join Alekseev's forces in the Don as a military correspondent, but it was now impossible to get there from Moscow because of the fighting. Tyrkova's mother and other members of the family were still at Vergezha, and she was understandably reluctant to leave them. In addition, as a politician and a key figure in the Kadet party, she felt that by leaving she was 'running away in the middle of the battle'. She had in fact stood for election to the Constituent Assembly in the province of Novgorod, but would never find out whether or not she was successful.<sup>27</sup> A number of considerations overruled their reluctance to leave. One was the couple's concern for their own

<sup>25</sup> *The New York Times* 13<sup>th</sup> March 1918, p. 1. *The Daily Chronicle* 12<sup>th</sup> March 1918, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> On Alekseev and the foundations of the volunteer army, see Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia 1918* (Berkeley, LA 1971), and Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War* (London 1987).

<sup>27</sup> Borman, A. V. *Tyrkova-Vil'iams* p. 152.

personal safety. After the deaths of Shingarev and Kokoshkin, other members of the Kadet party were particularly on edge. Tyrkova now rarely stayed in the same place for more than one night, and she recalled that her husband 'changed colour if a motor-car drew up by our door, especially at night'.<sup>28</sup> Another determining factor was a conversation Williams had in Moscow with a group of Russians - Struve and some of his 'liberation' friends, who were supporting Alekseev. According to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, the conversation went something like this.

'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 to 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.<sup>29</sup>

Coming after the deep despair and disillusionment Williams had suffered at the dawn of the Bolshevik regime, the new military front and the campaign for intervention were a welcome new cause to work for. His new attitude was reflected in one of his last dispatches from Russia, in which he stressed the German domination of the internal situation in Russia, and declared that 'it is in the interests of humanity, in the interests of all nations who are combined against Germany, that Russia should revive. Allied assistance to Russia is an imperative necessity in the present stage of the war, and allied assistance should be given in such form as to stimulate the national energies of Russia'.<sup>30</sup>

Harold Williams, Ariadna Tyrkova, and Tyrkova's daughter Sophia (Sonya) Borman left Russia via Murmansk after an eight day train journey from St. Petersburg. They sailed on a former German ship which had been chartered by the French to bring civilians home from

<sup>28</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 199.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. pp. 201-2.

<sup>30</sup> *The New York Times* 21<sup>st</sup> March 1918, p. 1. *The Daily Chronicle* 20<sup>th</sup> March 1918, p. 1.

Russia. It flew under a Portuguese flag, was captained by an Englishman, and the majority of the crew were Chinese.<sup>31</sup> Tyrkova and her daughter both travelled as British citizens, though it seems unlikely that they had passports to do so.<sup>32</sup> It was quite common for Russians, even those without Western connections, to find a way out of the country without the necessary documentation.<sup>33</sup>

The ship brought Williams and his family in to Newcastle, and they made their way from there to London. To Williams, and to Tyrkova-Williams, London was another world in comparison with the Russia they had come from. It was initially difficult to adjust. Williams tried to explain his state of mind in one of the first articles he wrote upon his return.

One comes home from Russia and sees life here as in a haze. It is difficult to piece things together in one's mind, the contrast is so extraordinary. Which is real – what we saw in Russia, or what we see here? One is confronted with two incompatible realities, perhaps with a jumble of incompatible realities. It is hard to relate things, to get a true perspective, to look around steadily on the world again. And it is really very difficult to explain in England what we saw and lived through in Russia.

There we saw a social structure torn up by the roots. Here we see the old order, the old standards – modified, it is true, adapted to the conditions of the war, gradually changing, but still firm and powerful. There we saw human nature turned upside down and inside out. We saw the collective mind plunging into the strangest adventures, unrestrained by convention or tradition, or by any ordinary considerations of prudence. We saw the inner workings of government, we saw children playing in the market-place with the ancient secrets of power. There were great emotions. There was a deep and singing joy, and a bitter despair, and anger and contempt and reverence, and, besides and apart from that, the sheer and constant fun of it all. And the contradictions were so baffling. It was a daily surprise that life somehow went on, that the sun rose, that one managed to eat, drink, sleep, buy and read papers, and telephone. After all, it was not the physical strain that mattered so much. There was physical danger, of course; but that has come to be commonplace in these days of the world-war. There was frequent anxiety for one's friends. There was a disturbing sense of the insecurity of intercourse, of the evil possibilities of the unknown. And then, through all and in all, was the fierce and often torturing test of ideas, principles, and standards. Sometimes one had the feeling that too many illusions had been torn away, that one had seen things that it was not good to see in this life.

Then 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

<sup>31</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 206-208.

<sup>32</sup> See chapter two for a discussion of Williams and Tyrkova's marital status.

<sup>33</sup> W. Chapin Huntington, *The Homesick Million - Russia-out-of-Russia* (Boston, 1933) pp. 5-17.



of Russia in England now. The range of perception is so different. The standard of judgement 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.<sup>34</sup>

Williams and Tyrkova-Williams were not the only ones trying to adjust themselves to new circumstances, and to put their point of view across to the Western public. In their 'political pilgrimage', as Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams described it, they joined a growing group of Russian émigrés, and of western sympathisers, who were migrating to the Western capitals, London, Paris and New York. Konstantin Nabokov, the Russian ambassador to London, was already there, and he was to become a leading member of the London community of Russian émigrés. Mikhail Rostovtsev, the classical historian, made his way to London from Russia at some time in 1918. Pavel Miliukov eventually made his way there via German-occupied Kiev, where he aroused disbelief and outrage amongst his fellow Kadets by attempting to negotiate with representatives of the Central Powers. Petr Struve spent the later months of 1918 wandering around northern Russia in the company of Arkadii Borman, who had been assigned the task of getting Struve out of Russia by an underground anti-Bolshevik organisation. They arrived in London in January 1919. All of these figures contributed to the campaign to influence Western opinion on the Russian civil war, a campaign which was at times co-ordinated, at times fragmented, and within which there existed a multitude of differing voices and opinions.<sup>35</sup>

Harold Williams was, as his friends realised, in a strong position to campaign on behalf of the anti-Bolshevik Russians in Britain in mid-1918. This was partly due to the dearth of reliable

<sup>34</sup> Harold Williams, 'The Furnace of Democracy' *The New Europe* Vol. 3, no. 85 (30<sup>th</sup> May 1918) pp. 152-3.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Pipes, *Struve – Liberal on the Right 1905-44* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980) pp. 260-271. Marinus Wes, *Michael Rostovtzeff, Historian in Exile. Russian roots in an American context* (Stuttgart 1990) pp. 37-38. On Rostovtsev see also G. M. Bongard-Levin, *Skifskii Roman* (Moscow 1997), an edition of Rostovtsev's letters which includes correspondence with Ariadna Tyrkova and Harold Williams, David Saunders, 'Russian Bear and Roman Eagle', *Ad Familiares* Vol. V autumn 1993 p. 4, and 'Rostovtzeff, Michael Ivanovitch', in John Cannon (ed.), *The Blackwell History of Historians* (Oxford 1998) pp. 356-358.

information on the nature of the Bolshevik government in England at this time; the news reports from Russia often seemed fantastic, and the opinions of 'experts', freshly arrived from Russia, were valued both by the public and by the government.<sup>36</sup> Williams's name was well known in connection with Russia, as it appeared above all his *Daily Chronicle* articles. As the articles also appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, his opinions had a fairly wide audience. When Williams and Tyrkova-Williams arrived in Newcastle, they were greeted enthusiastically by clerks who claimed to have read all Williams's telegrams.<sup>37</sup> Although he had made only a handful of visits to London during his time in Russia, Williams did have a number of important political contacts who gave him considerable help. Robert Donald, the editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, helped him to find his feet. Within days of their arrival Donald took Williams and Tyrkova-Williams to tea with Lloyd George, and at the Prime Minister's request Williams prepared a memorandum outlining his views on the options for Britain's policy towards Russia.<sup>38</sup> Williams already knew Lloyd George, of course, and Bernard Pares recalls the Prime Minister saying to him in the autumn of 1917 that he had never seen any correspondence from abroad as good as Williams's.<sup>39</sup> Bernard Pares and Robert Seton-Watson were both in London at this time, and they helped Williams to make new contacts that might be useful. One of these was Rex Leeper, a clerk in the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office who was responsible for reporting on developments in and advising on policy towards Russia. By the middle of May 1918, Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams already felt that their appearance in England was having an effect. Williams's

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<sup>36</sup> Warth, *The Allies and the Russian Revolution* pp. 163-5.

<sup>37</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 209.

<sup>38</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 212.

<sup>39</sup> See chapter three for details of Williams's and Lloyd George's earlier correspondence. Pares, *My Russian Memoirs* p. 479.

authority on Russia, she wrote to Arkadii Borman, would do a great deal of good. He had already seen many of the chief ministers, and was very well received.<sup>40</sup>

Besides personal conversations with those who had some influence on Russian policy, there were opportunities to lecture to interested audiences. Public speaking was hardly Williams's forté, but both he and Tyrkova-Williams made an effort to speak to interested societies, and to university audiences. Williams delivered lectures to, amongst other organisations, the British Russia Club, and the British Institute of International Affairs.<sup>41</sup> One speech made by Williams on 5<sup>th</sup> July, in combination with his close relations with Foreign Office officials, prompted questions in parliament as to whether he was in the employ of the Foreign Office, and whether his views on armed intervention represented Allied policy.<sup>42</sup> As the campaign for intervention became more organised, a Central Russian Committee was formed, to lobby the government on Russian policy. It was headed by Sir George Buchanan, and included amongst its members Harold Williams, Hugh Walpole, Bernard Pares, Alfred Knox, William Peters, and Rex Leeper. Aubrey Williams acted as secretary to this committee.<sup>43</sup>

Robert Donald gave Williams a lot of input into the *Daily Chronicle*'s Russian policy – between May and October 1918 the editorials on Russia all followed Williams's line, and besides

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<sup>40</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams to Arkadii Borman, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1918, Box 10, Folder 'A Tyrkova-Williams to A. Borman, 1919-1939', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>41</sup> W. J. Sedgfield to Harold Williams, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1918, Add. 54437. Correspondence between Charles Sarolea and Harold Williams / Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, Add. 54443. Harold Williams, untitled speech, 1918, and speech to the British Institute of International Affairs, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1918, Box 23 BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Irene Zohrab has published the full text of this paper, as 'The European Magnitude of the Russian Struggle: from the unpublished papers of H. W. Williams on Lenin's rise to power and advocacy of world revolution' *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* Vol. 8, No. 2 (1994) pp. 109-136.

<sup>42</sup> Hansard, Parliamentary Debates – Commons 1918, Vol. 108, p. 691, Vol. 109, p. 439.

<sup>43</sup> William J. Williams to Harold Williams, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1918, and circular letter from the British Russia Club, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1918, Add. 54437. Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 218.

leading articles by Williams himself, pieces by knowledgeable Russians, including Vladimir Burtsev and Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, found their way into the paper.<sup>44</sup> There were also other outlets for Williams's articles on Russia besides the *Daily Chronicle*. In October 1916, Robert Seton-Watson had established a weekly journal, the *New Europe*, which was intended to provide a platform for sympathetic writers and publicists to help to form 'a sane and well informed body of public opinion' on European questions. The journal was partly funded by Tomas Masaryk, and its programme included the liberation of the South-Eastern European nationalities from German and Austro-Hungarian rule, and a peace based on national rights, public law, and disarmament.<sup>45</sup> Seton-Watson welcomed Williams as a contributor, and Williams in turn saw the *New Europe* as 'one of the most hopeful signs in a slowly changing England'. However, the Russian question did not fit neatly into the mould prescribed by the *New Europe*'s policy, and Williams evidently expressed some criticisms privately to Seton-Watson, which the latter asked him to outline in an article for the journal. In doing so, Williams stressed that he believed firmly in the principles that the *New Europe* stood for; in making the world safe for democracy, and in the principle of a League of Nations. However, his experiences in Russia had taught him that these principles could not be universally applied. The British and Americans, he felt, had traditions and experience which gave them 'a feeling of security and serenity in wielding the democratic principle, a confident sense that it as such is universally valid and applicable'. What Williams missed in the *New Europe*'s articles was 'that tinge of doubt which, as the field of study broadens and complications appear, makes one go back and carefully sift one's fundamental principles'. If the world was to be made safe for democracy, he insisted, 'we have to make pretty sure that democracy is not going to be unsafe for the world'. He believed in democracy as a principle, but

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<sup>44</sup> See for example *The Daily Chronicle* 18<sup>th</sup> May 1918, pp. 2-3. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams says that Robert Donald put Williams 'in charge' of Russian policy on the paper. Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 213.

<sup>45</sup> Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe* pp. 179-80.

insisted that 'if we believe we have a principle that will guide us through we must hold to it not merely by faith and habit, but by clear and sensitive thinking on the application of the principle to actual issues'. In Russia, the democratic principle had been applied suddenly and universally, and disaster had ensued; the current regime, supposedly the people's choice, had trampled on the idea of democracy. The *New Europe* needed to be aware of how its principles might be applied on the wider scale, in Japan, China, India and Africa. Essentially, Williams was warning against a narrowness of vision. It was necessary, he cautioned, to 'broaden our minds and steady our hearts'.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the *New Europe*, Williams contributed an article on 'The Spirit of the Russian Revolution' to another prominent journal of international affairs, the *Round Table*. In it he traced the course of the revolution from its inception, and attempted to explain some of its key characteristics; the failings of the Provisional Government, and Lenin's success in turning what was essentially a mutiny against the war to his own account. Again, Williams stressed that the Russian Revolution bore great significance for the Western nations, not only in relation to the World War, but in view of the future of world civilisation. It was not enough to assume that Western democratic principles could be applied the world over, he cautioned. The revolution was a test, and a warning, which ought to teach the Western nations to confront and review their habits, prejudices and institutions, and their 'calm sense of achievement'.<sup>47</sup>

Since 1917 Williams's articles from the *Daily Chronicle* had been reprinted by a syndicate arrangement in the *New York Times*, and as a result his name was also known in the USA in connection with Russia. According to both Samuel Harper and Sergei Karpovich (the

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<sup>46</sup> Harold Williams, 'The Furnace of Democracy'. *The New Europe* Vol. III, No. 85 (30<sup>th</sup> May 1918) pp. 152-156.

<sup>47</sup> Harold Williams, 'The Spirit of the Russian Revolution' *The Round Table* (April 1918) pp. 710-749. On relations between the *New Europe* and *Round Table* groups, see Erik Goldstein, 'The Round Table and the New Europe', *The Round Table* No. 346 (1998) pp. 177-189.

latter was assistant to Boris Bakhmetev at the Russian embassy in Washington), Williams's articles had considerable influence.<sup>48</sup> In a letter of 11<sup>th</sup> May 1918, Karpovich thanked Williams effusively for the assistance he had rendered Russia as a journalist. Williams's dispatches, he stated, had been 'practically the only true source of actually veracious and correctly presented information concerning the internal conditions of Russia'. Karpovich hoped Williams's 'influence on the British and American public opinion will be to us a strong support in attaining the aims for which we are striving'.<sup>49</sup> Samuel Harper was also placing articles by Williams and Tyrkova-Williams in American publications where he could, and he circulated their letters to influential persons with an interest in Russia, such as Charles Crane, and John R. Mott.<sup>50</sup> Harper had been in Petrograd during the summer of 1917, but had chosen not to return to Russia after the October revolution, as he believed he could be of more use in America 'by trying to get support for those working over in Russia'.<sup>51</sup> He undertook bits and pieces of advisory work for the State Department, attempted to influence those in power through personal conversations, and was also involved in the organisation, in 1918, of the American League to Co-operate with Russia, a group which attempted to bring the press around to what Harper termed 'a fairer attitude' towards Russia. For Harper, and for Williams, unity of action between Britain and America was of paramount importance, and their regular correspondence was a means of keeping the dialogue going, and making sure they were both pushing in the same direction. For example, Harper's initial enthusiasm for the policy of recognising the regional soviets as a form of local government

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<sup>48</sup> Samuel Harper to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1918, and Sergei Karpovich to Harold Williams, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1918, Add. 54437.

<sup>49</sup> Sergei Karpovich to Harold Williams, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1918, Add. 54437.

<sup>50</sup> John R. Mott belonged to the International Committee of the YMCA, and had been involved in relief work amongst prisoners of war in Russia. He, along with Charles Crane and others, had been part of a special mission sent to Russia by President Wilson after America's entry into the war in 1917, to establish relations with the Provisional Government. Harper, *The Russia I Believe In* p. 99.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Harper to Harold Williams, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1918, Box 5, Folder 6, Samuel N. Harper Papers. On Harper's role in the campaign for intervention, see also G. F. Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations 1917-1920* 2 vols. (London, 1956-58) Vol. 2 'The Decision to Intervene' pp. 329-334.

was soon abandoned after communication with Williams and Tyrkova-Williams, and with Russians in the United States. At one point Harper had hoped that it might be possible to bring Harold Williams over to America for a few weeks. He felt Williams would be useful and would gain immediate attention as a result of his *New York Times* articles. This initiative came to nothing, however.<sup>52</sup>

Williams, Harper, and other like-minded commentators faced an uphill struggle against those shades of opinion which, either for ideological or tactical reasons, opposed their campaign for intervention. This included many former friends or acquaintances, such as Morgan Phillips Price, John Reed, Raymond Robins, and Arthur Ransome. Williams's friendship with Ransome, which had been close, was a casualty of the October revolution. Ransome had formerly held Williams's opinion in high regard, and often deferred to his point of view. However, he was convinced that Williams seriously underestimated Lenin's government – although Ransome always denied being pro-Bolshevik, he saw the Bolsheviks as a serious political force and was certain that they had staying power.<sup>53</sup> A difference in political opinions under normal circumstances might not have been enough to threaten the friendship, but the deaths of a number of Williams's close acquaintances, and the threat to his own family made the events of 1917 truly personal.

Arthur Ransome certainly seems to have blamed Ariadna Tyrkova for the breakdown of his friendship with Williams. His dislike of her is evident in his autobiography and his correspondence.<sup>54</sup> He was scathing about what he considered her reverential attitude to Miliukov,

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<sup>52</sup> Samuel Harper to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1918, Add. 54437. Extracts from a letter from Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1918, Folder 5, Box 21, Samuel N. Harper papers. Harper, *The Russia I Believe In* pp. 111-116.

<sup>53</sup> Notebook 4, Arthur Ransome papers.

<sup>54</sup> Oliver Gillespie to Arthur Ransome, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1957, Arthur Ransome to Oliver Gillespie, n.d. [1957], Arthur Ransome papers. Ransome, *Autobiography* p. 207.

and he himself seems to have regarded the Kadets with some contempt.<sup>55</sup> He clearly felt that it was Tyrkova's influence that made Williams so blind to what he considered to be the truth of the situation. As he wrote in a draft of his autobiography, this section of which was never published:

I shall never forget the shock I experienced at the dinner table of a lady of the Cadet party (Ariadna Tyrkova, later Mrs. Williams), not long after the March Revolution, when a man of that party, known to me for the gentleness of his disposition (Harold Williams), complained that the revolution had been bloodless, that it needed bloodletting, that the Bolsheviks would take power, and be cleared out a week later ... after which under Cadet tutelage, the Revolution could ... follow a normal, healthy course.<sup>56</sup>

In turn, Williams was astonished at Ransome's faithlessness. 'Ransome disgusts me', he wrote to Harper in September 1918. His journalism was a 'marvellous tissue of lies'.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, Ransome and his like were a force to be reckoned with in terms of western opinion on Russia; for one thing they were still in the country and were able to send up to date reports on the situation there which were likely to carry more weight than the opinions of embittered anti-Bolshevik émigrés. Ransome had good access to the centre of power through his relationship with Trotsky's secretary, Evgenia Shelephina (whom he later married), and his friendship with Karl Radek, in whose house he lived for a time. Even when Williams was still in Russia, the *New York Times*, true to its motto 'all the news that's fit to print', was printing his articles directly alongside Ransome's, regardless of the fact that their statements often blatantly contradicted one another. Where Williams mourned the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, Ransome dismissed it as the legacy of an earlier revolution. While Williams campaigned for

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<sup>55</sup> Arthur Ransome to Edith Ransome, 17<sup>th</sup> November 1918, Arthur Ransome papers. Ransome, *Autobiography* p. 207.

<sup>56</sup> Notebook 14, Arthur Ransome Papers.

<sup>57</sup> Extracts from a letter from Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1918, Box 5, Folder 21, Samuel N. Harper papers.



intervention, Ransome advocated swift recognition of the new government.<sup>58</sup> J. L. Garvin, the editor of the *Observer*, also preferred to present a variety of opinions. He disapproved of the system of 'tuning correspondents' opinions to chime with editorial comments', and told Williams so when the latter wrote to complain about the sentiments expressed by the *Observer's* Russian correspondent, David Soskice. He was happy, however, to include contributions from Williams.<sup>59</sup> However, both the *New York Times* and the *Observer* showed an editorial bias towards intervention. Later, in 1919, Garvin asked Williams to write an editorial himself, but anonymously, as he was then convinced that 'Russia is the key of the world's problem', and was alarmed at Allies policy of 'disastrous helplessness'. Williams, apparently, was one of the few people whose views on Russia Garvin trusted.<sup>60</sup>

The anti-Bolshevik Russians and their western colleagues soon learned the lesson that, whatever appeals they made against recognition of the Bolshevik government and in favour of moral and military intervention, they had to be made in terms acceptable to the West – i.e. in terms of the western democratic, liberal ideal.<sup>61</sup> Their initial response was to insist that the Russian struggle still be seen as part of the war as a whole, despite the fact that Lenin's government had concluded a separate peace. As Williams stressed in his press and academic articles, Russia had made enormous sacrifices in the early stages of the war, and had suffered greatly in the common cause. By abandoning Russia now, the Allies were effectively abandoning their ally.<sup>62</sup> By this rationale, failure to intervene in Russia would also give Germany the upper

<sup>58</sup> See for example *The New York Times* 5<sup>th</sup> January 1918, pp. 1-2, 7<sup>th</sup> January 1918, p. 1, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1918, p. 5, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1918, pp. 1-2, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1918 pp. 1-2.

<sup>59</sup> Garvin to Williams, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1918, Box 12, Folder 'Various Persons to Harold Williams (1)', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>60</sup> Typed note of 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1919, Box 12, Folder 'Various Persons to Harold Williams (1)', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>61</sup> Pipes, *Struve – Liberal on the Right* p. 274.

