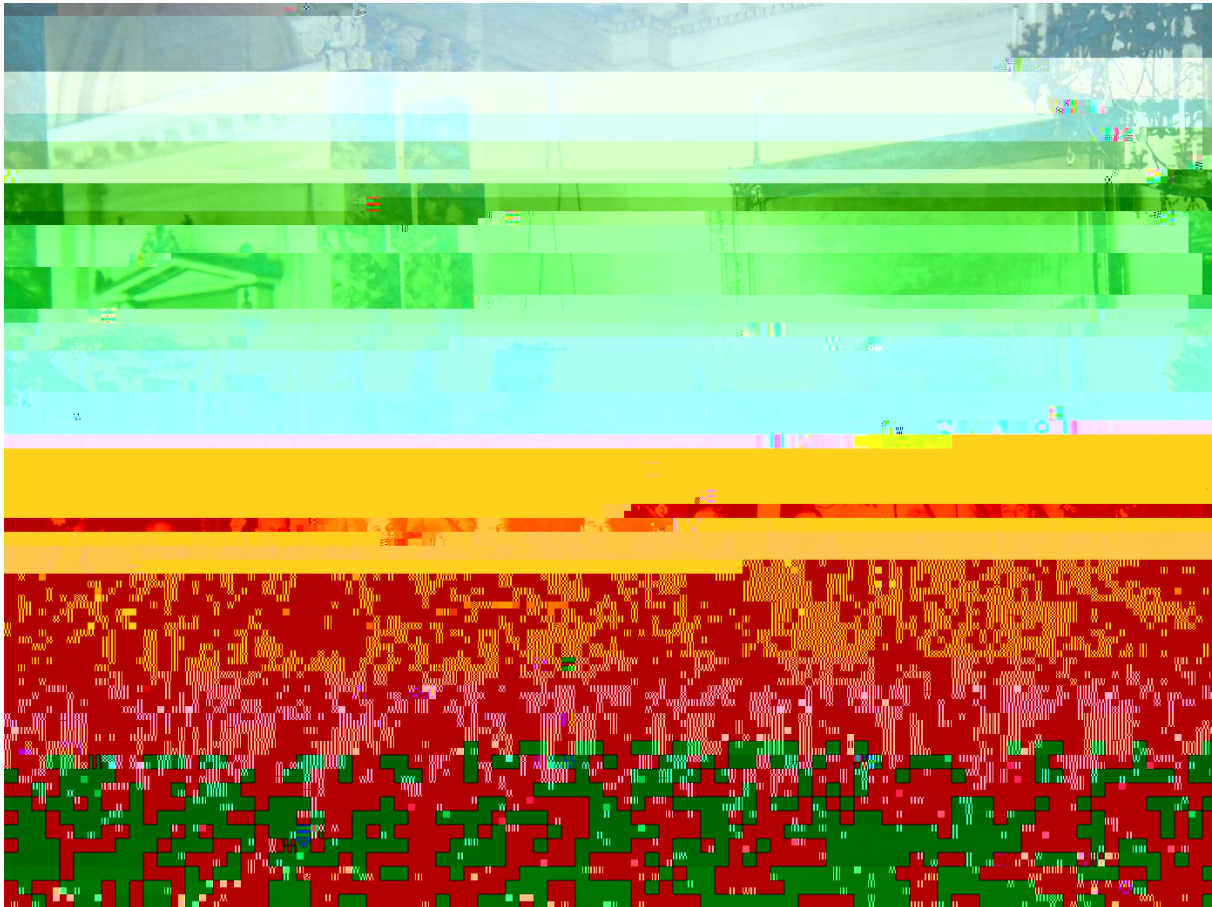




On 31 January, the delegation travelled to the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoe Selo, 15 miles south of Petrograd (St. Petersburg) to be presented to the Tsar. Two days later Milner returned for a private audience when he was introduced to, and had lunch with, the Tsarina and her daughters. However, from his meetings with the Tsar it was obvious to Milner that there was nothing the Mission could achieve on the political side. Sir Henry Wilson, a senior Army staff officer and corps commander who had been appointed by Lloyd George as the Senior Military Representative for the British delegation, wrote that "Yesterday the Emperor and Empress ... made it quite clear that they would not tolerate any discussion of Russian internal"



After another two days, on 4 February 1917, the whole Mission returned again to the Palace for a State dinner. A photograph exists in the New College Archives Milner collection which features a group portrait of officials, military officers and other dignitaries; Tsar Nicholas II is seated at the centre and it would appear that, seated third to his right, is Lord Milner. Consultation of photographs of the internal rooms of the Alexander Palace allows for a confident conclusion that the picture was taken in the Semi-Circular Hall, the room used in Imperial times for receptions, galas and dinners. Given that all evidence seems to indicate that Milner did not visit Russia in an official capacity before 1917, the State dinner of the 4 February would appear to be the only occasion at which this photograph could have originated.<sup>1</sup>

With Robert Bruce Lockhart as his guide, and glad to get away for a while from the seemingly endless round of functions, Milner visited Moscow for three days, meeting with Prince Lvov (a leading liberal statesman and the soon-to-be Prime Minister of the Russian Provisional Government) and M. Chelnokov, the mayor of Moscow. In the course of the meeting the Russians attempted to impress on Milner the effects poor administration and mismanagement of people and resources were having on the country, as well as the increasingly unfavourable way in which the Tsar himself was now seen for doing little to help alleviate the situation.

On his return to Petrograd, Milner launched into more days of meetings, interviews and receptions and on 18 February met with the Tsar for the final time. Milner had, in fact, written a confidential letter to the Tsar in which he set out his views on the matter of the help the Allies could give Russia. The donation of supplies would need to be perceived to genuinely enhance the probability of the success of any future military operations. It was possible that materials which may not make a significant difference to operations on the Western Front, for example, may prove vital to success on the East. Milner felt there was also a need for Russia to demonstrate that it had already exhausted its own supplies of the resources requested, to prove in effect that it was truly necessary for the Allies to hand over their own vital supplies. No doubt partly with his recent meeting in Moscow fresh in his mind, Milner went on to point

Certainly, no-one present in the Alexander Palace on that lavish evening of 4 February 1917 could have predicted the events of less than six weeks later, when the world they had known would be turned upside down and eventually swept away, never to return.

<sup>1</sup> This photograph has been used on the dust-*lcmgy"qh"ökpukfg"vjg"gpki oc<"Dtkvkj"qhhkekcnu"kp"Twuuk"3;22-3;5;ö* by Michael Jwi jgu."Nqpfqp<" J c o dngfqp"Rtguu."3; ;90"Vjg"cempqyngfi o gpv"pqvg"kpfkcevgu"vjcv"vjg" r j qvq i tcr j"qtkikpcvgf"ökp"vjg"gctn{"fc{u'qh"vjg"Hktuv"Yqtnf"Yctö0"However, as the seated figure is almost certainly Lord Alfred Milner, who does not appear to have officially visited Russia until the Allied Mission of January/February 1917, the precise dating of this photograph may become a subject for debate. His presence in the group would also provide an explanation as to exactly why the picture is in New Collegeøu"Oknpgt"eqmgevkqp.

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New College Library

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