<sup>62</sup> *The New York Times* 25<sup>th</sup> May 1918 p. 3.

hand. Not only had the Germans had a hand in bringing the Bolsheviks to power, and in forcing Russia out of the war, they were now in a position to exploit the situation further by intervening to restore order. They would penetrate into Asia, threatening the position of India, and would thoroughly exploit Russia's economic resources. The Allied failure to intervene would mean a victory for German despotism over Western democracy.<sup>63</sup> When news filtered through in mid-1918 of Miliukov's negotiations with the German staff in the Ukraine, Williams presented it, although he regretted it deeply, as a mark of desperation. Russian patriots were naturally inclined towards the Allies, but of course they would rather join forces with the enemy than see their own country fall into ruin.<sup>64</sup>

It was also important to stress the truly international nature of the Bolshevik threat. Lenin and Trotsky, Williams insisted, were ultimately unconcerned with the future of Russia. For them, Russia was a 'jumping-off ground' for the world revolution.<sup>65</sup> They had gained control in Russia as a result of the country's weakness, but the Bolshevik disease could equally well infect the other countries of Europe. If the Allies did not take steps to eradicate Bolshevism, it would overwhelm them. With Russia as a 'training ground, and with the money and arms of the Russian State they aim at advancing through the moral and material wreckage of the great war and establishing their dictatorship not only in Warsaw, Berlin, Vienna and Budapest, but ultimately in Rome, Paris, London and New York.'<sup>66</sup> All of these arguments rested on the assumption that Bolshevism was not the choice of the Russian people. It was an important and critical phase, but

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<sup>63</sup> *The New York Times* 25<sup>th</sup> May 1918 p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> *The New York Times* 18<sup>th</sup> July 1918, p. 6, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1918 p. 5. On Miliukov's negotiations with the Germans in the Ukraine, for which he was condemned by the rest of his party, including Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, see Stockdale, *Paul Miliukov and the Quest for a Liberal Russia* pp. 266-270.

<sup>65</sup> Memorandum on the Russian Situation, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1918, Box 23, Folder 'Harold Williams, misc. and short articles (4)'. It seems likely that this is the memorandum Williams wrote for Lloyd George following their meeting.

<sup>66</sup> *The Daily Chronicle* 31<sup>st</sup> December 1918 p. 3.

it was not representative of the long term state of Russian public opinion. The 'real Russia', for Williams, was represented by the anti-Bolshevik liberal Russians.

Intervention was, in Williams's view, an unhappy term for the action that he and those who shared his views had in mind. It suggested interference, rather than assistance. What was needed was a source of obvious, physical help. 'We have too long been merely a name, a distant echo, a hazy legend. We must be there on the spot'.<sup>67</sup> Forces, which should be brought in through Archangel, Vladivostok and the Caucasus, should be used to provide a rallying point for the Russian people. Japanese troops, which were ready to enter Russia by Siberia, might be used, providing they were part of a co-ordinated Allied effort, which would appease Russian fears of Japanese designs in the Far East.<sup>68</sup> The Czech troops which had been fighting with the Russian army and were now in Siberia could certainly be used. Any action must be carried out in a completely disinterested fashion. The object should be 'to help the Russian people as a whole, to protect them against their enemy and ours', and not to dictate forms of government. 'We can only help the Russian peoples to organize, to express their will, to re-establish the State in a form that best pleases them'.<sup>69</sup> Williams's private views on the immediate future of the Russian empire were made clear in a letter to Samuel Harper at around this time. 'Personally', he wrote, 'I don't care a brass farthing whether it's a Constitutional Monarchy [or] a Republic, so long as a stable and pretty democratic government is established for the whole of Russia. In any case I think the first stage must be a wise military dictatorship, without reprisals or punitive expeditions, to give the unhappy country a rest and let it find out what it really wants'.<sup>70</sup> In an article for the *Daily*

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<sup>67</sup> *The New York Times* 25<sup>th</sup> May 1918, p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> Memorandum on the Russian Situation, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1918, Box 23, Folder 'Harold Williams, misc. and short articles (4)' BAR Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>69</sup> *The New York Times* 25<sup>th</sup> May 1918, p. 3, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1918, p. 1, 20<sup>th</sup> August 1918, p.1.

<sup>70</sup> Extracts from a letter from Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1918, Box 5, Folder 21, Samuel N. Harper papers.

*Chronicle*, he insisted that 'if Allied action in Russia were dictated merely by reactionary capitalist interests I, for my part, would not raise a finger to support it. But it is just because I am convinced that the spread of Bolshevism – in itself a gross tyranny – would lead in the long run to the triumph of a bitter and cruel reaction that I urge the speedy liberation of Russia from Leninism'.<sup>71</sup> Mistakes were inevitable, he admitted, and many 'fresh lessons as to methods and forms of freedom' would have to be learned.<sup>72</sup>

In the summer of 1918 the Allied governments debated the questions of intervention and recognition amongst themselves and in inter-allied discussions. In the spring, small detachments were sent to Archangelsk, Murmansk and Vladivostok, to protect military supplies that it was feared the Bolsheviks might seize. The Russian question was largely allowed to drift, however, as it was vastly overshadowed by the continued battle against Germany on the Western front. While campaigners for intervention lit upon the slightest statement by British and American leaders which might support their case, Lloyd George and President Wilson remained cagey and sensitive about the issue of Allied intervention. When Woodrow Wilson announced in a speech in New York in May that he intended to stand by Russia just as he stood by France, Williams used the statement as the basis for an editorial for the *Daily Chronicle* – in it he praised Wilson's approval of military intervention, and urged speedy action. The result was a telegram from Robert Lansing, the US Secretary of State, asking why Williams interpreted Wilson's speech as an approval of military action. When the *New York Times* published Williams's editorial, it cautiously placed it above the statement 'Nothing is known in this country of any commitment by President Wilson to any policy of intervention in Russia.'<sup>73</sup> Wilson's eventual decision, in

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<sup>71</sup> *Daily Chronicle* 31<sup>st</sup> December 1918, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> Harold Williams, 'The Search for Russia' *The New Europe* Vol. VII, No. 87, (13<sup>th</sup> June 1918) pp. 197-8.

<sup>73</sup> *The New York Times* 25<sup>th</sup> May 1918, p. 3. Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 215. Wes, *Michael Rostovtzeff* p. 22.

August 1918, to send a small force to Vladivostok in combination with the Japanese, was directed mainly by a desire to protect the Czechoslovak troops. British aid to the anti-Bolshevik Russians, as it developed in 1918 and 1919, meant offering military supplies and moral support rather than any effective fighting force.<sup>74</sup>

As an Allied victory became increasingly certain in the autumn of 1918, and the Allies gained control of new areas on the fringes of Russia, the possible methods and forms of intervention became clearer. The will to maintain a sustained intervention, however, was declining. Williams and his friends had struggled to convince their readers and listeners that Russia was still part of the war, but they now faced the even harder task of convincing them that, without intervention in Russia, there could be no peace. Williams expressed his concern in a piece for the *New York Times*.

The allied armies are marching from triumph to triumph. Germany is tottering. Victory is within reach, victory and liberation from a nightmare. There is the sound of suppressed cheering in the air and jubilation is mingled with amazement that the cause of our hearts is at last so brilliantly vindicated by our arms. The Allies are exchanging congratulations and vying in praise of each other's efforts.

But there is a shadow in the background watching with eyes full of sadness and longing, the shadow of a once great ally who spent her strength in the darkest hour, who put forth an effort beyond all her resources, and fell stricken before victory dawned.

We dare not forget Russia now, broken as she is and suffering agony such as no nation has suffered for centuries. This victory that we are now approaching is hers as much as ours. Her blood is in it, the blood of thousands of her best sons. Her sorrow is in it, a sorrow that has sounded all the depths of tragedy.<sup>75</sup>

In the *New Europe* he delivered a similar message.

Our victory is Russia's victory, and unless one of the fruits of it is Russia's redemption our victory is incomplete and insecure. The great nation that has broken itself in trying to save

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<sup>74</sup> On the development of British and American intervention in the Russian civil war, see Richard H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921* 3 vols. (Princeton and London, 1961-72), Vol. 1 *Intervention and the War*, Vol. 2 *Britain and the Russian Civil War*. George F. Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations 1917-1920* 2 vols. (London 1956-58) Vol. 2 'The Decision to Intervene'.

<sup>75</sup> *The New York Times* 16<sup>th</sup> October 1918, p. 3.

Europe makes to the Allies, in the hour of victory, a powerful appeal that cannot and must not remain unheard. Not for the sake of compassion only, though surely there was never such a sight to provoke compassion as the sight of Russia now, not only for the sake of her great effort that yesterday failed but will surely succeed to-morrow, but for the sake of that new Europe in which the Russian people believed with an utterly devoted and uninstructed faith, for the sake of the integrity and security of the new world for which we have been stubbornly fighting. Russia must be Russia again. As a wounded soldier, lying forsaken on the field, stirs with faint hope when he hears in the distance his comrades' shout of victory, so Russia now, maimed and bleeding from many wounds, is trying to raise herself to take her share in the triumph.<sup>76</sup>

It was not only in the west that events had developed however. In Russia, both the Bolshevik government and the several groups of anti-Bolshevik forces had consolidated their position. In Siberia, forces led by Admiral Kolchak were experiencing some success, and a provisional government associated with this army was established in Omsk. In the Caucasus, General Alekseev's Volunteer Army had become a sizeable force. General Evgenii Miller in the far north of Russia, and General Nikolai Iudenich in Estonia led smaller anti-Bolshevik forces. One of the things that preoccupied western observers was the allegedly reactionary nature of these army generals; it was widely feared that they harboured right-wing agendas which might involve restoring the Tsarist regime and reclaiming land which had been distributed to the people. Even Rex Leeper had some concerns about this. Williams, however, was certain that this was not the case. Kolchak, he insisted, was a Russian patriot, with 'broad views and a finely tempered character'. The Siberian people over whom he currently ruled were practical democrats, and his government included several socialists. His programme was to secure good working conditions, land for the peasants, and to form a constituent assembly. When Denikin took command of the Volunteer Army after Alekseev's death, Williams described him also as a 'clean strong man', a military man at heart, but dedicated to establishing 'that type of strong and orderly democratic

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<sup>76</sup> Harold Williams, 'Russia, "The Acid Test"' *The New Europe* Vol. IX, No. 105, (17<sup>th</sup> October 1918) pp. 15-17.

government which is best suited to promote the prosperity of the Russian State and the free development of the peoples of Russia'.<sup>77</sup>

The bulk of the British and American press actually favoured intervention. The *New York Times*, in an editorial of 17<sup>th</sup> October 1918, declared: 'We have not forgotten Russia; we mean to stand by her when the end of the war comes, but why not stand by her now?'<sup>78</sup> The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Morning Post*, both naturally conservative, favoured intervention. The *Times* was also instinctively in favour, and from mid-1919, under the leadership of Henry Wickham Steed, the paper conducted 'a wild campaign against the Bolsheviks' with the intention of preventing Lloyd George from making peace with Lenin and giving the anti-Bolsheviks time to consolidate their forces.<sup>79</sup> There were also prominent public figures at the head of the campaign for intervention. Samuel Hoare, whose Coalition Government Foreign Affairs Committee attempted to stimulate government support for the White forces, was in close touch with Williams, whose opinion he held in high regard, and whom he described at the time as 'the most active anti-Bolshevik writer'.<sup>80</sup> Through Hoare, Leeper, and later more directly, Williams was also in touch with Winston Churchill, who was violently opposed to the Bolshevik regime. Even Churchill, however, was convinced that action taken against the Bolsheviks had to be taken by the Russians themselves. If there was evidence that a strong movement against the Bolsheviks existed, he would support Allied assistance to that movement, as indeed he did at several points during 1919 when Kolchak or Denikin's forces appeared strong, lobbying both Lloyd George and the Peace Conference to send troops, and military assistance. Yet he was frequently disappointed,

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<sup>77</sup> Harold Williams, 'Russia and the Peace Conference' *The Edinburgh Review* Vol. 229, No. 468 (April 1919) pp. 286-87.

<sup>78</sup> *The New York Times* 17<sup>th</sup> October 1918, p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Rex Leeper to Harold Williams, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1919, Add. 54438.

<sup>80</sup> Samuel Hoare to Col. Sir V. Kell, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1919, II:3, Templewood papers, Cambridge University Library. Cross, *Samuel Hoare - a political biography* pp. 60-61. See chapter three on Hoare and Williams's co-operation in Petrograd during the war.

and would rather have seen Allied troops withdraw than prop up a fighting force which was not strongly committed to its objectives. There was therefore as much work to be done in promoting a positive image of the forces led by Alekseev, Denkin, and Kolchak, as there was in expounding the evils of Bolshevism.<sup>81</sup>

Williams's role in the campaign was complicated, however, by developments at the *Daily Chronicle*. Robert Donald, the *Chronicle*'s editor, had until 1918 enjoyed a close relationship with the Prime Minister. In 1917 Lloyd George had invited Donald to work with him on the establishment of the Ministry for Information, and as we have already seen, they were on close enough terms for Donald to invite Williams to Lloyd George's house for tea. The *Chronicle* had always been broadly supportive of the Prime Minister in its editorial policy. In 1918, however, both the personal and editorial relationships began to deteriorate. The dispute was triggered by Donald's decision to employ Sir Frederick Maurice, who had recently criticised Lloyd George in a letter to *The Times*, as military correspondent on the *Chronicle*. In a second incident, the day after Lloyd George made a speech praising Marshall Foch but making no mention of Haig, the *Chronicle* published an editorial entitled 'Well Done Haig!', which included the line: 'It is a small mind that petulantly refuses to acknowledge the services of a great soldier'.<sup>82</sup> Lloyd George was clearly unhappy with the paper's policy. In October 1918, he encouraged a syndicate led by Henry Dalziel to buy the newspaper. The intention was to link the paper firmly with Lloyd George's government and policy – the paper would be tied into being a liberal organ for 14 years.

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<sup>81</sup> Harold Williams to Rex Leeper, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1919, Rex Leeper to Sir Archibald Sinclair, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1919, Sir Archibald Sinclair to Winston Churchill, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1919, CHAR 16/12, Harold Williams to Sir Archibald Sinclair, 26<sup>th</sup> September 1920, CHAR 16/49, Memorandum by Harold Williams on 'the present position of General Wrangel' CHAR 16/54, Churchill Archive Centre. Martin Gilbert, *Churchill - a life* (London 1991) pp. 407-413. Markku Ruotsila, 'The Churchill-Mannerheim Collaboration in the Russian Intervention, 1919-1920', *Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 80, No. 1, (January 2002) pp. 1-20.

<sup>82</sup> Linton Andrews and H. A. Taylor (eds.), *Lords and Labourers of the Press - men who fashioned the modern British newspaper* (Illinois, 1970) pp. 38-40. Grigg, *Lloyd George - War Leader* pp. 614-616.



Donald, who valued his editorial independence, could not accept this and resigned. The staff of the *Chronicle* were also greatly upset by the change.<sup>83</sup>

Harold Williams had always enjoyed a happy relationship with his editor and with the paper. It had allowed him to develop his own style of correspondence and had given his dispatches a prominence they might not have had in another publication.<sup>84</sup> He felt uncomfortable about the change; rightly so, as it turned out. Under the new arrangement, Ernest Perris, who became the new editor, was committed to support the line taken by Lloyd George's Government. Williams's outspoken articles on Russia did not fit this mould. When they did still appear, as in January 1919, they did so under a subheading to the effect that Williams was expressing his personal views and not those of the paper. This statement could only encourage the paper's readers to question the statements within the articles. In October 1918 Williams was sent to Geneva, where, as an 'expert on revolutions', he was to study the development of the revolution in Germany.<sup>85</sup>

Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams travelled with her husband as far as Paris, and there they received the news of the armistice. She was meeting members of the Russian colony in Paris, to discuss their plans to lobby the Allies regarding the forthcoming peace settlement. Harold Williams met Robert Seton-Watson and Henry Wickham Steed, and they in turn discussed the opportunities and problems presented in Eastern Europe.<sup>86</sup> Williams then travelled on to Geneva, where he began to study the situation in Germany.

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<sup>83</sup> There is correspondence on this episode in the *Daily Chronicle's* history in D/2/3-18 in the Robert Donald papers at the House of Lords Records Office.

<sup>84</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>85</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 219-220.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 220-221. Harold Williams, 'Opportunities and Dangers in Russia' *The New Europe* Vol. IX, No. 110, (21<sup>st</sup> November 1918) pp. 128-131.

Williams found the progress of the German revolution uninspiring in comparison to its Russian counterpart. There was, he wrote, 'no exultation in liberty, no particular indignation against the authors of the national misfortune, no recognition of the wrong done by Germany to the world, not the faintest sign of national repentance'. The hostile attitude to the Allies remained unchanged, and the overthrow of the Kaiser was regarded at best with indifference. The overall impression was of a 'grudging acknowledgement of the crushing military defeat', rather than a 'heartfelt recantation of German imperialism', and there was a tendency still to blame the Allies for the outbreak of the war.<sup>87</sup> However, A Russian named Przhevalinskii who had travelled through Germany to Geneva told Williams of the joy in Berlin at the overthrow of the Kaiser.<sup>88</sup> What was lacking in Germany, Williams felt, was either a great leader, or an inspiring idea.<sup>89</sup> In Berne he spoke with two German intellectuals, who left him with the impression that the new young leaders of Germany, such as Kurt Eisner, had good intentions but were not practical statesmen.<sup>90</sup>

Williams did still find the opportunity to report on Russian affairs, and although Switzerland was not at this time such a Russian centre as London had become, he was closer to Europe there and was receiving bits and pieces of information. From Geneva he reported the death of General Alekseev and the appointment of General Denikin as his successor at the head of the Volunteer Army.<sup>91</sup> Przhevalinskii gave him a hopeful account of the situation in the Ukraine - German oppression had apparently relaxed, and the Kiev government was now openly in favour of union with Russia. People could speak and write freely, and there was a great deal of

<sup>87</sup> *The New York Times* 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1918, p. 3, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1918, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> *The New York Times* 27<sup>th</sup> November 1918, p. 4. *The Daily Chronicle* 27<sup>th</sup> November 1918, p. 1. Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 25<sup>th</sup> November 1918, Box 7, Folder 'Correspondence - Williams, Harold 1918'. BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>89</sup> *The New York Times* 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1918, p. 3.

<sup>90</sup> *The New York Times* 16<sup>th</sup> December 1918, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> *The New York Times* 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1918, p. 3.

support for the Volunteer Army.<sup>92</sup> Williams was excited to hear that Allied ships were at Sevastopol, and that Allied officers were in Kiev.<sup>93</sup> A representative of Georgia gave him news of that country, which was apparently quiet and orderly.<sup>94</sup>

He was also able to report on Eastern Europe – on Pilsudski's dictatorship in Poland, the economic crisis in Hungary, and conditions in Vienna.<sup>95</sup> He had received some papers on the Czechs and Slovaks (presumably from Seton-Watson), and gained from them 'a delightful picture of the awakening of this picturesque people to liberty'.<sup>96</sup> It is clear that Williams still maintained his reservations about the universal application of the principle of self-determination, however. In an article on Czechoslovakia he wrote of the Slovaks, who had maintained their nationality for a thousand years under Magyar rule, but were happy to be united with their Czech 'kinsmen'. Of another Slovak national council, which had declared an independent Slovak republic on the basis of the differences in the Czech and Slovak languages, he was dismissive. The language differed, he explained, in the same way as Ukrainian differed from Russian, or broad Scotch differed from English. And to quote what was apparently a favourite saying of President Masaryk's, 'you cannot found a state on dialect'.<sup>97</sup> It was impossible, however, to escape the national problems of Europe. 'Oh! How difficult they all are – from the Rhine to the Caucasus', he wrote to Ariadna. 'I hear long explanations of about six different national problems

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<sup>92</sup> *The New York Times* 28<sup>th</sup> November 1918 p. 3, Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 25<sup>th</sup> November 1918, Box 7, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1918', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>93</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1918, Box 7, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1918', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>94</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1918, Box 7, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1918', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>95</sup> *The New York Times* 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1918, p. 4, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1918, p. 4, 11<sup>th</sup> December 1918, p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> *The New York Times* 18<sup>th</sup> December 1918, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> *The New York Times* 18<sup>th</sup> December 1918, p. 2.

in one day. Wilson doesn't know what he will have to study when he gets here. They all seem to want to talk their own language even if they starve in the process.'<sup>98</sup>

In one of his last dispatches from Switzerland before his return to London, Williams reflected sombrely on the current state of Europe.

Europe is strewn with guns, machine guns, bombs, and ammunition, all the leavings of a great war, and every one and no one is master of these instruments of destruction.

Frontiers and lines of [demarcation] are swaying. Agreements are made today and broken tomorrow, and save for a few cases there is not a Government from the Rhine eastward that is not desperately beating the air today and is liable to be swept away tomorrow.

In the war the democratic maritime powers are victorious, and the great blocks of despotism in the European hinterland have been broken up into their component atoms without any visible binding will or controlling purpose.

I have no hesitation in saying that the spectacle of European ruin is simply appalling. Nineteenth century civilization has broken down.

I do not mean simply that dilapidated trains crawl dismally; that postal and telegraphic communication is hardly better than in Napoleonic times; that famine and pestilence are creeping over Europe, but that there is a collapse of human, moral energy, a revival of the primitive, barbaric instincts, and the fierce endeavour to have one's little private will by force.

The general sense of the purpose of life is lost in the chaos of petty warring impulses. People eagerly repeat the shibboleths of democracy and equality, hoping that this will dispel the terrible dread that lurks in their hearts. Little men, often well-meaning and sincere, devise shallow plans for coping with the menacing forces of destruction...

I don't wish to appear to be preaching, but only the imagery of the apocalypse can do justice to the present state of Europe. It is not a political but a spiritual crisis. The victory of the Maritime Powers is an immense moral responsibility because on the victors lies the task of saving and reconstructing all that is worth saving in civilisation.

I hope that I may be forgiven for telegraphing in this way; but no one who has closely watched the present ruin of Europe can help feeling that all purely external discussion is futile unless the moral foundations of peace are powerfully laid. That is why the League of Nations is supremely important. If the League of Nations is a Utopia, then our spiritual strength is exhausted and civilization will go down in a welter of barbarous slaughter.<sup>99</sup>

In a lighter mood he wrote to Ariadna that 'Altogether this place is like a cinematograph, and it's full of ambassadors past and present of all the old and new nations of Europe. I sometimes roar with laughing, it is so funny. The world is full of tragedy, but often the present

<sup>98</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1918, Box 7, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1918', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>99</sup> *The New York Times* 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1918, pp. 1, 3.

state of affairs is so comic that it is impossible to treat it seriously.'<sup>100</sup> 'It is perfectly astonishing and inconceivable what disorder there is everywhere, and how few really capable men there are. I have entirely ceased to care for parties or programmes, but I do long to see men'.<sup>101</sup>

Tyrkova-Williams was unimpressed by the *Daily Chronicle's* decision to send her husband to Geneva, and by his failure to return. When he telegraphed her to the effect that he had been offered the choice of going on to either Munich or Vienna, she replied that not only she, but also Leeper and Pares insisted that he must return to London. He was needed, either there or in Paris, where the Peace Conference would shortly open.

... We must settle the business with the Chronicle ... They must understand that you are necessary to them in Paris. Our scheme must be that you have to come here, to speak with different important people who till now had not fixed their mind. To help them to fix it and then go to Paris perhaps only for the next two months, the most [decisive]. I am sure it is your way and the best way to work for the Chronicle too, because every paper has to send the best correspondent to Paris now.<sup>102</sup>

Williams had little enthusiasm for the trip to Vienna either. His one desire, he wrote, was to return to Russia with Ariadna. The news that the Allies were in the South of Russia gave him hope that they themselves might be back in Petrograd by January. Russia was his business, he insisted, not Austria or Germany.<sup>103</sup> He flatly refused to go to Germany, on the grounds that he would be able to see things less clearly there, but by the beginning of December Perris was bombarding him with telegrams telling him to go to Munich, or Vienna. Williams was annoyed – just because he knew the languages of these countries, it did not mean that to cover events there

<sup>100</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1918, Box 7, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1918', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>101</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1918, Box 7, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1918', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>102</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams to Harold Williams, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1918, Box 11, Folder 'Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams to Harold Williams 1916-1919', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>103</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1918, Box 7, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1918', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

was his job. Above all, he said, he missed Ariadna and wanted to be back working with her in London, or ideally in Russia.<sup>104</sup>

The self is a funny thing, and if my bones and muscles are here bending over this table in a long, narrow room in the first floor of the Bernehof, it doesn't mean that I am here at all. I go to bed at night, and get up in the morning, I eat good meals ... I go about and talk and hear and say a number of interesting and intelligent things in different languages, I read every day the never-ending story of the wreck of nineteenth century civilisation, and feel sad, because never a prophet comes to tell of the birth of a new world. It's all wreck and ruin and collapse – a ghastly business, with weak, tired people wandering about and trying to keep some order, to build little huts amidst the ruins. And I send telegrams which I suppose you read ... And yet I am not here, and sometimes I feel as though the real me were hovering about in space and looking down curiously on this lanky grey haired shadow that wanders about the arcades of little Berne.<sup>105</sup>

Despite his reluctance, Williams had begun to prepare to go to Vienna. It was Ariadna's insistence, in letters and telegrams, that convinced him to return to England.<sup>106</sup> In returning he severed his permanent connection with the *Daily Chronicle*, and he returned to London with no form of employment but his work for the Russian anti-Bolshevik cause.

In that connection, however, there was plenty of work to be done. In January 1919, the peace conference opened in Paris. The conference provided a focus for the hopes and energies of officials, diplomats and observers across Europe, and particularly for those Western observers who possessed a genuine belief in the principles embodied in Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points and the spirit of the 'New Europe'.<sup>107</sup> Although it was clear that Russia did not fit the easy mould of democratic self government, and although assistance to Kolchak and Denikin was still continuing only on an ad-hoc basis, it was clear that many of the decisions that would have to be

<sup>104</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1918, Box 7, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1918', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>105</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1918, Box 7, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1918', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>106</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams to Harold Williams, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1918, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1918, Box 11, Folder 'Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams to Harold Williams 1916-1919', Telegrams, Box 8, Folder 'Harold Williams – telegrams', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>107</sup> Harold Nicholson, *Peacemaking 1919* (Constable 1933) chapter 1.

taken by the conference either depended on or would affect the situation in Russia. The anti-Bolshevik Russians and western opponents of the Bolshevik regime were anxious to secure representation and a voice at the conference. To this end, the Russian National Committee, chaired by Prince Lvov and including amongst others Maklakov, Sazonov and Chaikovskii, was formed. This body was not officially recognised by the peace conference, but it did have the backing of both the Omsk government led by Admiral Kolchak and the South Russian Government associated with General Denikin, and it was the medium through which much of the Allied negotiation with anti-Bolshevik Russia took place.<sup>108</sup>

All sides in the Russian debate were to be disappointed by the proceedings of the peace conference. The fact that there were such a multitude of questions that needed to be addressed often led to none of the questions being addressed properly, and on top of that there were so many conflicting opinions and attitudes (not least the conflict between the 'old diplomacy' and 'new Europe' schools of thought), that it was difficult to reach agreement on any one issue.<sup>109</sup> The Russian problem seemed so intractable that it was often left to one side. Herbert Hoover described Russia as 'the Banquo's ghost sitting at every council table'.<sup>110</sup> James Headlam Morley, a member of the Foreign Office's Political Intelligence Department, commented in his diary that

In the discussions everything inevitably leads up to Russia. Then there is a discursive discussion; it is agreed that the point at issue cannot be determined until the general policy towards Russia has been settled; having agreed on this, instead of settling it, they pass on to some other subject.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>108</sup> John M. Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace* (Princeton 1966) pp. 66-78.

<sup>109</sup> Jonathan Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity. E. H. Carr 1892-1982* (London 1999) pp. 25-26.

<sup>110</sup> Herbert Hoover, *The Hoover Memoirs* 3 vols. (London 1952) Vol. 1, 'Years of Adventure' p. 411.

<sup>111</sup> J. W. Headlam-Morley, *A Memoir of the Paris Peace Conference 1919* (London 1972).

One of the first steps taken with regard to Russia was the proposal put forward on 22<sup>nd</sup> January that all parties in the Russian conflict, including representatives of the Bolshevik Government, should meet at a separate conference, with Allied representatives, on the island of Prinkipo in the Sea of Marmara. Williams was dismayed by this move, which he regarded as a 'poor joke'. It is hardly surprising that he opposed a proposition which acknowledged the Bolsheviks as a real and authoritative power by bringing them into peace talks. But the Prinkipo proposal offended Williams on a wider, European level. If the proposition was meant seriously, he wrote in the *New Europe*, then it betrayed an 'appalling ignorance' of the present state of Russia and of Europe generally. If on the other hand it was a strategy, then all hopes of founding a lasting peace based on an enlightened public opinion, accountability and morality in international relations were dashed.<sup>112</sup> He also dismissed the US-led plan to send food to Russia in the hope that this relief would alter the country's ideological orientation. Starvation was the effect, not the cause of Bolshevism, Williams insisted.<sup>113</sup>

The work of the peace conference would necessarily be imperfect, Williams reasoned, while the Russian problem was left out of account, or was treated too narrowly. Williams, like many other observers, could see that the Peace Conference was unlikely to solve all the intractable problems thrown up by the war. Yet he could not despair of the process entirely. He appreciated and supported the attempt, as he perceived it, to impose a new unity, a new morality, and a new constitution (in the form of the League of Nations) on the world and on world affairs. Yet he saw the Russian question, with its own specific characteristics and complexities, as a 'challenge and a criticism' to the whole peace process – a warning that there were many processes at work which the delegates in Paris, and indeed all observers might not understand;

<sup>112</sup> Harold Williams, 'Prinkipo' *The New Europe* Vol X No. 120 (30<sup>th</sup> January 1919) pp. 49-53. Also partially reprinted in *The New York Times*, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1919, p. 14.

<sup>113</sup> *The New York Times* 21<sup>st</sup> April 1919 p. 2, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1919, p. 16.



that their decisions had far-reaching consequences, and that these decisions and conclusions could not therefore be made lightly, quickly, or according to any supposedly universally valid system. The work of the Peace Conference could only be 'a suggestion, an experiment, a beginning'. The League of Nations and the Fourteen Points, stemming as they did from an Anglo-Saxon mentality, could be applied only with caution to the problems of Europe, and indeed the world.<sup>114</sup>

Another emerging problem was the 'border state policy' which was gaining currency in British government and Foreign Office circles. Directed in part by sympathy for the anti-Bolshevik, liberal governments of newly independent countries such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and partly by a cynical desire to weaken Russia in the long term by detaching provinces in the Baltic and the Caucasus from her empire, this policy aroused the wrath of the Russian National Committee and of sympathisers such as Williams.<sup>115</sup> In Williams's view, 'to set up a number of new border states along the fringe of the Russian Empire without reference to Russian aspirations and necessities, without waiting for or promoting the re-establishment of Russia, is to endanger the existence of those proposed states, to serve the purposes of a reconstituted Germany, and to sow the seeds of very serious complications with Russia in the future.' Williams did not dispute the re-establishment of Poland, though he warned that her eastern frontiers should be carefully delineated so as to avoid future conflict with a restored Russia. The independence of Finland, he admitted, was also inevitable. But beyond that, he

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<sup>114</sup> Harold Williams, 'Russia and the Peace Conference', *Edinburgh Review* Vol. 229 No. 468 (April 1919) pp. 271-289.

<sup>115</sup> On the British attitude to the Baltic states see John M. Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace* (Princeton University Press, 1966) pp. 55-6, Edgar Anderson, 'The British Policy towards the Baltic States 1918-1920' *Journal of Central European Affairs* Vol. 19 (1957), and Olavi Hovi, *The Baltic Area in British Policy 1918-1921* (Helsinki 1980).

regarded the Allied attempts to encourage the independence of small border states as 'debateable and dangerous'.<sup>116</sup>

The Prinkipo proposal made members of the Russian colony in London realise just how far the Allied understanding of the situation in Russia differed from the view they had been trying to put across. On the initiative of Michael Rostovtsev an organisation was founded which aimed to direct British public and government opinion away from recognition of Lenin's government and towards intervention on behalf of the anti-Bolshevik 'Whites'. Members of the Russian Liberation Committee (initially known as the Russian Liberation Union) included Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, who acted as secretary and undertook much of the day to day running of the committee, Harold Williams, Konstantin Nabokov, Isaak Shklovskii, Pavel Miliukov, and Petr Struve. The Committee was funded by contributions from a Russian businessman, Nikolai Denisov. It was based at offices at 173 Fleet Street.<sup>117</sup>

One of the Russian Liberation Committee's most important functions was that it acted as a telegraphic agency for Admiral Kolchak's government in Omsk, and distributed these telegrams, which were an important source of counter information to the Bolshevik reports on the progress of the Russian civil war, to the British press. The agency was also involved in the setting up of information bureaux in south Russia – George Crookston, who went out to south Russia in early 1919, was given a sum of money with which to establish agencies for telegraphic and postal communication in Odessa, Ekaterinodar and Rostov.<sup>118</sup> In its first year the committee published a weekly bulletin, which carried short articles that stressed the dire economic circumstances in

<sup>116</sup> Harold Williams, 'Russia and the Peace Conference', *Edinburgh Review* Vol. 229 No. 468, (April 1919) pp. 271-289.

<sup>117</sup> G. S. Smith, *D. S. Mirsky – A Russian-English Life 1890-1939* (Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 89. Marinus Wes gives a brief account of the activities of the Russian Liberation Committee in *Michael Rostovtzeff – Historian in Exile* (Stuttgart 1990) pp. 25-6. There is a much more detailed account in O. Kaznina, *Russkie v Anglii* (Moscow 1997) pp. 36-42.

<sup>118</sup> Minutes of the Russian Liberation Committee, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1919, Add. 54466.

Soviet Russia and gave accounts of the Bolshevik terror campaign and the persecution of the Russian church. They also gave information on the progress of Admiral Kolchak's government and army, which according to the bulletin stood for 'reorganisation of life on the basis of free participation of all in the general and local institutions'.<sup>119</sup> The Committee made every effort to print documents and statements which came straight from either the Bolsheviks or the White forces, a strategy of which Samuel Harper, amongst others, approved. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams was sending Harper the bulletins, and the latter considered them 'excellent and just what we need' - he had asked the State Department to secure two sets.<sup>120</sup> From the end of March 1919 the bulletin began to appear under the Committee's joint slogans - 'No Compromise with Bolshevism!' and 'Russia United and Free!' The committee also published individual pamphlets on pertinent issues, which were widely distributed - 'The Communists and the Russian Church', 'Violators of Art', 'The Famine', and 'Can Soviet Russia be a Market for Europe?' One of the pamphlets the committee published was a reprint of Harold Williams's article on *The Spirit of the Russian Revolution*, originally written for the *Round Table*.<sup>121</sup> Between February and December 1920 the committee issued a weekly magazine, *The New Russia* - this was discontinued due to the heavy burden of expenditure. In August 1921 it was replaced by a monthly review, *Russian Life*, which in turn was discontinued in March 1922.<sup>122</sup> By this time of course the objectives of the Liberation Committee had undergone a marked change - intervention was no longer even a remote possibility. The Committee still had a role to play, however; it considered itself to be 'the

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<sup>119</sup> The Bulletin of the Russian Liberation Committee, No. 3, 10<sup>th</sup> March 1919, p. 1.

<sup>120</sup> Samuel Harper to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1919, Box 1, Folder 'Harper, Samuel N.', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>121</sup> The Bulletin of the Russian Liberation Committee, 1919-20. *Publications of the Russian Liberation Committee*, British Library.

<sup>122</sup> Information on the Russian Liberation Committee, Add. 54466. *The New Russia* (1920), *Russian Life* (1921-22).

only organisation aimed at giving the British public the 'true facts on the Russian situation'.<sup>123</sup> It no longer had much mainstream influence, but it did manage to keep a steady stream of articles on economic subjects such as 'The Plight of the Donetz Coalfields', 'The Railway Crisis and its Causes' and 'Supply and working of the Metal Industry' flowing into publications which included *The Mining World*, *Railway Gazette* and *Metal Industry*.<sup>124</sup>

Harold Williams's role in the Liberation Committee was restricted to its early period, when the campaign for intervention was still in full swing. He appears to have acted as a kind of facilitator, helping to get sympathetic material into the British newspapers, and using his influence to further the Committee's cause.<sup>125</sup> This work was a direct reversal of the work he had done with the British propaganda bureau in Petrograd – there he had been placing articles favourable to the British cause in the Russian press, and educating Russian opinion about the British; here he was attempting to create a favourable view of the anti-Bolshevik Russian cause in England. His press connections must undoubtedly have helped. He also had connections in political and diplomatic circles which would have proved an asset. However, Williams's involvement in the Committee was limited by the fact that he was only in England for a short time in the early days of its existence. He attended nine of its weekly meetings between February and April 1919.<sup>126</sup>

Williams was anxious to get back to Russia, especially since the news from the anti-Bolshevik armies was so positive in the late spring and early summer of 1919. He seems initially to have been planning a trip to Finland, perhaps to get close to Kolchak's armies,<sup>127</sup> but this did not come off; in any case Denikin's armies in South Russia were also beginning to achieve

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> List of the publications of the Russian Liberation Committee, Add. 54466.

<sup>125</sup> Wes, *Michael Rostovtzeff* p. 25.

<sup>126</sup> Minutes of the Russian Liberation Committee, 28 February 1919 – 25<sup>th</sup> April 1919, Add 54466.

<sup>127</sup> Minutes of the Russian Liberation Committee, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1919, Add. 54466.

significant success. In May 1919 the *Daily Chronicle* and *The Times* agreed to send Williams to join Denikin's army as their joint correspondent. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, who was busy with her work for the Russian Liberation Committee, was to stay in England for the time being. She joined Williams in south Russia in July, where she acted as correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*.<sup>128</sup>

The journey to the south of Russia was long and slow, especially in the conditions created by the aftermath of the war. Williams shared a dusty, shaky train from Paris with a group of Americans, some French, Italians, and a couple of Englishmen. They travelled down through the French countryside, through the Fréjus tunnel near Mont Cenis, across the Piedmont plains, and on to Genoa. They continued along the Italian coast, past small coastal towns, and then through the green Tuscan countryside. They passed through Pisa, and eventually reached Rome, at almost 11 o'clock the evening after setting out from Paris.<sup>129</sup> Williams waited for a day in Rome, staying with MacClive, the chief correspondent of *The Times*, who had a flat high above the city, with views that stretched across the city and as far as the sea. He also met Jeffries, the correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, who had been in Warsaw and the Ukraine. Together they saw the sights of Rome; the Coliseum, the catacombs, and St. Peters. The next day he travelled on to Taranto, and took a boat across the Aegean Sea to Constantinople.<sup>130</sup> From the boat he saw Athens, Corinth, and the entrance to the Corinth Canal. On the steamer the Italian passengers discussed politics; 'not debate so much as patriotic ebullitions'. President Wilson was widely condemned, and the

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<sup>128</sup> Robert J. Paterson to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1919, Box 6, Folder 'O-R', BAR Ms Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Samuel Hoare to the Foreign Office, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1919, Add. 54438.

<sup>129</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1919, Box 8, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1919', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>130</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1919, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1919, Box 8, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1919' BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

British attitude to the Fiume question was unpopular. More quietly, a group of Yugoslavs discussed their opposing views.<sup>131</sup>

On reaching Constantinople, Williams found the city gloomy. The Turks were 'silent, depressed and dignified'. The city was crowded with Allied soldiers, and with Russian refugees from Odessa and the Crimea.<sup>132</sup> Half of Petrograd and Moscow were there, it seemed – Williams met many old friends, such as Fedor Rodichev, and Alexei Tolstoi, both of whom had stories to tell him which were at once amusing and depressing. A British mechanic who had arrived from Moscow told him horror stories of Bolshevik rule. A Yugoslav soldier who had come from Petrograd praised the strength of Kolchak's army. Williams heard that connections between the anti-Bolshevik fronts were few, but were apparently being gradually established. Denikin was advancing so fast that it was hoped that he might even join up with Kolchak soon.<sup>133</sup> Williams also spoke to several people about setting up a news agency to send information from south Russia to the Russian Liberation Committee, in return for information from the west and from Kolchak's armies. The men he spoke to apparently had funds from Ivan Stakhiev, of the Putilov firm and the Russian Asiatic Bank.<sup>134</sup>

Williams managed to secure a place on a steamer, the *Kapurthala*, which was bound for Novorossiisk. On board were a party of R.A.F. men who were going out to instruct the Russians in the use of British aeroplanes. Williams listened to their stories from the western front, and from India, and thought of the world they were leaving, and the incomprehensible, incredible world they were heading for. He could not dissociate the Black Sea from its history; its memories

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<sup>131</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1919, Box 8, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1919', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. *The New York Times* 27<sup>th</sup> May 1919, p. 4.

<sup>132</sup> *The New York Times* 27<sup>th</sup> May 1919, p. 4.

<sup>133</sup> *The New York Times* 1<sup>st</sup> June 1919, p. 6. Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1919, Box 8, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1918', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>134</sup> Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1919, Box 8, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1919', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

of Greek and Byzantine civilisation, and of the first Slav adventurers. Three days after leaving Constantinople Williams gained his first sight of the mountains around Novorossiisk, and thought how strange it was to be back in the Russia which he had left thirteen months before.

'It was absurd, of course', Williams admitted, 'to expect anything like the real Russia in Novorossisk with its motley population of international dock labourers and Greek and Armenian traders'. The town had a disorganised and apathetic feel; there was little connection with the outside world, industry was at a standstill, prices were inordinately high, and every purchase involved a long argument over change as there was little hard currency to be had.<sup>135</sup> The journey to Ekaterinodar, a distance of only 50 miles, took an entire night.

At six on a rainy morning we found ourselves alongside a long platform flanking a commonplace brick building. It took us some minutes to realise that we had actually arrived at Denikin's capital. We were prepared to be excited, but we were tired and hungry and very dirty, and the drizzling rain, the black puddles between the rails, the long, monotonous lines of brown trucks, the sleepy slouching figures of a few Cossacks in sheepskin coats and caps, rather depressed us. "Well, I thought anyhow the band would be playing and Denikin would be here to meet us", said one of the airmen by way of cheering us up. But gradually the sun came out and the station awoke to crowded life, and when we considered that Ekaterinodar had had its breakfast we went up into the town.<sup>136</sup>

Williams's impressions of Ekaterinodar improved as he began to meet old friends and acquaintances, and found his feet. As in Constantinople, many faces were familiar to him from Moscow and Petrograd. All seemed badly off, and appeared to be 'wearing out their last suit of clothes'. The town was crowded and it was virtually impossible to find anywhere to sleep. Williams was saved from sleeping on the floor in Guy Beringer's room by Nikolai Lvov, who offered him a spare bed in his room. Williams and Lvov spent much of the first night talking

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<sup>135</sup> Untitled text by Harold Williams, Box 23, Folder 'Miscellaneous short articles', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>136</sup> Harold Williams, 'Ekaterinodar' Box 22, Folder 'Manuscripts by Harold Williams', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

about Lvov's experiences since the Kornilov campaign, the fate of his family, and his hopes for the regeneration of Russia.

He told me of the heroism of the young officers and schoolboys who again and again, with a few rounds of cartridge, or by some daring ruse, dispersed and drove back well-armed Bolshevik forces ten or twenty times their number, of the long hard trek in winter from village to hostile village, with Bolsheviks lurking all around, with the long line of wounded who were carried in the middle of the column, because there was no place where they could be left in safety, of General Alexeiev travelling with his money-box in a sort of springless governess cart, of Kornilov poring over maps, scouting on horseback at the head of his troops, directing a fight from a house top with Bolshevik shells falling all around, and dying a hero's death within gunshot of Ekaterinodar in March 1918. Kornilov went out from Rostov on February 22 with 2000 volunteers, and by the end of the year the casualties of the Volunteer Army were 30,000. Kornilov was killed in March. Ekaterinodar was finally captured on August 15. Alexeiev died in October of inflammation of the lungs brought on by the privations and terrible anxiety of the campaign. There had never been a moment of compromise with either Bolsheviks or Germans. Often the little force had been nearly overwhelmed. Cut off absolutely from the Allies, driven into a remote corner of Russia, they had never flinched in their loyalty to the Allied cause. They had a single idea and a single faith and that was Russia.<sup>137</sup>

It is clear already from this personal memoir that Williams's involvement in the cause for which Denikin's army was fighting was total. This same commitment and enthusiasm were conveyed in varying degrees in his dispatches and in his private letters to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams. His letters, of course, were always more honest; his dispatches were at times so jingoistic that they prompted Philip Knightley, writing of this period, to conclude that Williams was 'the worst of the war correspondents' in Russia at this time, and that he was so personally involved with the anti-Bolshevik forces that he should never have been given the assignment.<sup>138</sup> A more measured assessment of events, although still with broadly the same colouring, can be found in the weekly political reports that Williams began writing in November for General

<sup>137</sup> Harold Williams, 'Ekaterinodar' Box 22, Folder 'Manuscripts by Harold Williams', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Harold Williams to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1919, Box 8, Folder 'Correspondence – Williams, Harold 1919', BAR Ms Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>138</sup> Knightley, *The First Casualty* p. 138, pp. 157-159, p. 169. Knightley regards Arthur Ransome and Morgan Philips Price as the 'best' correspondents.



Holman, by then the head of the British Mission to Denikin's army. Williams sent copies of these to Rex Leeper at the Foreign Office.<sup>139</sup>

Williams's first dispatch to *The Times* and the *Daily Chronicle* confirmed, although in upbeat terms, the early impressions he recorded in his memoir.

Ekaterinodar is unique. Imagine half the War Office and half of Westminster and Fleet street huddled together, say, in Taunton, sleeping three in a room, wearing all sorts of costumes and uniforms, and working for the liberation of England – that is the general effect of this rough-and-ready provincial town in sight of the blue outspurs of the Caucasus. 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.

Many acquaintances whom I meet are greatly changed, and financially ruined, with no knowledge of the whereabouts of their wives and little children, broken by the loss of gallant sons in this terrible conflict. Man after man I meet who has lost one, two, three, or four sons in this glorious patriotic endeavour, and now schoolboys are going out to take the places of those who have fallen. The spirit of the place is extraordinary, despite the overcrowding and discomfort – it is the campaigning, or rather the Crusading spirit.

There are drawbacks, but they are rather physical than moral, and not worth mentioning. The party differences are slight. The three groups – 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. How they dream here and long for the sound of the Moscow church bells!<sup>140</sup>

Williams had his first meeting with Denikin on June 5th, and was impressed. He had not seen a Russian leader who inspired so much confidence as Denikin in the entire course of the Russian Revolution, he told the *Daily Chronicle* and *The Times*. He was direct and simple, a man of the people rather than a member of the intelligentsia or the aristocracy. Far from being a reactionary, as was asserted in many circles in London and Paris, Denikin was progressive in his ideas and was a thorough patriot. He was 'fighting a hard and clean battle against the most treacherous and most unscrupulous enemy that ever devastated the territory and soul of a great

<sup>139</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 244. Political Reports filed by Harold Williams, Box 24, Folder 'Political reports filed 1919', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>140</sup> *The Times* 18<sup>th</sup> June 1919 p. 11. *The New York Times* June 20<sup>th</sup> 1919, p. 17.

nation'.<sup>141</sup> He had announced agrarian and labour reforms. When, on 12<sup>th</sup> June, Denikin formally declared his submission to Kolchak as supreme leader of the anti-Bolshevik Russian territory (in view of the possibility of the Allies at Paris according Kolchak recognition), Williams was impressed with his self-effacement and obvious commitment to the revival of Russia. He regarded the decision as an 'epoch-making event'.<sup>142</sup> It was difficult, however, to 'give any account of his political system that could be translated into the simplified democratic phraseology current at the Peace Conference.' Denikin had no party ties, and represented no one programme, left or right. He was deeply respected by all sides for his 'unswerving honesty of purpose and his proved and unreserved devotion to the Russia that is bigger and deeper than all classes and parties'.<sup>143</sup>

When Williams arrived in the south of Russia, all the news was of victories on Denikin's front. On 21<sup>st</sup> June he was able to report that in three weeks, the Volunteer Army had trebled the territory that it held. They had captured 22,000 prisoners, and considerable quantities of munitions and rolling stock. Forces led by General Wrangel were within 70 miles of Tsaritsyn, and in the west troops were moving towards Kharkov and Ekaterinoslav.<sup>144</sup> The front was almost 800 miles long, and its contours changed daily as the Volunteer Army advanced in all directions.<sup>145</sup> By 1<sup>st</sup> July Williams was reporting the capture of Tsaritsyn; by 4<sup>th</sup> July he was reporting the freedom of Kharkov. By 10<sup>th</sup> July Williams estimated the length of the front held by Denikin's armies at 1,200 miles, and the territory under his control as having a population of over

<sup>141</sup> *The Times* 21<sup>st</sup> June 1919, p. 11.

<sup>142</sup> *The Times* 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1919, p. 11. *The New York Times* 4<sup>th</sup> July 1919, p. 3.

<sup>143</sup> *The New York Times* 26<sup>th</sup> July 1919, p. 3. On Denikin see D. Lehovich, *White Against Red: The Life of General Anton Denikin* (New York 1973), M. Grey, *Mon Pere le General Denikine* (Paris 1985), and Denikin's own memoirs *Ocherki Russkoi Smuty* (Berlin 1925).

<sup>144</sup> *The Times* 21<sup>st</sup> June 1919, p. 11. *The New York Times* 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1919, p. 14. See also Harold Williams to Rex Leeper, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1919, II:3, Templewood papers.

<sup>145</sup> *The Times* 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1919, p. 14, *The New York Times* 24<sup>th</sup> June 1919, p. 5.

20,000,000. Objectives now were Saratov, Voronezh, Kursk and Poltava. Moscow did not seem impossibly far away.<sup>146</sup>

Williams went on a tour of the newly liberated territories with General Holman. His chief impressions were of 'the ruin wrought by Bolshevism, of the extraordinary dash and gallantry of the volunteer army at the front and of the clumsy ineffectiveness of the bulky but hastily improvised "Red" army'. Any doubts that the Bolshevik government might be popularly supported or have strong foundations have been removed completely.<sup>147</sup> He did not stint in reporting the details of Bolshevik atrocities discovered in Kharkov and other newly liberated cities. 'Women are found with their breasts cut out; many victims have been tortured, some have had the skin torn off their hands; others have had nails driven under their finger-nails; many have had their teeth torn or knocked out'.<sup>148</sup>

A key feature of Williams's reportage was his attempt to convey a sense of the gratitude and general good-feeling that existed in South Russia with regard to the British assistance, such as it was. He reported that the Russian troops were proud of the British uniforms with which they had been supplied, and that the "New Englishmen", as they were called, clipped their moustaches, smoked pipes, and tried to look as English as possible. The usefulness of the British supplies of tanks and munitions were widely acknowledged, and the local newspapers were full of praise for this 'real help ... without advertisement'.<sup>149</sup> Denikin himself spoke with warm appreciation of the British aid to Russia, and assured Williams that it would not be forgotten for generations.<sup>150</sup> One Don and Two Kuban Cossack *stanitsas* had elected General Holman, the

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<sup>146</sup> *The Times* 19<sup>th</sup> July 1919, p. 13, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1919, p. 11, *The New York Times* 20<sup>th</sup> July 1919, p. 3, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1919, p. 8.

<sup>147</sup> *The Times* 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1919, pp. 10, 12, *The New York Times* 24<sup>th</sup> August 1919, p. 3.

<sup>148</sup> *The Times* 24<sup>th</sup> July 1919, p. 11, *The New York Times* 24<sup>th</sup> July 1919, p. 15.

<sup>149</sup> *The Times* 18<sup>th</sup> June 1919, p. 11.

<sup>150</sup> *The Times* 21<sup>st</sup> June 1919, p. 11.

leader of the British Mission, as an honorary Cossack.<sup>151</sup> The picture Williams presented privately of British prestige was a different one – in a letter to Rex Leeper he complained that there were very decided pro-German tendencies amongst the right-wing groups. ‘We are not as popular as we ought to be. Somehow we don’t seem to be able to display ourselves, and our lack of commercial enterprise and our inability to organise such things as a decent postal and telegraphic service and a regular and abundant supply of papers hampers us terribly. I simply cannot understand why we are so impotent. The Germans had all this running two days after they got in’.<sup>152</sup> It was difficult to maintain a positive public stance as time wore on and it became clear that the British commitment to anti-Bolshevik Russia was wavering. News from England was not readily available – papers arrived weeks after publication, and such letters as Williams received often came too late for him to act upon them. When news did trickle through it was often demoralising. At the beginning of December reports came through of Lloyd George’s Guildhall speech in November. This was the Prime Minister’s first public statement on Russia since April of the same year, and he used it to prepare the ground for a cessation of assistance to the Whites. News of the speech, which it was impossible to keep from the papers, did great damage to British prestige in Rostov.<sup>153</sup>

One of the greatest sources of agitation in relations between the Allies and Denikin, and indeed one of the greatest problems Denikin faced even in his own territory, was the question of the border nationalities. The British, as we have seen, were already committed to a policy of tacit

<sup>151</sup> *The Times* 31<sup>st</sup> July 1919 p. 11.

<sup>152</sup> Extracts from a letter from Harold Williams to Rex Leeper, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1919, FO 371/4383.

<sup>153</sup> Harold Williams, ‘British Interests in South Russia’ 9<sup>th</sup> December 1919. Box 23, Folder ‘Miscellaneous short articles’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Political Report for week ending 5<sup>th</sup> December, Box 24, Folder ‘Political reports filed 1919’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. Harold Williams to Samuel Hoare, 8<sup>th</sup> December 1919, I:2, Templewood papers. On the speech itself see R. H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-21* 3 vols. (Princeton and London 1961-72) Vol. 2 ‘Britain and the Russian Civil War’ pp. 304-307. The situation was apparently similar in Archangel, where month-old copies of *The Times* were the only sources of information from Britain. George Young to Harold Williams, n.d. Add. 54437.

support of the independence of the small nationalities on Russia's north-western border, and they were not opposed to the idea of independence in areas of the Caucasus such as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. At the peace conference there were even representatives of the Don and Kuban Cossacks, in whose territory Denikin's army was based, and on whose population he depended for a sizeable portion of his fighting force. Ekaterinodar, initially the headquarters of the Volunteer Army, was the capital of the Kuban Cossack territory, which was autonomous, had its own government, and recognised Denikin only as a military leader. Denikin's own political council, based first in Ekaterinodar and later in Rostov-on-Don, were guests on this territory. Although Williams insisted that the council (which he admitted privately consisted largely of second-rate statesmen) was a liberal body containing Kadet and Octobrist members, who advocated broad self-government for all regions, a national assembly, and comprehensive land and labour reforms, the council and the army won themselves no additional support in the Caucasus or in the West by adopting the slogan 'Russia United and Free'.<sup>154</sup>

It was clear where Harold Williams's sympathies lay. He regarded the pretensions of bodies such as the 'preposterous' North Caucasian Republic as ridiculous, and as a petty distraction which was cramping Denikin's freedom of action in the Caucasus. He condemned the action of the Paris representatives of the Caucasian tribes, and applauded Denikin's order for their arrest.<sup>155</sup> In one dispatch he dismissed the Azerbaijani, Georgian, and even the Ukrainian governments as being products of German and Turkish strategy. Ukrainian separatism, he argued, had been nurtured in Germany with the intention of splitting up Russia. Williams regarded it as

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<sup>154</sup> Extracts from a letter from Harold Williams to Rex Leeper, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1919, FO 371/4383. Harold Williams, 'The Special Political Council', Box 23, Folder 'Miscellaneous short articles', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>155</sup> *The New York Times* 5<sup>th</sup> December 1919, p. 17. See also Political Report for week ending November 22<sup>nd</sup>, Box 24, Folder 'Political reports filed 1919', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

treasonable, and discouraged Western support for it.<sup>156</sup> As he wrote to Rex Leeper; '... both Georgia and Azerbaijan are living on a capital of Russian laws and institutions and Government property and have created nothing of their own ... The whole position is more ridiculous even than I had imagined'. Denikin was happy to let Georgia and Azerbaijan be independent for the meantime, but the republics knew 'perfectly well that as soon as Denikin settles things in central Russia he will turn round and mop them up, to the joy of most of their unfortunate subjects'.<sup>157</sup> Some officials in the Foreign Office were clearly alarmed by the 'almost exuberant' satisfaction Williams displayed at Denikin's suppression of separatist tendencies.<sup>158</sup>

Williams had always been broadly sympathetic to the desire of Russia's subject nationalities for autonomy in the past – his undoubtedly vast knowledge of the ethnography of the Russian Empire no doubt contributed to this. However, as we have already seen, he was sceptical about the universal application of the principle of self-determination, and in this case, his concern was for the Russia that had been Britain's ally in the war. 'Our only safe and wise policy is to support Russia wholeheartedly without imposing any peddling restrictions', he wrote to Leeper. 'Russia is going to be very big anyhow. She will respond well to generous treatment now, but it is not safe to patronise or humiliate her, as some of the people in Paris seem apparently still to persist in doing'.<sup>159</sup>

Williams's attitude was now very far removed from developments in western thought and policy on these subjects. Letters from Rex Leeper and Samuel Hoare provided his main source of information on developments in Britain. Hoare wrote to Williams in December 1919 that he considered it vital to draw the peoples of the Caucasus into an anti-Bolshevik bloc; he wanted

<sup>156</sup> *The New York Times* 18<sup>th</sup> September 1919, p. 17.

<sup>157</sup> Extracts from a letter from Harold Williams to Rex Leeper, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1919, FO 371/4383.

<sup>158</sup> Comments on extracts from a letter from Harold Williams to Rex Leeper, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1919, FO 371/4375.

<sup>159</sup> Harold Williams to Rex Leeper, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1919, II:3, Templewood papers.

Williams to talk to Denikin about it, and if possible convince him to make some sort of proposal.<sup>160</sup> Halford J. Mackinder, a geographer and Unionist MP, was eventually sent out to South Russia to advance this programme in October.<sup>161</sup>

It was also taking around two weeks for Williams's dispatches to reach London, even by telegraph, with the result that they were often hopelessly out of date. Denikin's army was advancing at speed during the summer and early autumn of 1919, and wireless news was received faster through official channels. The necessary sub-editing by *The Times's* office resulted in one dispatch of Williams's appearing as follows:

The Volunteer Army is recovering the Crimea. [The Crimea has now been wholly recovered.] ...

In the meantime the Cossacks and the Volunteer Army are closing in on Kharkoff ... [since captured] ... while the Terek Cossacks ... are advancing along an almost parallel railway on Bielgorod [also since captured] ...

Ekaterinoslav, another important objective of the Volunteer Army [also taken], has been raided from the west by the Ukrainian leader Grigorieff, to whom the bulk of the Soviet garrison deserted.<sup>162</sup>

The accuracy of Western news reports concerning the position of his troops was the least of the worries created for Denikin by his army's speedy advance. A note written by Guy Beringer to fellow journalist John Hodgson sums up some of the problems experienced by the western journalists reporting on Denikin's front, and indeed the fundamental problem with the position of Denikin's army in the autumn of 1919.

"I'm in despair," he said, "about getting any reliable information from the staff. They are incredibly optimistic about everything, and the front is now so elongated that it is absolutely impossible to verify one-tenth of what they tell me. I have a feeling that there is something wrong somewhere. Surely, if a thousand mile front is being properly held by only 200,000 troops, there

<sup>160</sup> Samuel Hoare to Harold Williams, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1919, Add. 54438, and II:3, Templewood papers.

<sup>161</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 247. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations* vol. 2 pp. 217-218.

<sup>162</sup> *The Times* 6<sup>th</sup> July 1919, p. 11.

can be no powerful spear-head [at] any one spot? Yet they say they are about to strike for Moscow in force."<sup>163</sup>

At the end of September Williams wrote that the feeling was as if the volunteer army had reached the summit of a hill, and was preparing to sweep the enemy down the other side.<sup>164</sup> The capture of Voronezh, Liski and then Orel were considered significant.<sup>165</sup> Even when severe reverses, including the fall of Kharkov at the end of December, took place, Williams remained upbeat. There was no expectation of defeat. Losses during the retreat had been small, and there was still a great determination to win. The one depressing factor was the impression that Great Britain was planning to withdraw material and moral support.<sup>166</sup> As the Bolsheviks advanced southwards, preceded by a host of refugees, Williams insisted that Denikin was not beaten.<sup>167</sup> References to what was actually going on at the front had become slight; they were replaced by accounts of the determination and morale in Denikin's army. The sudden evacuation of Rostov therefore appears in Williams's dispatches as a complete surprise.<sup>168</sup> He may genuinely not have anticipated it – C. E. Bechhofer, who called on Williams only days before the evacuation, found him, along with Tyrkova-Williams and Petr Struve, fairly optimistic about the army's prospects.<sup>169</sup> In a later account Williams gave a clearer indication of the mood in Rostov prior to the evacuation.

In a big window on the Sadovaya, the main street of Rostov, hung a huge map with a cord showing the line of the front. Every day the cord sank lower and lower. The crowd that gathered at all hours before the window gazed anxiously at the map, scanned the daily bulletin, and, saying not a word, again melted away into the endless current that passed up and down the street. The

<sup>163</sup> John Ernest Hodgson, *With Denikin's Armies. Being a Description of the Cossack Counter-Revolution in South Russia, 1918-1920* (London, 1932) p. 13.

<sup>164</sup> *The New York Times* 12<sup>th</sup> October 1919, p. 6.

<sup>165</sup> *The New York Times* 17<sup>th</sup> October 1919, p. 2, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1919, p. 3, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1919, p. 10.

<sup>166</sup> *The New York Times* 27<sup>th</sup> December 1919, p. 2.

<sup>167</sup> *The New York Times* 5<sup>th</sup> January 1919, p. 17.

<sup>168</sup> *The New York Times* 21<sup>st</sup> January 1919, p. 4.

<sup>169</sup> C. E. Bechhofer, *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus 1919-1920* (London 1921) pp. 117-118.



hope of victory was failing. Town after town was being surrendered to the enemy. Kharkoff had gone, and the refugees from Kharkoff and smaller towns and villages were flowing into and through Rostov. The railway station was crowded with homeless wanderers who slept there by night, and by day walked about the town seeking help and guidance. With the influx of refugees the epidemic of typhus increased in violence, and the hospitals were overcrowded. Often the dead were brought up to the cemeteries in cartsful, and tumbled wholesale into a common grave.<sup>170</sup>

On December 14<sup>th</sup> / 27<sup>th</sup>, the decision was taken to remove Government institutions from Rostov – this order was retracted the next day as it was unclear where they were going to move to. Meanwhile those who could afford to pay battled for train tickets out of Rostov in the direction of Novorossiisk. Every action of the British colony was closely observed, and ‘at least a score’ of people called on Williams every day to make sure that he had not suddenly fled.<sup>171</sup> On December 17<sup>th</sup> / 30<sup>th</sup> Denikin abolished his advisory council and replaced it with a government of seven ministers. Williams approved this measure, but only wished it had been taken months ago – the cumbrous advisory council had wasted much time discussing political questions which, in Williams’s view, could have waited until the establishment of a properly constituted central government.<sup>172</sup> The staff and the Allied missions were leaving Taganrog, but the residents of Rostov had been assured that the town would not be abandoned, and that a battle would be fought on defensive positions some way outside the town.

On New Year’s Day I was quietly writing when a telephone message came telling me to board a train by six in the evening. I had about three hours to pack in and settle all my affairs, and by six we were at the station with our luggage. At eight we got into a third-class carriage retained by the British Railway Mission, expecting to leave the same evening. And then our troubles began. We were promised from hour to hour that we should be coupled on to the next train and train after train went off without us. We were shunted onto various sidings and left stranded for hours. We saw trains come in – generals’ trains, passenger trains, goods trains. We crunched over the snow, and when the snow melted ploughed through interminable slush trying to find our ever elusive coach. We sent expeditions outside the station for bread and meat. We boiled water and fried fat bacon on a Primus stove, and laid in cans of water for washing as there was no water in the carriage. The crowd on the station thickened. In the waiting rooms it

<sup>170</sup> Harold Williams, ‘The Retreat’ Box 23, Folder ‘Miscellaneous short articles’, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> *The New York Times* 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1920, p. 17.

was impossible to move among the stifling crowded mass of humanity, camped on luggage, sprawling on the floors, waiting for trains that did not go, or tickets that were not available.<sup>173</sup>

On the third day of waiting, after discovering that their coach had again been struck off the list, the British coach finally got away. Two days later they arrived in Novorossiisk. At the end of the week a train full of ministers and government officials arrived, bringing with it the news that Rostov had fallen the day before.<sup>174</sup>

Even from Novorossiisk Williams's dispatches maintained a note of hopefulness. The front was steadily recovering, and Denikin was confident of being able to retaliate.<sup>175</sup> Privately, however, Williams felt greatly let down. 'I am extremely disappointed and bitterly blame a great many people, both the politicians and the military', he wrote to Samuel Hoare. With a little coolness and common sense he believed the retreat need never have happened.<sup>176</sup> On around 17<sup>th</sup> February, Williams received a telegram from the *Daily Chronicle* recalling him to England.<sup>177</sup> Public and governmental opinion in England had turned firmly away from giving any further assistance to the White armies by this time. Both Rex Leeper and Samuel Hoare were anxious to assure Williams that this was not due to an increase in sympathy for the Bolsheviks. On the contrary, anti-Bolshevik feeling was stronger than ever. But neither was there any enthusiasm for Denikin, since enthusiasm for Denikin meant continuing to make a big effort, which few people were willing to do. There was an increasing tendency to adopt what Rex Leeper referred to as the 'stewing in her own juice' policy – the idea of writing Russia off as far as international relations

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<sup>173</sup> Harold Williams, 'The Retreat'. Box 23, Folder 'Miscellaneous short articles', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Box 24, Folder 'News dispatches filed by Harold Williams (1920)', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>176</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Hoare, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1920, Box 12, Folder 'Neither to nor from Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>177</sup> Box 24, Folder 'News dispatches filed by Harold Williams (1920)', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

were concerned.<sup>178</sup> On March 6<sup>th</sup>, on arriving in Constantinople, Williams sent the following final dispatch.

I have again left the shores of Russia. This time with a sadder feeling than ever before. Coming out here into closer contact with Europe I realize that the policy as regards Russia is changed. I admit I am too fresh from the scene of unspeakable tragedy to offer any judgement on these new political combinations, but at least can express hope that among the public will still be found some sympathy for the helpless victims of this catastrophe.<sup>179</sup>

Williams and Tyrkova-Williams spent several weeks searching for Tyrkova-Williams's daughter, Sonya, who had been working as a nurse but had been evacuated from Odessa with typhus. After searching in Constantinople and Salonika, they were directed to the town of Leskovatz in Serbia, where they eventually found her.<sup>180</sup>

Back in London, Williams found himself isolated. His wholehearted support for Denikin's cause had compromised his reputation as a journalist, and his opinions on Russia no longer carried the same weight. This became obvious over attitudes to General Wrangel, who had now taken over what remained of Denikin's forces, and was based in the Crimea, where he continued the struggle against the Red Army. Williams had no intention of advocating Allied military support for Wrangel, as he could see that this was now a useless policy. It was clear to him that the only way that Lloyd George would learn was by experience in dealing with the Bolsheviks.<sup>181</sup> He did his best, nevertheless, to present a fair and optimistic portrait of the new leader, and to engender faith in Wrangel where his readers had already been disappointed in Kolchak, Iudenich, and Denikin. In what he considered a 'purely informative' article for the *New Europe* (which was admittedly very favourable to Wrangel, but made no demands for concrete support), he described

<sup>178</sup> Rex Leeper to Harold Williams, 25<sup>th</sup> November 1919, and Samuel Hoare to Harold Williams, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1919, Add. 54438.

<sup>179</sup> *The New York Times* 31<sup>st</sup> March 1919, p. 17.

<sup>180</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 249-252.

<sup>181</sup> Harold Williams to Robert Seton-Watson, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1920, SEW/17/31/1.

the new hope and restored morale that existed in the Crimea, and drew attention to Wrangel's fresh and inspiring personality, and the realistic nature of his aims. However, all this work was undone by a preface inserted by A. F. Whyte, the managing editor of the journal. This piece went out of its way to discredit Williams's article, making a number of condescending comments about Williams's association with the anti-Bolshevik cause and the campaign for intervention, and ending with the caution; 'As for Wrangel's prospects our readers will probably, in view of former disappointments, accept Dr. Williams's optimism with due reserve'.<sup>182</sup> Williams wrote to Seton-Watson in a rage, complaining of Whyte's underhand tactics. A genuine response to his article, rather than this condescending preface, would not have offended him so deeply.

Whyte has a perfect right to be angry with me if he likes. If he is let him hit out and I'll hit back. But let him hit straight ... Damn such painful pitying Christian toleration! He doesn't treat me as myself, he treats me as a generalised anti-Bolshevik bogey, and makes me responsible for the sins of all the anti-Bolsheviks.<sup>183</sup>

Whyte's comments, unfortunately for Williams, were representative of a large section of public opinion, which was becoming increasingly apathetic where Russia was concerned. As peace time conditions resumed, and the longevity of the Soviet Government, at least in the medium term, became apparent, anti-Bolshevik campaigners like the Williamses faced a new threat, from high-profile, influential, yet largely uninformed writers. These were favoured as they were not caught up in what was widely seen as the divided and quarrelsome world of Russian émigré politics. One example was H. G. Wells, who was invited to visit Russia in the autumn of 1920, and who subsequently wrote a series of articles which occupied the front page of the

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<sup>182</sup> Harold Williams, 'General Wrangel', *The New Europe* Vol. XVI No. 201 (19<sup>th</sup> August 1920) pp. 124-128, and 'Wrangel Consequences', *The New Europe* Vol. XVI No. 201 (19<sup>th</sup> August 1920) pp. 122-124.

<sup>183</sup> Harold Williams to Robert Seton-Watson, 20<sup>th</sup> August 1920, SEW/17/31/1.

*Sunday Express* for five weeks in October and November 1920.<sup>184</sup> Wells's comments appeared under a statement from the editor, which read 'Mr. Wells's articles are wholly unbiased and independent ... he gives blame and praise to both sides without reservation or evasion'. This was in marked contrast to the by-line Williams had been obliged to write under for the *Daily Chronicle* back in January 1919, and it reflected the increasing desire of the press, and the public, for balanced and unbiased reports.

Williams and Wells had been close in the early stages of the First World War, when they had both been engaged in a campaign to foster understanding between Russia and Britain as Allies and to justify the conflict. While Williams had remained loyal to this objective, however, Wells had soon become disillusioned and later regretted his naïve enthusiasm.<sup>185</sup> By 1920 Wells had become something of a liability as far as Williams and his Russian campaign were concerned. In his *Sunday Express* articles, Wells insisted that he had not been taken around Russia with blinkers on, as he had been warned he might. He described in detail the incredibly harsh conditions still prevalent in St. Petersburg and Moscow, but laid the blame for this not at the feet of the communist regime, but of the capitalist one which had preceded it, and which had plunged the country into an exhausting war. Ultimately, he concluded, the blame lay with European imperialism. Williams wrote to him to remonstrate. 'If I had a paper to write in I would argue with you ... I am terribly afraid that you will again confuse the minds of the young intellectuals who are just waking up to the real nature of Bolshevism, and so will weaken our power of resistance'.<sup>186</sup> He wrote to Harper of Wells's 'discreditable performance', but Harper assured him that Wells's articles, which had reached America, 'did not carry much weight here,

<sup>184</sup> *The Sunday Express*, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1920 p. 1, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1920 p. 1, 14<sup>th</sup> November 1920 p. 1, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1920 p. 1, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1920 p. 1. These articles later appeared in book form in H. G. Wells, *Russia in the Shadows* (London, 1920).

<sup>185</sup> See chapter three.

<sup>186</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Wells, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1920, Wells-1 W 307.

because even the uninformed readers could detect the contradictions of which he was guilty'.<sup>187</sup>

Frank Swinnerton, a mutual friend of Wells and Williams, wrote in sympathy; 'I can quite imagine that the Russian articles are worse than exasperation to you. We know what ingenuity H. G. has, and how impossible it is for him not to see things with a very eccentric parti pris. For anybody who knows a subject thoroughly he must be a cause of grasping despair'.<sup>188</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, in a long letter of retaliation, wrote of Wells:

Happy he is, for he can not only wash and shave where he will, but he can write and print what he thinks. It is a pity only that what he thinks about Russia is so far from the reality. He comes into the room of one who is dying, and bears himself as though he were at some curious public spectacle.<sup>189</sup>

There was a personal element to the falling out also – while in Russia, at a house belonging to Maxim Gorky, Wells had been approached on two separate occasions, first by a woman who told him that she was Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams's sister, and secondly by a boy who purported to be her nephew. The latter asked Wells to take a sealed letter to Tyrkova-Williams in England. Wells declined, for fear that he was being 'tried out' by an agent provocateur.<sup>190</sup> Upon his return to England Wells wrote to Tyrkova-Williams to explain the situation. The news caused her considerable distress. Williams was at pains to make Wells understand that neither he nor his wife blamed the latter for his action in refusing to take the letter; he could not have acted otherwise, not knowing the boy. Williams did point out, however, that Tyrkova-Williams's sister, Sofia Kolesnikova, had been among the party Wells had met at

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<sup>187</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1920, Box 8, Folder 16, and Samuel Harper to Harold Williams, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1921, Box 8, Folder 22, Samuel N. Harper papers.

<sup>188</sup> Frank Swinnerton to Harold Williams, 10<sup>th</sup> November 1920. Box 12, Folder 'Various persons to Harold Williams', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>189</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams to the Editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, n.d. [1920] Box 10, Folder 'A. Tyrkova-Williams to various persons', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>190</sup> H. G. Wells to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1920, and H. G. Wells to Harold Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1920, Box 3, Folder 'Wells, Herbert George', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

Vergezha in 1914. It was painful to think of the effort the family must have made to get their message to England; 'to think that they reached out a hand to us, but there was nothing from our side'.<sup>191</sup>

Harold Williams's final published contribution to the debate on Russia in the period up to 1921 was a novel, *Hosts of Darkness*, penned jointly with Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams. Williams had at one stage planned to write a factual account of the Russian Revolution – he was working on it in the summer and autumn of 1918, and had shown some extracts to his brother Owen, who was in England at the time. His father was also aware of the project, and considered that 'such a book from your pen will be widely welcomed as a contribution to a subject on which much light is needed'.<sup>192</sup> He must have done more work on it after his return from south Russia in 1920, as a chapter plan which survives amongst his papers indicates that the manuscript was to include sections on the civil war, intervention, and prospects for the future.<sup>193</sup> According to Tyrkova-Williams, although Williams usually wrote easily and rapidly, in this case page after page was torn up and thrown away.<sup>194</sup> Williams was also negotiating with Constable about the publication of a book on 'The Nationalities of Russia', and fragments of this manuscript survive amongst his papers.<sup>195</sup> These seem to have been two distinct projects, although it is of course possible that Williams himself neither finished nor was clear about the final structure of either book, or how they might fit together. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams attempted to publish the former manuscript after her husband's death, under the title 'The Quest for Liberty', but with no success (she also

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<sup>191</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Wells, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1920, Wells-1 W 307. Irene Zohrab also mentions this exchange in '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) pp. 3-15.

<sup>192</sup> Owen Williams to Harold Williams, 25<sup>th</sup> September 1918, and William James Williams to Harold Williams, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1918, Add. 54437.

<sup>193</sup> Chapter plan, Box 22, Folder 'Manuscripts by Harold Williams', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>194</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 255.

<sup>195</sup> Box 23, Folder 'Miscellaneous short articles', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

attempted to have *Russia of the Russians* republished). After her death, her son Arkadii Borman gave the manuscript of 'The Quest for Liberty' to Hugh Williams, Harold's nephew, who was living in America at the time and working for the United Nations. Hugh Williams eventually passed it on to Irene Zohrab, who has published some extracts, along with other unpublished articles and speeches, in the *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*.<sup>196</sup>

*Hosts of Darkness*, published by Constable published in 1921, is a love story based in Bolshevik Russia in the civil war period. An Englishman, Charles Ellis, who had spent some time in Moscow before the war as an officer in the Indian army, is sent back to the city by the War Office to establish exactly what relations, particularly commercial relations, existed between the Bolshevik Government and the Germans. His superior warns him before he leaves not to get mixed up in Russian politics – 'This damned Russia knocks people off their legs. Everyone I send gets affected. They all go either wildly pro-Bolshevik or wildly anti-Bolshevik'.<sup>197</sup> As the story unfolds, we see why Ellis cannot help becoming emotionally involved. At first he struggles to understand the changed situation in the Russian capital, and as he meets old friends, and makes the acquaintance of the beautiful Katia Shuiskaia, he is gradually drawn to the side of the anti-Bolsheviks who are supporting the armies in the south and attempting to combat the Bolshevik government from within. Ellis is a very English character – although he has gut emotional feelings he does not allow himself to be overwhelmed by them, demanding clear and logical reasoning at every step. This is a useful device, in that it allows the authors to gradually address the questions which are raised in Ellis's, and therefore the western reader's mind - for example, why can the liberal intelligentsia not come to some agreement with those in power, and why are

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<sup>196</sup> The two which appear to be chapters from the manuscript on the revolution are published by Irene Zohrab as 'The place of the liberals among the forces of the Revolution: from the unpublished papers of Harold W. Williams', *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1986) pp. 53-82, and 'The Socialist Revolutionary Party, Kerensky and the Kornilov Affair: from the unpublished papers of Harold W. Williams' *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1991) pp. 131-161.

<sup>197</sup> Ariadna and Harold Williams, *Hosts of Darkness* (London 1921) p. 34.



events in Russia any of the Allies' business? This is combined with heavy imagery, spiritual references, and the promotion of a sense of moral outrage at the cruel and brutal Bolshevik regime. When Bolshevik soldiers search the liberal Miliutin's house, they carelessly smash his treasured butterfly collection, showing a disregard for his possessions and raising a sense of injustice at their presence.<sup>198</sup> Stress is laid on the fact that there is no real government – the Bolsheviks are presented simply as a gang of robbers and bullies. There are frequent references to the anti-Christ, and to the Bolsheviks as 'demons in human form', and the Revolution as a whole is presented as a struggle between light and dark, good and evil.

With hindsight it is difficult to avoid the temptation to identify the models for many of the characters in the novel. The portrayal of Petrovich, the fictional dictator, is the most obvious – a man with a large, projecting forehead, deep set eyes and a snub nose, whose name was not that which he had received at birth. He was 'a despot by nature, cold, soulless, knowing neither mercy nor compassion, he was ardent only in his sectarian dogmatism'. His wife, Olga, who had been dedicated to the cause of liberty in her youth, was now devoted to her husband, unquestioningly loyal to his beliefs, and blind to his evil streak.<sup>199</sup> The Miliutins lived in 'fine, generous disorderly comfort' reminiscent of the family life of the Tyrkovs, and Ellis was fascinated by the way Elena Miliutin could undertake so many tasks at once (something often attributed to Ariadna Tyrkova).<sup>200</sup> John Hunter, an English correspondent who supported the Bolsheviks, and lived in a house which now belonged to one of the leading Bolsheviks, bears many of Arthur Ransome's characteristics - he was a nervous, impressionable man, who had volunteered for the army but

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid. pp. 137-160. This portrayal of Petrovich as Lenin is slightly odd, however, as both Lenin and Trotsky are mentioned elsewhere in the novel. See earlier in this chapter and chapter two for details of Ariadna Tyrkova's friendship with Nadia Krupskaya.

<sup>200</sup> Ariadna and Harold Williams, *Hosts of Darkness* p. 16.

had been rejected, to his own relief. He had a 'curious habit of wilting under criticism'.<sup>201</sup> The mysterious Huhn, who appeared everywhere that Ellis went, is a clear parallel of Kurz, the spy attached to Williams. He was the correspondent of a French newspaper, and claimed to be an Argentine citizen.<sup>202</sup> Of course, many of these may simply be 'types' of the Russian revolution which Williams and Tyrkova-Williams found it easy to identify, rather than specific individuals. Owen Williams congratulated his brother on the fact that, with the exception of the portrayal of Lenin, the characters in the novel were not identifiable. They were real, but were not 'so and so or any other single individual'.<sup>203</sup>

The book received mixed reviews. Constable, the publisher, asserted that it might well prove to be 'the great novel of the Russian Revolution', but from the reviews it received it was abundantly clear that this it was not. Some praised it as an honest statement of the authors' views and experiences in Russia, but many dismissed it as propaganda, since the political sympathies of the authors were by this time well known. *The Saturday Review* commented that one might 'as well expect from John Knox a balanced oration of pro's and con's in a polite repudiation of the devil'.<sup>204</sup> A reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* astutely commented that 'one is faced with the certainty that the authors were more concerned to express their view than to compose a good novel ... accounts of real life are far more thrilling when they are written as such. Propaganda in the form of fiction loses half its power as either'.<sup>205</sup> Of course, *Hosts of Darkness* came much too late to have any really significant propaganda value, but at some level it was

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid. p. 93. See Brogan, *The Life of Arthur Ransome*.

<sup>202</sup> Ariadna and Harold Williams, *Hosts of Darkness* p. 30.

<sup>203</sup> Owen Williams to Harold Williams, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1923, Box 12, Folder 'Various persons to Harold Williams', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams. *Hosts of Darkness* apparently had wide circulation in New Zealand – Owen had come across it even in small places like Greytown, Masterton and Carterton.

<sup>204</sup> *The Saturday Review* 17<sup>th</sup> December 1921. Box 32, Folder 'Reviews of books by A. Tyrkova-Williams', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>205</sup> *The Times Literary Supplement* 15<sup>th</sup> December 1921. Box 32, Folder 'Reviews of books by A. Tyrkova-Williams', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

undoubtedly intended to influence public opinion. Writing the novel must also have been a cathartic process; a way of truly expressing their thoughts and beliefs about the revolution in a way that was not as painful as journalism, in that it was not directly related to current political events. One of the book's weaknesses is its somewhat awkward style of writing, perhaps a result of the combination of Williams's and Tyrkova-Williams's ideas, and Harold Williams's attempts to render the latter into English.

*Hosts of Darkness* was not the end of Harold Williams's attempts to influence opinion on Russia. He never accepted the Bolshevik Government as a permanent force in world politics, and Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams went on campaigning against the Bolshevik government, in combination with a diminishing circle of her contemporaries, until the end of her long life. But 1921 did mark the end of the crusade Williams had undertaken in mid 1918. In 1921, with public opinion now largely apathetic, and the British government beginning to find ways to co-operate with the Bolshevik government, Williams found his position untenable. He was out of work, and if he wanted to survive he needed to diversify, and widen his interests. His attitude to Russia in the period following the White defeat is captured in a letter he wrote to Samuel Harper following his return from South Russia. It had been a hard and disappointing year, he admitted, but he was gradually getting over his disappointment and coming to see things more philosophically. There were two major points which seemed quite clear to him amidst the chaos.

First, the Bolsheviks cannot evolve, or attenuate or modify their policy. Lenin is no longer a free agent. He cannot think freely and his machine embodies doctrines that he cannot change or modify now even if he would. If the Bolsheviks try to evolve they go. They can exist only as a tyranny. They dare not admit liberty. They dare not openly admit private property. They are strong at present through the weakness of everybody else, but they are steadily creating the conditions for their own destruction.

Second, it is useless to talk about peace in Russia so long as Bolshevism exists. While Lenin is in power there will always be war in some form or other. Somebody will always fight, regulars, brigands, peasants, officers – it doesn't matter who, but there will be continual fighting

in Russia till Bolshevism is overthrown. It isn't a question of outsiders encouraging or not encouraging fighting. We may dislike and disapprove intensely, but the fighting will go on.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Harold Williams to Samuel Harper, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1920, Box 8, Folder 2, Samuel N. Harper papers.

## 5. The Times, 1921-1928

For a period of around a year, between the summers of 1920 and 1921, Harold Williams was without regular work, and he and his family struggled to support themselves in their new and largely unfamiliar surroundings. What little income they had came from minor writing assignments, from the publication in 1921 of *Hosts of Darkness*, and from the small salaries that Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams and Arkadii Borman received from the Russian Liberation Committee.

In the summer of 1921 Williams's fortunes finally changed, and two opportunities arose at once. Bernard Pares and Robert Seton-Watson, who were engaged in the reorganisation and expansion of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at Kings College in the University of London, had secured funding for a Chair in Comparative Slavonic Philology, which they intended to offer to Williams.<sup>1</sup> In June 1921 Williams received an offer of work at *The Times*, from the paper's editor, Henry Wickham Steed. This became a permanent offer of employment on the paper's editorial staff from September 1921.<sup>2</sup> *The Times's* offer was the better paid of the two, and it was also much more Williams's fort   – he had turned down academic opportunities in favour of journalism much earlier in his career.

Henry Wickham Steed, whom Williams knew through their mutual connection with Robert Seton-Watson and the *New Europe*, had been editor of *The Times* since the middle of 1919. He had been brought in by Lord Northcliffe (Alfred Harmsworth), the newspaper's owner, to replace Geoffrey Dawson, whom Northcliffe felt failed to

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Pares to Robert Seton-Watson, 15<sup>th</sup> September 1921 and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1921, and draft of a letter from Robert Seton-Watson to Bernard Pares, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1921, SEW/17/20/1. See below for a fuller discussion of Williams's work with SSEES.

<sup>2</sup> From 20<sup>th</sup> June 1921 Williams received a retaining fee of £500 p.a. from *The Times*, and 5 guineas per column for the material they published. From 1<sup>st</sup> September 1921 he was appointed as a 'leader and special writer', at a salary of £115 per month. Williams managerial file, TNL Archive.

appreciate or act upon his own 'pre-vision'. Northcliffe, a hugely successful self-made press baron, demanded an unprecedented degree of control over the policy, content, and layout of the newspaper. He wanted the paper's full support in a campaign against the Government, and specifically against Lloyd George, whom he had turned on since the end of the war. Steed was personally very loyal to Northcliffe, and his commitment to a new order in Europe had led him to distrust the Prime Minister as an opportunist. Williams, with his experience of the British Government's policy on Russia, shared this view. He had made plain his opinion of Lloyd George's management of foreign affairs in a vitriolic article on the 1921 Anglo-Russian Trade Treaty, in May 1921.<sup>3</sup>

*The Times* in the early 1920s was neither a relaxing nor a particularly secure environment in which to work. Northcliffe had never really been well since an operation on his throat in 1919, and his apparent megalomania made the editorship of the paper impossibly difficult, even for Steed. Northcliffe was irritated by the paper's rising costs and steadily falling sales and profits, and he was concerned that the paper was outdated and uninteresting. He had long been in the habit of reading the day's newspapers early in the morning, and then firing off didactic telegrams or messages from wherever he was which were to be read at the editorial meeting that day. These missives might praise, but more often criticized aspects of the paper, from the line taken in a particular leader to the placing of articles on the foreign page. His attitude swung wildly between one of complete confidence in and of relative non-interference with the editor, and on the other hand the view that Steed was conspiring against him, and must be got rid of. At one point in 1921 he contemplated giving up the paper entirely; at other times he seems to have wanted to diminish the role of the editor and

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<sup>3</sup> Harold Williams, 'The Prime Minister's Deal with Lenin', *Nineteenth Century* Vol. 89, No. 531 (May 1921) pp. 741-758.

take over all executive decision making himself. Williams was writing leaders on foreign subjects almost daily in late 1921 and early 1922 – one of the reasons for this was that Northcliffe insisted on sending Steed abroad to cover conferences, to get him out of the way. One day he was ‘wilful, venomous and erratic’, the next he was ‘cool, kindly and consistent’.<sup>4</sup>

Williams came in to contact with Northcliffe relatively rarely. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams recalls one occasion on which he was invited to lunch with him, to which he went reluctantly. Northcliffe seems to have approved of Williams – he was pleased that he had secured such a ‘phenomenon’ in terms of linguistic ability for *The Times*.<sup>5</sup> In fact, although it was Steed who had given Williams the job as leader writer, it was Northcliffe and Campbell Stuart, the Managing Editor, who instituted the changes in personnel that resulted in Williams being appointed Foreign Editor on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1922.<sup>6</sup> Within a matter of months of this decision Northcliffe died, and the paper was taken over by Major Astor, in combination with John Walter. They removed Steed and reinstated Geoffrey Dawson, partly because of his more conservative views, but also because they wanted *The Times* to be independent of party, and they felt that Steed had stamped his personality too firmly on the paper for them to do this with him still in charge.<sup>7</sup> Williams was happy under the new regime – he regarded the new proprietor as ‘a very good sort’, who took a great interest in the paper, but did not interfere with the editor. Since the change of ownership, he remarked in a letter to his father, things had been much quieter and it had been possible to work more regularly.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *The History of The Times: the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Beyond 1912-1948* 2 vols. (London 1952) Vol. 2, pp. 622-3, 640. See also S. J. Taylor, *The Great Outsiders. Northcliffe, Rothermere and the Daily Mail* (London 1996) pp. 196-220, and J. Lee Thompson, *Northcliffe – Press Baron in Politics 1865-1922* (London 2000) pp. 380-398.

<sup>5</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 301-2.

<sup>6</sup> Williams’s actual title was ‘Director of the Foreign Department’. He was now receiving a salary of £1500 p.a. plus £500 p.a. in expenses. Williams Managerial File, TNL Archive.

<sup>7</sup> *The History of The Times: the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Beyond* Vol. 2, p. 678-785.

<sup>8</sup> Harold Williams to William James Williams, n. d. MS Papers 0555-1.

He would never be as comfortable with Dawson as he had been with Steed, but he admitted that the new editor was 'a thorough Englishman, clear headed, firm and business-like'.<sup>9</sup> Brumwell, the Assistant Editor, he also liked – the latter knew the paper through and through, and had a marvellous eye for news.<sup>10</sup> By July 1924, Williams was writing to Lints Smith, the Manager, that 'I need hardly assure you that I am proud to be associated with *The Times* and that I am and shall be happy to do my utmost in the service of the best paper in the world'. This was something of a turnaround from his attitude in 1903, but it reflected his changed situation and his gratitude to the paper as well as his experiences and development in the intervening years.<sup>11</sup>

*The Times* provided Williams with employment, but it could not, in the early 1920s at least, provide him with a cause to which he could commit himself. He had to devote himself to getting to grips with the workings of the Foreign Department, and to the complications in Western Europe and elsewhere which had never really been solved by the peace treaties which followed the war.

Williams sent his father a long written description of his daily routine at *The Times*, which is worth repeating in that it gives a good sense of the round of work with which Williams was occupied for much of the 1920s.

My own department is pretty big. I have an assistant called Kennedy,<sup>12</sup> who sometimes writes leaders, and goes round the town and picks up views. Then there is Deakin,<sup>13</sup> the Foreign News Editor, who looks after the technical side of our work, sees to the telegraph and telephone arrangements, watches for news possibilities and does a lot of very good organising work. His opposite number on the Dominions side is Peterson. Then there is a room, full of foreign sub-editors who get correspondents' messages and articles ready for the paper. There are eight of them, and they are now

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Harold Williams to W. Lints-Smith, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1924. Williams Managerial File, TNL Archive.

<sup>12</sup> It seems very likely that this was A. L. Kennedy. See Gordon Martel, (ed.), *The Times and Appeasement. The Journals of A. L. Kennedy 1932-1939* (London 2000) pp. 1-15.

<sup>13</sup> Ralph Deakin (1888-1952) was Foreign News Editor from 1922 until 1952.



under a very good fellow, called Casey.<sup>14</sup> I mustn't forget my poor old Brain, who has been on the Times for over forty years, and goes round the town picking up all the ends of foreign news. He was always a great support, but he has had an operation for a cataract, and I don't know whether the poor fellow will be able to work again. Then there are the correspondents scattered all over the world. I have to watch them, stir them up and generally try to keep them going. Our best correspondents are in Berlin and Washington. In Paris we have had rather bad luck.<sup>15</sup> Deakin deals with what we call the local correspondents in less important places, who are not on the regular staff but are usually local business men, and are paid at space-rates for what they send.

I have to write a great many leaders, 4, 5 and sometimes 6 a week, besides watching all the news, looking after correspondents, keeping in touch with all sorts of people. The day's work is like this. I get to the office between 3 and 4 and send my letters. At 4.15 we have a conference about the general plan of the day's paper. At this conference are the heads of all the departments and the makers-up. Then I go into the editor and discuss leaders and other business. After that all sorts of work rushes on; visitors come in, orders and instructions have to be given, articles considered, letters written. At about 7.30, I rush off and swallow my dinner in about twenty minutes. Then I write a leader, which takes from 1½ to 2 hours. At the same time I have to keep a watch on the pile of type written flimsies – the telegraph and telephone messages with all the news of the night. About 11 Casey comes in to me with the foreign papers, wet from the press, and I go through it with him. There are questions of headings, hurried consultations with the Editor, corrections in proof, more letters to be written, appointments to be made, etc. etc. At 12 the "first" (provisional) edition of the paper comes out and the vans start buzzing in the yard, waiting to carry it off to the trains. We glance through the paper, make a few more arrangements, and about 12.30 we go off. I usually get home about 1, sit a while and read the paper and go to sleep about 2. I wake up at 9 or 10, have my coffee in bed, read all the morning papers, and then before lunch, begin telephoning or I go to the Foreign Office or one of the Embassies. I go out to lunch with some passing foreigner or Government official, and then off to the office, and the whole thing begins again. Saturday is a free day, and then I am in a state of doze, but I try to go for a long walk.<sup>16</sup>

Writing leaders, which essentially set out the policy of the newspaper, was a new skill for Williams, as Tyrkova-Williams points out - rather than collecting and communicating information on a particular subject, he was now responsible for putting forward an opinion, based on information collected by others and tuned to fit the paper's policy.<sup>17</sup> Leaders in *The Times* had a peculiar character of their own. They were never attributed to their authors, but expressed the view of *The Times* as an

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<sup>14</sup> William Francis Casey (1884-1957), who in 1928 became a leader writer, in the 1940s became deputy editor, and then in 1948 became editor of the paper.

<sup>15</sup> See below. The correspondent in Washington was Wilmott Lewis - in Berlin it was H. G. Daniels, and in Paris Sisley Huddleston.

<sup>16</sup> Harold Williams to William James Williams, n.d., MS Papers 0555-1. Dawson tried to get Williams to write his leaders much earlier in the day, but never succeeded in changing his habit. Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 320.

entity in itself. There were a number of regular leader writers, who in the early 1920s included Gerald Campbell, J. W. Flanagan, Arthur Shadwell, and B. K. Long, but Williams wrote the majority of the leaders that dealt with international subjects. The range of subjects he wrote on was impressive, even from the beginning – his leaders covered Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia, but also Egypt, India, America, China and Japan.<sup>18</sup>

As Foreign Editor, ‘watching, stirring up, and generally trying to keep the foreign correspondents going’ also formed a significant part of Williams’s workload. The foreign news pages on which their dispatches appeared were his responsibility, and besides that fact it was the correspondents who provided the hard news on which the editorial staff based their international leaders. A good correspondent, and a good relationship with that correspondent, could make a great difference to the success of the news service. Williams of course was familiar with the problems of reporting from a foreign capital and explaining events there to a newspaper’s readership. He knew also how important it was for a correspondent to feel that he was in close touch with the office.<sup>19</sup> He put his point of view, and *The Times*’s point of view across firmly to the correspondents, but also wanted to hear what they felt on the spot, in order to hammer out a common policy.<sup>20</sup>

The Paris office was the largest centre for foreign news, with three members of staff – the chief correspondent, his assistant, and a third ‘emergency’ man, who was supposed to be used for travelling to cover regional events, or to man the office in the event that one of the other correspondents was ill, on holiday, or absent themselves

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<sup>17</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 260.

<sup>18</sup> See *The Times Editorial Diaries*, 1921-1928. TNL Archive.

<sup>19</sup> Harold Williams to Sisley Huddleston, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1922, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>20</sup> Harold Williams to Philip Graves, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1922, HW/1, TNL Archive.

covering some important event.<sup>21</sup> Between 1922 and 1924 the chief correspondent in Paris was Sisley Huddleston, with whom Williams was not particularly impressed – he lacked independent judgement, and tended to reproduce the French official point of view rather than taking any account of the line that *The Times* was attempting to follow. His communications were often verbose and sometimes unhelpful.<sup>22</sup> Huddleston left in 1924, and was replaced by Hubert Walter, for a time with the assistance of C. D. R. Lumby, and eventually by H. G. Daniels, whom Williams regarded as one of the best of *The Times*'s correspondents.<sup>23</sup>

Relations between France and Britain in the early 1920s were uneasy, as it was clear that despite their war time alliance, the two countries' interests in post-war Europe and their intentions towards the other European states, particularly Germany, were diverging. Attempts to uphold the Anglo-French guarantee treaty of 1919 had failed. While the British government leaned increasingly towards concessions towards Germany and even some modification of the terms of peace, the French government were determined to enforce the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles to the letter.<sup>24</sup> *The Times*'s policy was initially designed to encourage the formulation of some workable post-war Anglo-French alliance, based on mutual understanding even where the two countries aims and intentions differed. The fundamental interests of the two countries, Williams insisted in a leader in 1921, were identical. It was the job of the statesmen concerned to translate this into an operable agreement.<sup>25</sup> Williams was sympathetic to the appointment of Raymond Poincaré as Prime Minister in 1922, and

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<sup>21</sup> Harold Williams to Sisley Huddleston, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>22</sup> Harold Williams to Sisley Huddleston, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1922, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1923, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive. Memorandum – the Foreign Service of The Times. January 1923. Box 27, Folder 'Harold Williams, foreign correspondent – job related materials', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>23</sup> C. D. R. Lumby to Harold Williams, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1926, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>24</sup> Alan Sharp, 'Anglo-French relations from Versailles to Locarno, 1919-1925. The quest for security' in Alan Sharp and Glyn Stone (eds.), *Anglo-French Relations in the Twentieth Century: Rivalry and Co-operation* (London, 2000) pp. 120-138.

<sup>25</sup> 'The Entente and Germany' *The Times* 19<sup>th</sup> December 1921 p. 11.

was sure that his appointment would lead to more honest co-operation between the two countries based on their true opinions and interests.<sup>26</sup> In a strongly worded leader in May 1922, following reports that Lloyd George had declared that the entente was at an end, and that Great Britain was free to pursue other relationships, Williams denounced the Prime Minister for misrepresenting British public opinion, and forcing a choice between 'the tried friendship of France and an alliance with the Germans and Bolsheviks, whose joint aim is to bring to naught the victory that we won at such a sacrifice'.<sup>27</sup>

The French hard line attitude on questions of European security and on the issue of the apparent inability of Germany, which was experiencing a deep economic crisis, to pay the agreed reparations, led to modifications in the paper's attitude as time wore on. In August 1922 Williams wrote privately to Huddleston that

Our chief desire is that France should have ... at least some instalment of a constructive solution. The alarming thing is that France seems to be going the other way. Perhaps the attitude is not unlike that which has been growing in England. In England the attitude is that things have got so thoroughly bad that we can do nothing now. We can only stand aside, keep clear of entanglements and see how the catastrophe works itself out. The same attitude in France may lead in France to another conclusion, namely, that since things are so hopelessly bad let us stand firm and save what we can from the mess.<sup>28</sup>

The French decision to occupy the industrial border area of the Ruhr in 1923, in order to recoup what they regarded as the payments that were owed to them, strained relations further. In his leaders Williams tried to draw attention to the lack of clarity in the French policy, and to demand a clear statement of French aims.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> 'Great Britain and France' *The Times* 14<sup>th</sup> January 1922, p. 11. 'The French View' *The Times* 16<sup>th</sup> December 1922 p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> 'Wrecking the Entente' *The Times* 8<sup>th</sup> May 1922 p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> Harold Williams to Sisley Huddleston, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1922, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>29</sup> 'The Issue in the Ruhr', *The Times* 12<sup>th</sup> February 1923 p. 11. Harold Williams to Sisley Huddleston, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive. On the French occupation of the Ruhr see Conan Fischer, *The Ruhr Crisis 1923-24* (Oxford 2003).

This country is friendly to France and understands many of the motives that have impelled her to act as she has done. But our friendship for France, our genuine desire to maintain our close association with her in the work of repairing the devastation of the war, cannot disguise a strong dislike of French action in the Ruhr and grave alarm at its probable consequences ... while we insist unequivocally on the liability of Germany to pay reparations to the full amount that can be claimed from her, while we scrutinize with extreme care and caution the methods by which Germany has refrained hitherto from meeting the payments to which she has pledged herself, we cannot admit that France has chosen the right way to enforce payment, or that she has chosen it in the right manner.<sup>30</sup>

Privately he wrote to Huddleston to explain that *The Times* did not 'particularly complain and we have no special feeling and we do not wish to foment any special hostility to France.' They simply wanted to make the situation clear, and to 'consider the situation calmly from the point of view of our joint interests in Europe'.<sup>31</sup> There were British troops in Cologne, in connection with the demilitarization of the Rhineland, and it was important in Williams's view that their neutrality should not be compromised.<sup>32</sup>

Besides the wider European situation there were a number of minor irritants in the Anglo-French relationship in the 1920s, such as relations in the Near East, and the unresolved issues of the Moroccan port of Tangier, in which French, Spanish, and British interests competed.<sup>33</sup> The Tangier question was a relatively minor one, but it held particular interest for *The Times* as they had a permanent staff correspondent in the area, the writer and explorer Walter Burton Harris.<sup>34</sup> Although Williams often had

<sup>30</sup> 'Great Britain and the Ruhr', *The Times* 16<sup>th</sup> February 1923 p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Harold Williams to Sisley Huddleston, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>32</sup> Harold Williams to C. D. R. Lumby, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive. For several years in the mid twenties *The Times* had a correspondent, G. E. R. Gedy, in Cologne.

<sup>33</sup> G. H. Bennet, 'Britain's Relations with France after Versailles: The Problem of Tangier, 1919-1923', *European History Quarterly* Vol. 24 (1994), 53-84.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Burton Harris, 1866-1933. His books included *A Journey Through the Yemen* (Edinburgh and London, 1893), *Tafilet. The narrative of a journey of exploration in the Atlas Mountains and the oases of the North-West Sahara* (Edinburgh and London, 1895), *The Land of an African Sultan - Travels in Morocco 1887, 1888, and 1889* (London 1889), *From Batum to Baghdad via Tiflis, Tabriz, and Persian Kurdistan* (Edinburgh 1896), *Morocco that was* (Edinburgh and London, 1921), *France, Spain and the Rif* (London 1927), *East for Pleasure - the narrative of eight month's travel in Burma, Siam, etc* (London 1929), and *East Again - the narrative of a journey in the Near, Middle and Far East, etc.* (London, 1933).

trouble even getting Harris's articles into the paper, he watched the situation closely, and enjoyed Harris's correspondence.<sup>35</sup> Harris's reporting on Tangier and the situation in Morocco generally (there was an ongoing conflict at this time between French and Spanish colonial forces and Riff separatists led by the Berber Abd el Krim) highlight some interesting aspects of the nature of *The Times's* journalism. It shows the high profile and semi-official role that *The Times's* correspondents tended to adopt, or be assigned. When Harris went to Paris to cover the negotiations for the settlement of the status of Tangier in late 1923, his involvement was more than that of purely a reporter - the French wanted to give him the *Legion d'Honneur* for his part in the negotiations. At one stage he held over a resumé of the convention when asked to because it was felt that its publication might make it more difficult to get final Spanish agreement.<sup>36</sup> It was the newspaper as a whole, and not only the correspondents, which assumed this sense of responsibility towards the events it was reporting. When Harris uncovered details of Spanish atrocities against Riff people in the autumn of 1925 (he had got hold of a photograph of some severed heads), he was determined to make the matter public, but Williams, or the office generally, was unwilling to publish the sensation in *The Times* owing to the newspaper's already poor relations with the Spanish government.<sup>37</sup>

Williams wrote a leader awarding faint praise to the Tangier settlement, which had a strong international character with many nationalities taking responsibility for the administration of the port. It was a clumsy arrangement, he felt, but it could not

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<sup>35</sup> Harold Williams to Walter Burton Harris, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1922, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive. On the Tangier question in European politics see G. H. Bennett, 'Britain's Relations with France after Versailles: The Problem of Tangier, 1919-23' *European History Quarterly* Vol. 24 (1994) 53-84.

<sup>36</sup> Walter Burton Harris to Harold Williams, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Burton Harris to Harold Williams, 30<sup>th</sup> September 1925, 7<sup>th</sup> October 1925, and 17<sup>th</sup> October 1925. Harold Williams to Walter Burton Harris, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1925, HW/1, TNL Archive.

prove unworkable 'until somebody tries to work it'.<sup>38</sup> Despite their involvement in the negotiations, the British government were anxious to keep out of the Morocco situation, and Harris, Williams and *The Times* all echoed this view. 'We are really quite determined not to be mixed up in the thing through the Tangier zone', Williams wrote to Harris, 'and I have not, for a long time, seen any decision of any Government so generally approved as Chamberlain's announcement that we were going to keep out of it'.<sup>39</sup>

Berlin ought to have been as major a centre as Paris for *The Times's* news service, but since the end of the war there had been only a single correspondent there. In 1901, when Williams had first worked in the Berlin office under George Saunders, there had always been at least two men. Williams had full confidence in H. G. Daniels, *The Times's* correspondent in Berlin since 1921 - he had an excellent grasp of German politics and economics, and was a good writer.<sup>40</sup> However, he was anxious to find him a suitable assistant, ideally a young man with an open mind and a reasonable knowledge of German.<sup>41</sup> A number of options were explored - for a time Daniels was assisted by a man named Barker, but the arrangement did not prove satisfactory owing either to Barker's failings as a journalist or Daniels's failings as a teacher.<sup>42</sup> It was not until 1926 that they found someone really suitable - Norman Ebbutt, whom Daniels was very happy with, and whom he was content to leave in

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<sup>38</sup> Harold Williams to Walter Burton Harris, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1924, HW/1, TNL Archive. 'The Tangier Agreement' *The Times* 20<sup>th</sup> December 1923 p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> Walter Burton Harris to Harold Williams, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1925, and Harold Williams to Walter Burton Harris, 20<sup>th</sup> July 1925, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>40</sup> Memorandum - the Foreign Service of the Times, January 1923, Box 27, Folder 'Harold Williams, foreign correspondent - job related materials', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>41</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Daniels, 9th February 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>42</sup> H. G. Daniels to Harold Williams, 21st January 1924, C. D. R. Lumby to Harold Williams, 24<sup>th</sup> February 1924, HW/1, TNL Archive.

Berlin on his own at any time. Ebbutt eventually took over the Berlin office when Daniels moved to Paris.<sup>43</sup>

Although Williams was anxious that the reparations plan should be stuck to, and although his commitment to the entente with France was sincere, his attitude to Germany in the twenties was a cautiously flexible one. The policy of the paper, he explained to Daniels, was 'to try our level best to keep the door open so that our country may still have room to act'.<sup>44</sup> The trouble was that no-one in England, in Williams's view at least, really had a clear idea of what was going on in Germany. He wanted articles from Daniels describing general life, economic trends, and the development of political ideas.<sup>45</sup> He was keen for some sort of agreement to be secured, and welcomed the Dawes Plan of 1924, which aided Germany's financial recovery.<sup>46</sup>

One of *The Times*'s best correspondents, in Williams's view, was Wilmott Lewis, in Washington. Lewis had a good grasp of American affairs, and rarely made a bad judgement. His articles were 'extraordinarily good'.<sup>47</sup> Williams freely admitted that he, and indeed the office as a whole, relied heavily on Lewis's assessment of American policy when forming their own views, and when writing leaders. Williams was anxious to increase the supply of American news; not necessarily its overall quantity, but certainly the frequency with which it appeared in the paper. The *Daily Telegraph* ran a great deal of American news, which 'visitors from the other side' were always talking about, and Williams wanted to create something like an

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<sup>43</sup> H. G. Daniels to Harold Williams, 27th February 1926, HW/1, TNL Archive. Norman Ebbutt (1894-1964) was expelled from Germany in 1937 because of his unfavourable coverage of the Nazi regime.

<sup>44</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Daniels, 9th May 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>45</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Daniels, 21st March 1924, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>46</sup> 'Germany Seeking a Government' *The Times* 14<sup>th</sup> January 1925 p. 15.

<sup>47</sup> Harold Williams to Wilmott Lewis, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.



American column in *The Times* to rival this, in order to convince Americans abroad that *The Times* was the paper they ought to read.<sup>48</sup>

There were some problems with communication, however. Williams wrote long letters to Lewis outlining the sort of service he wanted – more description, details of what the average American thought, and portraits of American statesmen. Lewis almost never responded. In the last years of Lewis's service there were some more serious problems, with promised articles never materialising: even after several personal meetings in London this misunderstanding was not resolved. Williams felt that when Lewis returned to Washington 'the thread suddenly snapped'.<sup>49</sup> In a letter to H. G. Daniels, the Berlin correspondent, in 1925, he remarked wryly that 'The event of today is that Wilmott Lewis has sent us an article'.<sup>50</sup>

The key concern in American policy was the increasingly isolationist policy adopted by successive American presidents in the 1920s. After Woodrow Wilson's close involvement in the formulation of the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, American withdrawal under Harding and Coolidge was hard to take.

Williams wrote to Lewis in 1923;

We often get very impatient with America on this side, but we feel that America had to go through her own evolution and we had a certain curious and sometimes rather bitter interest in watching the process. At the same time we know that we are lonely in the world now and that the only foreign people who are ever likely to understand us and sympathise with our ideas are the Americans. So we are patient.<sup>51</sup>

In a later letter he told Lewis of a meeting he had had with Philip Kerr, formerly Lloyd George's personal secretary. Kerr had told him that the British simply did not understand 'the great nation across the seas that is going to dominate the

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<sup>48</sup> Harold Williams to Wilmott Lewis, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>49</sup> Harold Williams to Wilmott Lewis, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1924 and 8<sup>th</sup> November 1926, HW/1, TNL Archive. *The Times* had a correspondent in New York, Bullock, who also worked for the Daily Mail.

<sup>50</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Daniels, 7th December 1925, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>51</sup> Harold Williams to Wilmott Lewis, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

twentieth century'. 'Perhaps we don't understand', Williams wrote, 'but at any rate we don't think we are quite played out. We are watchful, a little incredulous, and really very impatient, we are having hard times, Europe is near, and America after promising all kinds of wonders has left us to face the mess and has wrapped herself up in her own private prosperity. That is the general feeling here, but we do want to know what that wonderful country is really up to.'<sup>52</sup> When Williams wrote leaders on America, however, he tended to play up the friendship between Great Britain and America. Perhaps he hoped that by emphasising the existence of such a friendship on paper, it would be possible to cultivate close co-operation in reality.<sup>53</sup>

Another major centre for *The Times's* news service was Constantinople. The correspondents there in the 1920s were, in succession, Philip Graves, Harry Pirie-Gordon, and Jack Collins. Graves, who later returned to the London office to work, and became a close friend of Williams's, dealt with Turkey in the aftermath of the world war, and during the course of the Greco-Turkish war of 1920-22.<sup>54</sup> *The Times* attempted to adopt a neutral stance on this conflict, and Williams was anxious that no anti-Turkish bias should appear in the paper – for this reason he did not use some of the material Graves sent him on Turkish atrocities. 'We are neither pro-Turk nor pro-Greek', he wrote to Graves in explanation. 'We are opposed to the continuation of the war in Asia Minor, which injures Turks and Greeks and ourselves. By every possible means, the war must be stopped'.<sup>55</sup> What *The Times* wanted was a reconstructed, independent Turkey, within its ethnographical frontiers. By mid 1922 Williams saw the group led by Mustafa Kemal as the most likely rallying centre; they had gathered around them 'most of what is vigorous and possibly constructive in Turkey.' 'What I

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<sup>52</sup> Harold Williams to Wilmott Lewis, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>53</sup> 'America and Europe', *The Times* 29<sup>th</sup> April 1922 p. 13. 'The American Method', *The Times* 24<sup>th</sup> April 1924 p. 13. 'Mr. Kellogg's Farewell', *The Times* 18<sup>th</sup> February 1925 p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> Philip Graves (1876-1953).

am trying to discover', Williams wrote, 'is a Turkey with whom we can make peace and with whom we can work'.<sup>56</sup>

Graves's articles were always good, but, as with several of the correspondents, Williams had to press him over their presentation. This was partly a response to the new readers that the increased circulation of *The Times* had attracted. The new kind of reader was intelligent, but liked ideas to be put to him in a lighter and more general way. A touch of description, a living figure, or scenery, would also make the arguments appeal to him. 'We want to use your extraordinary and exceptional knowledge of the Near East in the most effective way', he told Graves. 'We want to get into close touch with the man who reads you or would like to read you in the third class carriage of the underground on his way to business in the morning'.<sup>57</sup>

Williams had of course lived in and reported from Constantinople himself, and he was interested in the reports that the correspondents there sent in. He wished he had more opportunity to write leaders on the Turkish situation.<sup>58</sup> When Pirie Gordon wrote of the marked changes in life in Constantinople in 1925 – clean, repaired streets, repainted trams, a functioning fire brigade, and overwhelming support for the republican government, Williams wrote to him; 'So there has been a real revolution after all. Your picture of Constantinople is new and startling'.<sup>59</sup>

In areas where there was no permanent staff correspondent it was sometimes necessary to send out an experienced man to assess the situation and provide occasional coverage. In 1923 Graves was sent on such a tour of India, to send back

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<sup>55</sup> Harold Williams to Philip Graves, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1922, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>56</sup> Harold Williams to Philip Graves, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1922, HW/1, TNL Archive. On relations between Britain and the Kemalist government, see Stephen F. Evans, *The Slow Rapprochement. Britain and Turkey in the age of Kemal Atatürk 1919-38* (Beverly, 1982), and Erik Lance Knudsen, *Great Britain, Constantinople and the Turkish Peace Treaty 1919-1922* (New York and London 1987).

<sup>57</sup> Harold Williams to Philip Graves, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1922, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>58</sup> Harold Williams to Harry Pirie-Gordon, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>59</sup> Harry Pirie-Gordon to Harold Williams, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1925, Harold Williams to Harry Pirie-Gordon, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1925, HW/1, TNL Archive.

articles for the paper, but also to assess the service. *The Times* had a number of local men working in the main centres in India – a man named Sheppard who was nominally their principal Indian correspondent, in Bombay, and other men in Simla, Delhi, Calcutta, Allahabad, and Peshawar. The problem was that there seemed to be little co-operation or co-ordination between the various correspondents, and there was ample opportunity for duplication or complete neglect of particular news stories. Both Graves and Williams were keen that the correspondents should send copies of material that they wired or mailed to *The Times* also to Bombay, but there seemed to be some trouble in implementing this. Even Williams acknowledged that while Sheppard was in theory the principal correspondent, he was not sure that this was true in practice, and that the views of all the correspondents ought to be taken into account.<sup>60</sup>

Graves was surprised by the power and organisation of the Swaraj movement – they were the only really organised party in India, he felt, and he would never again believe official assurances about their weakness.<sup>61</sup> Williams, although sceptical about the efficacy of the reforms that the British Government was attempting to implement, was certain that ‘from the point of view of maintaining British authority and enforcing existing law ... we must insist until the very last on the experiment being carried through. For the moment it is the only ground we have to go upon, and it does certainly offer the Indians remarkable opportunities for displaying any political power they possess.’ It was impossible to yield to wrecking tactics, he felt, and this was the line being taken in *The Times*. When Graves expressed unease about his own

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<sup>60</sup> Philip Graves, Bombay, to Harold Williams, 24<sup>th</sup> October 1923, Harold Williams to Philip Graves, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>61</sup> Philip Graves to Harold Williams, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

reactionary and undemocratic leanings, Williams reassured him: 'A democracy is a method not a principle. In some conditions it exists, and in others it fails ...'<sup>62</sup>

In China, *The Times* had a permanent correspondent, David Fraser, who was based in Peking and provided much of their Chinese news. They also had local correspondents, for example in Hong Kong and in Shanghai – the latter correspondent, Green, seemed to Williams to be 'going to his own funeral when he sends his messages to *The Times*'. *The Times*'s China service apparently had a good reputation, particularly in the city, where Fraser's financial messages were well-regarded.<sup>63</sup> However, there was little room for news from China in the paper in the early 1920s, particularly on the leader page. As Williams explained to Fraser,

Here we are all absorbed in our European troubles which are very serious and for which no one can see any remedy. I do not think our hard-pressed government has much thought to spare at present for the troubles of China, but it is certainly necessary that attention should be called to the changes in the Far East'.<sup>64</sup>

By 1925, the gravity of the escalating civil war in China was becoming more apparent, and both *The Times* and the British Government were obliged to confront the issue. In a series of leaders in 1925 and again in 1927, Williams highlighted the urgent need for action to protect British interests, and drew attention to the influence of the Soviet Government in China. Their intention, he was convinced, was 'to destroy British trade and to drive out British enterprise from the Far East'.<sup>65</sup> When the severity of the problem was realised, all attention suddenly turned to China. 'We have

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<sup>62</sup> Harold Williams to Philip Graves, 18<sup>th</sup> March 1924, HW/1, TNL Archive. See also 'The Viceroy's Speech and After' *The Times* 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1925 p. 13.

<sup>63</sup> Harold Williams to David Fraser, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1924, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>64</sup> Harold Williams to David Fraser, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>65</sup> 'The New China', *The Times* 27<sup>th</sup> June 1925 p. 15. See also for example 'A Land of Promise' 30<sup>th</sup> May 1925, 'Hankow and Moscow' *The Times* 4<sup>th</sup> January 1927 p. 11, 'The Lesson of Hankow' *The Times* 8<sup>th</sup> January 1927 p. 11, 'Shanghai' *The Times* 13<sup>th</sup> January 1927 p. 13, 'Action in China' *The Times* 20<sup>th</sup> January 1927 p. 13, 'British Policy in China' 27<sup>th</sup> January 1927 p. 13, 'The News from China' *The Times* 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1927 p. 13, 'The Chinese Tangle' *The Times* 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1927 p. 13.

been writing about China for years and up till now we have felt that we were beating the air', Williams wrote to Fraser in 1927.

If you were here you would note a surprising change. China is now the one all absorbing topic. People won't talk of Europe; they only want to talk about China, and we have actually reached the stage of having two successive Cabinet meetings entirely devoted to China ...<sup>66</sup>

In mid 1927, Frank Riley, a correspondent who had been sent out to assist Fraser, disappeared in Chengchow (Zhengzhou), which was in one of the worst zones of the civil war, and it soon became clear that he had been murdered by soldiers of Feng Yu-Hsiang, the 'Christian General'. The loss of Riley made a deep impact at *The Times* – Williams, who heard the news upon his return from a holiday in September 1927, had been convinced that Riley, who was young, eager, and open-minded, would have developed into a first rate correspondent.<sup>67</sup>

In Central Europe, there were a number of local correspondents, who produced work of varying degrees of quality. King, in Warsaw, took little interest in his work and was constantly missing important news.<sup>68</sup> He was later replaced by Sobanski, a Pole, who also proved to be less than satisfactory.<sup>69</sup> In Belgrade there was a man named Brown, whom Williams was also unhappy with, until the post was taken over by Bryce, who 'made the post of Times correspondent in Belgrade something which means far more to the Serbs than it has ever done before'.<sup>70</sup> They had a man called Trotter in Rumania, who was 'obviously working hard to get information' but was

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<sup>66</sup> Harold Williams to David Fraser, 18th January 1927, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>67</sup> Harold Williams to David Fraser, 13th September 1927, HW/1, TNL Archive. 'The Murder of Mr. Riley', *The Times* 11<sup>th</sup> November 1927 p. 17. *The History of The Times – the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Beyond* Vol. 2, p. 1139.

<sup>68</sup> Harold Williams to C. D. R. Lumby, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>69</sup> Harold Williams to C. D. R. Lumby, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1924, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>70</sup> C. D. R. Lumby to Harold Williams, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1924, HW/1, TNL Archive.

'quite unable to present it'.<sup>71</sup> There was a correspondent named Crocker in Budapest, and another named Neumann in Vienna.

In addition to this there was C. D. R. Lumby, who occupied the overarching role of 'Central European Correspondent'. He was initially based in Vienna but later moved to Prague. The idea was that he would visit neighbouring countries periodically and work up his knowledge so that he was able to write on them when the need arose.<sup>72</sup> Williams was anxious that Lumby should not sink into reporting on purely local news, simply for the sake of doing a day's work – he would rather have two considered messages a week from Lumby than one every day.

I want you to fill your rightful place in the paper as a Central European Correspondent ... Rumania, Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia, Yugo-Slavia and Poland all come within your scope – in a word, you are Chief Correspondent for the territory of the old Dual Monarchy, and a little more. The thing we want to understand is how this new experiment is working out from day to day. The local correspondents can give us the mere news, but we shall want you to give us a feeling and an interpretation of the bigger general movement, whether it means conflict and rivalry or rapprochement...<sup>73</sup>

The 'new experiment' included the political, social and economic fortunes of the newly independent states in Eastern Europe, and the progress of movements such as the Little Entente (a loose combination formed by Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania). Lumby was keen to penetrate beyond the image of some of these countries projected by their representatives in the West. Czechoslovakia, for instance, had a 'very fine reputation abroad as a well-managed, orderly and progressive country'. Much of this, in Lumby's view, was 'eye-wash'.<sup>74</sup> 'One sees a Benes or a Venizelos',

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<sup>71</sup> C. D. R. Lumby to Harold Williams, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1923, Harold Williams to C. D. R. Lumby, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>72</sup> Harold Williams to C. D. R. Lumby, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1922, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1922, 26<sup>th</sup> January 1923. C. D. R. Lumby to Harold Williams, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1923, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>73</sup> Harold Williams to C. D. R. Lumby, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>74</sup> C. D. R. Lumby to Harold Williams, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1924, HW/1, TNL Archive.

he wrote, 'and thinks that he is the country. It is a mistake'.<sup>75</sup> Williams also was anxious to get past the official representations. 'We should like to know where and in what ways there is real progress', he wrote to Lumby, 'and exactly where official optimism is to be discounted'.<sup>76</sup> Williams was anxious to present a balanced view of the situation in each of the countries concerned. This was a particular problem in the case of Hungary, where the government, led by Miklos Horthy, was unpopular in the west. In London, particularly, there was a great deal of anti-Hungarian sentiment, and relations between Hungary and the Little Entente were also strained.<sup>77</sup> Williams did not admire the Horthy regime, but he had a strong impression that things were not 'so horribly bad as some of the opponents of the regime make them out to be.'<sup>78</sup>

*The Times's* policy was the source of some conflict between Williams and Robert Seton-Watson, who felt that *The Times* had what he regarded as an inexplicable tendency to lean towards Hungary rather than the Little Entente.<sup>79</sup> He was annoyed that letters that he wrote on Hungary on several occasions failed to make it into the paper, whereas letters putting the opposing view did appear. This, as Williams explained, could often be due to time and space pressures, and simple oversights. The policy in leaders, however, was purely his and Geoffrey Dawson's responsibility. 'Please don't accuse us of short-sightedness,' he wrote in reply, 'and especially please don't accuse us (The Times in this instance would only mean G. D. and me) of lack of honesty.'<sup>80</sup>

*The Times's* Russian news service was one of the most problematic. It was inevitably restricted by the fact that the newspaper had no correspondent in Moscow,

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<sup>75</sup> C. D. R. Lumby to Harold Williams, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>76</sup> Harold Williams to C. D. R. Lumby, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1924, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>77</sup> Harold Williams to C. D. R. Lumby, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1922, Lumby to Williams, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>78</sup> Harold Williams to C. D. R. Lumby, n.d. [February 1924], HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>79</sup> Draft of a letter from Robert Seton-Watson to Harold Williams, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1926, SEW/17/31/1.



or indeed in Russia at all. Their Russian news came through two channels, neither of which was completely satisfactory – R. O. G. Urch, *The Times*'s correspondent in Riga, and a number of young men in Berlin, who at various times included a man named Kazarin, and Petr Struve's son, Gleb Struve.<sup>81</sup> Williams was determined that the service could be improved.

We ought to have a fair amount of Russian news in The Times, and at present we depend on Berlin and Riga for getting it. Sometimes Urch sends us very useful stuff, but he is uncertain and is apt to be carried away by wild-cat stories, some of which we only recognise when it is just too late. There is a great deal of Russian news in Berlin, and even though it now seems to be a dull season in Russian politics, I haven't the slightest doubt that some really interesting stories could be discovered.<sup>82</sup>

By 1923, arrangements had also been made to have the Russian papers read in the London office, which went some way towards improving the service.<sup>83</sup>

Williams of course kept up a close interest in the situation in Russia himself, through his wife and family, and through his involvement with the Russian émigré community.<sup>84</sup> The Russian colony in London was a relatively small one compared with those in Paris and Berlin, but it remained politically active, certainly throughout the 1920s. Besides disseminating material hostile to the Bolshevik regime, there was a great deal of work to be done in assisting the anti-Bolshevik refugees in Europe. The evacuation of the Crimea by Wrangel's forces added 200,000 extra refugees to the hundreds of thousands already in Europe. Organisations in London which were involved in relief work included the Russian-British *Bratstvo*, or fraternity (an organisation dominated by Russians and British in public life, which had been

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<sup>80</sup> Harold Williams to Robert Seton-Watson, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1923. Harold Williams to Robert Seton-Watson, 28<sup>th</sup> March 1926, SEW/17/31/1.

<sup>81</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Daniels, 11th April 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive. Struve was employed on a casual basis at Williams's suggestion, as he knew many members of the Russian community in Berlin, but Williams found that he lacked journalistic sense, and that his news was largely colourless.

<sup>82</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Daniels, 28th February 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>83</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Daniels, 6th December 1923, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>84</sup> See Chapter four.

established after the February revolution but remained in existence until 1921 with a new, anti-Bolshevik agenda), The British Russia Club, and the British Russian Relief Committee.<sup>85</sup> Harold Williams's and Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams's involvement in this work came mostly through the Russian Refugees Relief Association (RRRA), formed after the evacuation of the Crimea. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams chaired the Association's committee, and Harold Williams, along with Bernard Pares, Alfred Knox and Maud Hoare, was a member of the committee. They published appeals in the *Morning Post* and *The Times*, and also arranged a dance at Chesham House (the former Russian embassy) to raise funds.<sup>86</sup> This money was initially sent to Constantinople to aid the desperate situation there; later it was used to help refugees to establish themselves in the West. Samuel Hoare, who along with his wife was now a close friend of the Williamses, became closely involved in this work when he was appointed Deputy High Commissioner for Russian Refugees by the League of Nations.<sup>87</sup>

The small size of the Russian colony in London meant that its leading figures knew each other well, and they maintained a distinct, if limited, social network. While its members retained their strong sense of Russian émigré identity, they helped one another to find ways of fitting into British society. There were organisations to further co-operation between British and Russian academics, educational establishments, and the churches.<sup>88</sup> Personal contacts were equally valuable. G. S. Smith, in his biography of D. S. Mirsky, describes how in the 1920s the Williamses became a nexus between

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<sup>85</sup> Elina Multanen, 'British Policy towards Russian Refugees in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution' Ph.D. thesis, University of London (2000) pp. 239-260.

<sup>86</sup> 'The Russian Refugees Relief Association', Add. 54466.

<sup>87</sup> Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare. A Political Biography* pp. 60-61.

<sup>88</sup> Elina Multanen, 'British Policy towards Russian Refugees' pp. 260-277.

the Russian émigré community and British literary and political circles. Harold Williams helped to get Mirsky an academic post upon his arrival in London.<sup>89</sup> Frank Swinnerton, also by this time a close friend of Williams's, gives a vivid impression of the Williamses central role in émigré society in his memoirs.

My impression is that in the Williams household meals were continuous whenever the party was large and, as was often the case, casually augmented. A new-comer would sit down at the table, push away the plate of one who had gone before, and, while serving himself with food, would join at once in the general never-ceasing anecdotal, philosophical, chaffing, and above all political conversation ...

On another occasion he was invited to dinner, but was surprised to find that there was no meal. After a while, and without explanation, all the guests donned their coats and hats and went outside. Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams then unlocked the gate to some gardens, and they all proceeded in single file along a path around the back of some houses, until they reached a house with French windows, a light on inside, and a meal laid at the table.

First of all a silent woman in black appeared and took our coats, which I think she laid upon chairs in the room. Then a man of middle height and square build, with a ruddy face and a fair moustache entered the room by the inner door. He bowed to us all, kissed Mrs. Williams's hand, and spoke to my hosts in what I took to be Russian. Was it Russian? My mind was instantly full of Charlie-over-the-waterish notions: was this the Old Pretender in person? I knew it could not be the Czar, for the Czar was dead. Nor Rasputin, for Rasputin, besides being also dead, wore whiskers. But the stranger had a distinguished bearing, and everything seemed so mysterious that even if he had turned out to be plain John Smith I should still be enjoying an experience which would enable me in future to picture the Revolutionary Code in action. I do not remember if our friend spoke to me in any language whatever, but I imagine that he either spoke English or French or did not address me. I have forgotten this: it does not matter.

The meal proceeded. It ended. We rose. The stranger kissed Mrs. Williams's hand, bowed to us all, and retired. We stepped out of the French window into the darkness, and in single file walked back to Williams's lodging. Only when we arrived

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<sup>89</sup> G. S. Smith, *D. S. Mirsky – A Russian-English Life, 1890-1939* (Oxford University Press, 2000) pp. 88-89. See also G. S. Smith, 'D. S. Mirsky: Four letters to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams (1926), with an unknown review by Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams (1924)' *Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 71, No. 3, (July 1993) pp. 482-489. Mirsky was a close friend of Maurice Baring's, and by his presence in London in the 1920s helped to revive the latter's interest in Russia, which had been neglected during the First World War. Nina Lavroukine, 'Maurice Baring and D. S. Mirsky: A Literary Relationship' *Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 62, No. 1, (January 1984) pp. 25-35

there, safe from being overheard, did Williams say, laughing his funny nervous little laugh: "Well, what did you think of Miliukov?"<sup>90</sup>

Williams also maintained an interest in Russia affairs through his work for the School of Slavonic and East European Studies. Although he was obliged to turn down the Chair that Pares and Seton-Watson had intended for him, Williams accepted the joint editorship, with Pares and Seton-Watson, of the new *Slavonic Review* – besides his editorial responsibilities he wrote occasional articles for the journal.<sup>91</sup> He was given an Honorary Readership at the School, and delivered a number of public lectures each year. Pares and Seton-Watson, for their part, realised the advantages of having someone on board who was well paid elsewhere but still willing to assist them.<sup>92</sup> Pressure of work at *The Times*, however, gradually forced Williams to withdraw from much of this work. He was letting the others down much more often than he would have liked, and felt this failure deeply. He was also unhappy that his inability to be closely involved led to his name being attributed to issues with which he did not necessarily agree.<sup>93</sup>

Williams wrote leaders for *The Times* on Russia throughout the 1920s, but no more than on any other subject, and not exclusively – other leader writers also covered Russian subjects. His attitude to the Soviet regime remained unequivocal. When a Bolshevik delegation was invited to the Genoa conference to discuss the reconstruction of Europe in 1922, he was appalled, and condemned the Western

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<sup>90</sup> Frank Swinnerton, *Swinnerton – An Autobiography* (Plymouth, 1937) pp. 263-265

<sup>91</sup> See for example Harold Williams, 'Alexandre Blok', and 'J. D. Bourchier', *Slavonic Review* Vol. 1 No. 1 (June 1922) pp. 218-220, 227-228. Harold Williams, 'Petrograd' *Slavonic Review* Vol. 2, No. 4, (June 1923), pp. 14-35, Harold Williams 'Peter Struve', *Slavonic Review* Vol. 4 No. 1 (June 1925), pp. 18-22, Harold Williams 'General Wrangel' *Slavonic Review* Vol. 7 No. 19 (June 1928) pp. 198-204. On the early years of SSEES, see I. W. Roberts, *History of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies 1915-1990* (London 1991) pp. 1-29, N. B. Jopson, 'The School of Slavonic and East European Studies: The First Fifty Years. 1. 1922-37' *Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 44, No. 102 (January 1996) pp. 1-7, and Dorothy Galton, 'Sir Bernard Pares and Slavonic Studies in London University, 1919-39' *Slavonic Review* Vol. 46, No. 7 (July 1968) pp. 481-91.

<sup>92</sup> Bernard Pares to Robert Seton-Watson, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1921, SEW/17/20/1.

statesmen who had allowed it. The Rapallo Treaty between Germany and Soviet Russia summed up for Williams the conspiratorial abilities of the Bolsheviks, and the blindness and stupidity of Western leaders, particularly Lloyd George.

In the genial atmosphere of the sunlit southern city few seem to recognize that the Russia in whose name [the Bolshevik delegates] brazenly speak is the ghost of a great nation whom they have murdered, and that the undertone of their bland and calculated speech is a bitter wail of unimaginable desolation. They speak with the Prime Minister of Great Britain, as if there were no question of thousands dying of famine at this moment through their guilt. They walk through the streets of Genoa and no one cries out upon them that from month to month they have systematically murdered straight men and true, and that they have come to Genoa intent upon destroying the very bases of that imposing spectacle in which they are now allowed to participate.<sup>94</sup>

He attacked Lloyd George, who attempted to dismiss the Rapallo treaty as of no account, in a leader entitled 'Amateur Diplomacy'. The Prime Minister, and the other Western statesmen, had little experience in the ways of hardened conspirators, he wrote. They were unaware of the way in which the Bolsheviks 'broke up every assembly into which they were ever admitted, and finally broke up the Russian Empire'.<sup>95</sup>

The vitriol with which Williams's Russian leaders were delivered was gradually dampened, but the sentiment remained the same. On the death of Lenin, in January 1924, he wrote of the 'manifest and notorious' ruin wrought by the Soviet leader, and of his destructive doctrines that were 'still obscuring and poisoning the minds of millions'.<sup>96</sup> Yet he made no predictions as to Russia's future, and outlined no hopes for it. In the same year, he firmly opposed the *de jure* recognition accorded to the Soviet Government by Ramsay Macdonald's Labour Government, and juxtaposed his discussion of the negotiations in Downing Street with the news of the

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<sup>93</sup> Harold Williams to Robert Seton-Watson, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1924, and 30<sup>th</sup> June 1926. Bernard Pares to Robert Seton Watson, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1922. Williams to Robert Seton-Watson, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1922, SEW/17/20/1.

<sup>94</sup> 'The Bolshevik Stage' *The Times* 13<sup>th</sup> April 1922 p. 13.

<sup>95</sup> 'Amateur Diplomacy' *The Times* 21<sup>st</sup> April 1922 p. 13.

<sup>96</sup> 'Lenin' *The Times* 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1924 p. 13.

condemnation to death of a number of 'intelligent Russians' in Kiev, who had expressed a belief in freedom of speech.<sup>97</sup> He had no doubts about the authenticity of the Zinoviev letter of November 1924, which purported to be an instruction from Grigori Zinoviev to the Communist Party of Great Britain, inciting revolutionary activity.<sup>98</sup> When news came of the British raid on Soviet House, the headquarters of the Soviet trade organisation Arcos in May 1927, as they were suspected of espionage, Williams wholeheartedly supported the break in diplomatic relations between Britain and Russia which followed. Relations between the two countries had become a farce, he argued. A break with the Soviet Government did not mean a break with the Russian people. It was simply time to build a new Russian policy upon sounder and more permanent foundations.<sup>99</sup>

In November 1927, Williams wrote a long leader entitled 'Ten Years of Bolshevism', in which he looked back at the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, and summed up his views on the decade of Soviet rule that had followed. What had happened in those ten years could hardly be regarded as progress, Williams wrote. The cruelty of the regime was revolting – 'Nowhere else has the massacre of political opponents – Conservative, Liberal, Socialist and non-party – been carried out under the eyes of modern men with such grim ferocity and on such an appalling scale'. It was hardly even pretended that the 'gigantic Bolshevik experiment' had been anything but a failure – unemployment continued to be a problem, not to mention the sinking level of civilisation. Moreover, the Soviet regime continued to threaten the stability of Europe.

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<sup>97</sup> 'Recognition of Russia' *The Times* 26<sup>th</sup> January 1924 p. 11. 'The Conference With Bolsheviks' *The Times* 14<sup>th</sup> April 1924 p. 13. 'The Bolsheviks in Downing Street' *The Times* 15<sup>th</sup> April 1924 p. 15.

<sup>98</sup> 'The Zinovieff Letter', *The Times* 5<sup>th</sup> November 1924, p. 17. Gill Bennett, *A most extraordinary and mysterious business: The Zinoviev letter of 1924* (London, 1999).

Ten years have passed, and the Russian problem still looms up darkly in the background of all the complexities of international affairs. The Soviet Government may continue to exist for a few years longer, or it may suddenly collapse in storm. No-one knows. But the clear lesson of these years of crucial experiment in unhappy Russia is that in the search for a remedy for the ills of modern civilization there is no more glaring warning signal than Bolshevism. The experiment is the sternest warning of our time.<sup>100</sup>

Williams was lucky that in *The Times* he had found a newspaper which shared his views on Russia, and which was willing to let him expound them. It is clear, however, from the leaders he did write, that while his hostility to Soviet Russia remained total, there was no room in the pages of *The Times*, or in the international situation itself, for any sort of crusade against the regime. Williams had been forced by the circumstances of his job and of international events to broaden his horizons from Russia to the whole of Europe, and indeed the world, and if he was looking for a cause to write in favour of he would have to find it in this broader view.

It was not until 1925 that Williams found a cause for which, through *The Times*, he was able to work wholeheartedly. A lasting peace in Europe was of course something he and many others had wanted to see for some years – they had hoped to find it in the Treaty of Versailles, but were disappointed. During the early 1920s, Williams's attitude to Germany had remained cautious, and he had believed that the best hope for peace was in working for a closer Anglo-French understanding.<sup>101</sup>

In February 1925, Williams interviewed Herriot, the French Foreign Minister, at the Quai D'Orsay. Herriot surprised him by talking about the possibility of a European security pact, which would include Germany, and which would guarantee the latter country's western border as it stood. Russia, he made clear, would be

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<sup>99</sup> 'Soviet House', *The Times* 25<sup>th</sup> May 1927, p. 17. 'Soviet Diplomacy', *The Times* 27<sup>th</sup> May 1927 p. 17. H. Flory, 'The Arcos raid and the rupture of Anglo-Soviet relations, 1927'. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12 (1977), pp. 707-23.

<sup>100</sup> 'Ten Years of Bolshevism' *The Times* 7<sup>th</sup> November 1927 p. 15.

isolated by such an arrangement.<sup>102</sup> Herriot's optimism became more understandable upon Williams's return to London, as it emerged that an offer to negotiate such a pact had very recently been made to France by the German Government. Williams wrote his first clear leader on the subject on 6<sup>th</sup> March, shortly after Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Stanley Baldwin's government, had made a statement announcing the German proposals and indicating his willingness to discuss them. In his leader, Williams described the Anglo-French meeting at Cannes, the draft treaty of mutual assistance, and the recently negotiated Geneva Protocol as 'so many waves breaking ineffectually against the rock of an apparently insoluble problem'.

But what if there were some real possibility of a wider and more comprehensive pact, that would not perpetuate conflict, but might, on the contrary, culminate in the establishment of real peace in Europe for a long term of years? ... The suggestion of a wider Pact that would mean the pacification of the greater part of the European continent must ... be considered very seriously.<sup>103</sup>

In the following weeks he positively encouraged the rejection by the British Government of the Geneva Protocol on disarmament; not as a signal of Britain's disinterest in Europe, but rather in favour of something wider and more durable.<sup>104</sup> He made clear that British interest in and responsibility for European security was imperative. Britain had taken a leading part in the war, and in the peace. It was impossible now to 'take refuge in a mood of indifference' to the dissensions in Europe, which would force themselves upon Britain 'in a thousand ways'.<sup>105</sup> Williams made little direct reference to Russia in his articles on the security pact, but the

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<sup>101</sup> See for example his comments on the Genoa conference. 'The Bolshevik Stage' *The Times* 13<sup>th</sup> April 1922 p. 13.

<sup>102</sup> 'Notes of Conversation with Herriot, Quai D'Orsay, 12.15, February 26<sup>th</sup> 1925. Box 8, BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>103</sup> 'The Master Key' *The Times* 6<sup>th</sup> March 1925 p. 15.

<sup>104</sup> 'Pacts and Protocols' *The Times* 11<sup>th</sup> March 1925 p. 15. 'The Protocol – and After?' *The Times* 13<sup>th</sup> March 1925 p. 15.



inference was clear. Without such an agreement, Europe might 'wither away into extinction, leaving scope only for the play of destructive forces'.<sup>106</sup>

Williams was anxious that the German offer should not be passed by, or 'stifled by events', and throughout the summer of 1925 he maintained a fairly constant stream of leading articles outlining the necessity of such a pact.

These pact proposals are what really matter. If practical effect could be given to them, all the rest of the European problems that from time to time tease, tantalize, or alarm would be comparatively simple ... A bold adventure in good faith is the only safe way. It is for Germany to make a resolute endeavour; it is for France to rise to the height of her best and most generous tradition; while Great Britain in this difficult situation has at once a special opportunity and a delicate responsibility.<sup>107</sup>

Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams gives some insight into the techniques Williams used.

Repetition is one of the surest ways of communicating one's mood. Politicians and journalists, when they want to accustom public opinion to new political combinations, are obliged to repeat themselves just as a ballad-singer repeats his refrain. But the listener or reader must not notice the repetition. Otherwise he will react against it'.<sup>108</sup>

It was clear to her, and it is clear if Williams's leaders in 1925 are followed closely, that he was working gradually but deliberately to mobilize British public opinion in favour of the pact. *The Times*'s leaders also penetrated beyond British public opinion. H. G. Daniels, in Berlin at the time, later wrote to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams that they were widely quoted in the German press, and had some considerable influence.<sup>109</sup> By the late summer, Williams was convinced the pact had a good chance of success. 'If the Germans really want the Pact they now have a magnificent chance', he wrote to Daniels in August. 'I have had a whole day of it and

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<sup>105</sup> 'British Interest in a Pact' *The Times* 27<sup>th</sup> May 1925 p. 17.

<sup>106</sup> 'The Chances of the Pact' *The Times* 11<sup>th</sup> June 1925 p. 15.

<sup>107</sup> 'The Next Step' *The Times* 15<sup>th</sup> May 1925 p. 17.

<sup>108</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 273-4.

<sup>109</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 281.

I am convinced that both Briand and Chamberlain want to make it as easy for the Germans as possible.'<sup>110</sup>

Negotiations for the pact opened in Locarno in October 1925. C. D. R. Lumby, who was in Paris at the time, went to Locarno to cover the conference. From the journalistic point of view, he felt it was a hopeless affair – they were given very little material, and were 'put on trust' as regarded the use of what they were given. 'It was a case of making bricks with very little straw'.<sup>111</sup> The crux of the Locarno agreement was that Germany, France, Belgium, Italy and Great Britain signed a Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, accepting the status quo on Germany's western border (including the demilitarized Rhineland zone). Germany, France and Belgium agreed never to go to war with one another again, and Great Britain and Italy acted as guarantors of this treaty. The British advertised their role as that of an arbiter, rather than an ally of one power or another, bringing France and Germany closer together.<sup>112</sup>

Williams was by no means euphoric in his championship of Locarno. The years since the war had subdued his enthusiasm for grand schemes. His leaders announcing the conclusion of the Treaty were cautiously hopeful.

The little town of Locarno, beautiful among the mountains at the northern end of the Lago Maggiore, now has its assured place in history. Last evening the representatives of Powers and peoples who for eleven years had struggled in war, or with the bitter consequences of war, registered their free and deliberate agreement in a pact of genuine peace ...

We, who have lived through these eleven amazing years, are a weary and sceptical generation, and have perhaps lost the fine ardour which made the boldest conceptions of human achievement seem possible and credible. How many people in Europe a little more than eleven years ago were cherishing generous dreams of the liberation and expansion of human enterprise? How few there are now! Humbled and chastened by an unimaginable calamity, the peoples of Europe, struggling with a thousand fantastic problems in a changing world, have learnt to limit their hopes and

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<sup>110</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Daniels, 12th August 1925, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>111</sup> C. D. R. Lumby to Williams, 18<sup>th</sup> October 1925, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>112</sup> Frank Magee, 'Limited Liability? Britain and the Treaty of Locarno' *Twentieth Century British History* Vol. 6, No. 1 (1995) p. 1, p. 17. Douglas Johnson, 'Austen Chamberlain and the Locarno Agreements' *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* 8, (1961-62) pp. 62-81.

purposes. Safety for a time that may be foreseen, some real confidence that the work done to-day will not be undone to-morrow, even that would mean a marvellous release of energy in the present state of Europe. This, at the very least, is the result of the work that culminated yesterday in the Treaty of Locarno.<sup>113</sup>

It had been no exaggeration, he felt, when Chamberlain had called Locarno the real peace congress of Europe. Williams praised all the statesmen involved – Stresseman for his skill, Briand for his intuition and calm, and Chamberlain for his ‘wonderful assiduity and tact’ and ‘sincere desire for the establishment of peace in Europe’.<sup>114</sup>

In a letter to his father, Williams’s relief was evident.

It has been a very busy year again, but I am very thankful that part of my work has been worthwhile. I have worked very hard for months for the Pact, and now, after many uncertainties and anxieties, it was brought off at Locarno last Friday, and now, for the first time for eleven years, the chief nations of Europe are really at peace. There are all sorts of reasons – economic and financial – why the Germans and French should keep the bond, but the real reason is that everyone has learned now that the old hatred was ruin and destruction and the end of all. Now we shall be able to begin to work together for good. I am very thankful to-day. After all one can sometimes do a piece of good work.<sup>115</sup>

Williams’s hope for Locarno was that it would restore the will to work for peace. ‘There can be no sudden leaps into Utopia’, Williams wrote in a leader for *The Times* shortly after the close of the conference, ‘and the Treaty of Locarno would fail of its real purpose if it were used as material for castles in the air.’

It is altogether hopeful because it is the joint work of practical statesmen, acutely conscious of painful and obstinate realities, and banded together at last in an effort to solve their common problems together ... The new world certainly has not come. But it may be found that the effect of Locarno will be that many men and women in many countries will begin to hope once more that faithful work for a better future will not be done in vain’.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> ‘Peace at Last’ *The Times* 17th October 1925, p. 13.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> Harold Williams to William James Williams, 18th October 1925, MS Papers 0555-1.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Team Work at Locarno’ *The Times* 24th October 1925 p. 15.

Williams's views echoed those of Austen Chamberlain. In late 1926 Chamberlain was still stressing the importance of the 'peace mentality' that the agreement had created. The spirit of Locarno was more important in his view than the treaties themselves.<sup>117</sup>

This at least was one occasion on which Williams would not be disillusioned, as he would not live to see his hopes for Europe fail. In the period between the signing of the treaty and Williams's death in November 1928, there was no real post-Locarno disillusionment. There were problems, but no major break between the European powers. Baldwin's government remained in power, and foreign policy and European relations remained stable until after 1929. On a visit to Paris in 1926 Williams noticed a marked difference in the atmosphere in Europe – 'the Germans are not outside now, they're inside'.<sup>118</sup> In 1927, in a leader on 'The Foreign Outlook', Williams was mildly optimistic. Russia and China were still dark problems on the world scene. The Government could not rest on its laurels. But Baldwin's government at least took foreign policy seriously, he felt, and the Locarno treaty, which had resulted in a closer association between Great Britain, France and Germany, had been a success.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Magee, 'Limited Liability?' p. 19

<sup>118</sup> Harold Williams to H. G. Daniels, 4th October 1926, HW/1, TNL Archive.

<sup>119</sup> 'The Foreign Outlook' *The Times* 10<sup>th</sup> November 1927 p. 15.

## Conclusion

In November 1928, Harold Williams died. He had been severely unwell in June and July of that year, and had spent some weeks resting in a nursing home in Ealing. In August he and Ariadna took a holiday near Williams's relatives in Cornwall. In September and October he was back at work, but was clearly unwell – there was talk of his going to Egypt, partly for a holiday, but on the pretext of working for *The Times*. He wrote his last leader, on the Anglo-French naval compromise, on 5<sup>th</sup> November. It was published the following day, and the same day Williams collapsed.<sup>1</sup> His illness lasted a fortnight. The doctors who treated him struggled to identify what was wrong with him, and he was given a number of blood transfusions. Eventually he suffered from 'a sudden and profuse internal haemorrhage', from which he did not recover.<sup>2</sup>

Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams was stunned by Williams's death. It was a severe blow to her, and to the rest of the family. She clearly felt that the doctors were at fault, and seven years later, when she was writing his biography, she still retained a degree of bitterness: 'They ordered an unnecessary operation, which was fatal. They walked round him like blind men, hastening his death by their every word and deed'.<sup>3</sup> It was also a great shock to Williams's colleagues at *The Times*. George Brumwell, the Assistant Editor, wrote to Ariadna that he felt as though he had lost his only brother.<sup>4</sup> Philip Graves, who wrote the obituary (with Tyrkova-Williams's help), described Williams as 'a very loveable man, modest to a fault, bearing his great learning lightly ... who gave generously without thinking of his own needs'.<sup>5</sup> Tributes appeared in the pages of

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Abortive Compromise' *The Times* 6<sup>th</sup> November 1928 p. 17, Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* pp. 335-6, *The Times's* editorial diary, 1928, TNL Archive.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Perott to Lints-Smith, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1928, Harold Williams Managerial File, TNL Archive.

<sup>3</sup> Tyrkova-Williams, *Cheerful Giver* p. 336, Borman, *A. V. Tyrkova-Vil'iams* p. 235.

<sup>4</sup> G. M. Brumwell to Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1928, Box 27, Folder 'Harold Williams, foreign correspondent – job related materials', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>5</sup> 'Obituary – Dr. Harold Williams' *The Times* 19<sup>th</sup> November 1928, p. 19. Borman, *A. V. Tyrkova-Vil'iams* p. 235.

*The Times* from Sir Samuel Hoare, Princess Antoine Bibesco, Maurice Baring and Sir Robert Vansittart, amongst others – they all reinforced the view that Harold Williams's death had left a gap in many of his friends' lives that would 'never be fully filled'.<sup>6</sup> This was also true in a professional context. Geoffrey Dawson considered Williams's death to be 'by far the greatest loss which the paper has sustained since I came back to it'. Williams was not replaced as Foreign Editor, largely, Dawson admitted years later, because his outstanding knowledge of foreign affairs, and capacity for dealing with the Dominions and with the United States as well as Europe, made him irreplaceable.<sup>7</sup>

Given Williams's talents as a Foreign Editor, his output as an anti-Bolshevik writer, and his capacity for earning people's respect, admiration and friendship, it is perhaps surprising that he has been so largely forgotten. Oliver Gillespie blames the moderation of Williams's views – if he had stuck to the politics of his youth, Gillespie reasons, he 'might have had a library of books written about him'.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly his modesty played a part in this – Williams was not Bernard Pares, who was an expert at publicising his work, produced an enormous written output, and left several volumes of memoirs. Williams was a quiet and unassuming man, and while he worked hard in his career he did this not through personal ambition, but through a desire to do what he considered to be genuinely good work. This usually meant work for a particular cause, from his early career as a Methodist minister, and his enthusiasm for the ideas of Tolstoy, to the constitutional movement in Russia, the Anglo-Russian alliance, the anti-Bolshevik cause during the Russian civil war, and the attempt to reach an accommodation in Western Europe that was embodied in the Treaty of Locarno in 1925.

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<sup>6</sup> *The Times* 20<sup>th</sup> November 1928 p. 17, p. 21, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1928 p. 15, p. 19, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1928, p. 12, p. 21, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1928 p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Sir John Evelyn Wrench, *Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times* (London 1955) p. 276.

<sup>8</sup> Oliver Gillespie, 'New Zealand's Neglected Genius – Harold Williams' *The Auckland Star*, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1955.

Williams's career as a journalist, chosen above the ethnological and linguistic work that was his real passion, and talent, was a way of serving these causes. His Methodist upbringing had made him aware of the power of the spoken and written word at an early age. In 1898 he wrote the following as advice to Macie Smith, who was planning a dramatic dialogue on the destructive effects of gambling.

Too much reasoning on abstract principles would fail to turn the people. They are stirred by appeals to their pity, their sympathy, their sense of justice. Uncle [Tom's] Cabin had more immediate effect in abolishing slavery than all the [impassioned] reasoning of Garrison. He prepared the soil, Uncle Tom was the seed. If you could make the [whole] dialogue as [graphic] and vivid as possible, making free use of all the [humour] and pathos you [possess], it would wonderfully help to purify the minds of the people of their old love for vulgar comedy and would also increase their hatred of the gambling evil. You have the chance to preach a far more effective sermon than we ministers can.<sup>9</sup>

Williams's journalism followed this early lesson in many respects. It was descriptive, it was emotive, but it was designed to make a point. John Reed, in the preface to *Ten Days that Shook the World*, wrote that, although his sympathies had not been neutral, he had tried to see the events of 1917 'with the eye of a conscientious reporter, interested in setting down the truth'.<sup>10</sup> This was never Williams's intention. The revolution for him was first of all about establishing constitutional government in Russia, later about protecting the fragile liberal government which included so many of his friends and acquaintances, and finally about preventing the acceptance of the Bolshevik government. The establishment and maintenance of good relations between the liberal segments of British and Russian society was, for Williams, the key to this.

His knowledge of the languages and the ethnography of the Russian Empire gave him an interest in and sympathy for the politics, literature and culture of Russia's subject nationalities.

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<sup>9</sup> Harold Williams to Macie Smith, 25<sup>th</sup> June 1898, Box 12, Folder 'Letters from HW to MLS', BAR MS Coll. Tyrkova-Williams.

<sup>10</sup> John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (New York, 1922), preface.

But it was Russia that was his passion, and, just as he saw New Zealand as an important component part of the multi-ethnic British Empire, he saw the Russian Empire as a rich conglomeration of languages, races and traditions. He had little sympathy for the British policy of supporting the separation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from Russia, and even less for the separatist aspirations of the Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Even in his teaching for the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in the University of London, Williams insisted on the unity of the Ukrainian, Belorussian and Russian languages, just as he did on Czech and Slovak: language groups such as these should be treated together, and within this structural unity the differences between them could be properly explored.<sup>11</sup>

Williams's career reached its height in the 1920s, when he worked as Foreign Editor at *The Times*, but the height of his notoriety, and his commitment to the work he was doing, came in the period 1917-1921. By this time he had come a long way from the radical, though largely unpolitical views of his youth. He was considered by many in Britain to be a reactionary, in terms of Russian politics at least. Yet many people agreed with, and were influenced by his views; views which were, however controversial, formed from a basis of experience and scholarship as well as personal involvement. When, in 1917, Williams's articles were being printed simultaneously in the *Daily Chronicle*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *New York Times*, his influence on British and American opinion on Russia was not inconsiderable. He could only hope to influence policy makers, through his journalism, personal conversation and by submitting reports and memoranda, but his impact on public opinion, however difficult to measure, was real. Williams was considered by many to be a fine journalist, but the essence of his journalism was argument, however subtle, and his object was to persuade his readers to support one, or many, of the causes which were his life's work.

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<sup>11</sup> Harold Williams to Robert Seton-Watson, 7<sup>th</sup> July 1921. SEW 17/31/1.



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[courtesy of Paul Simmons]

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