

Helen Azar and Nicholas B. A. Nicholson, ed., translator, annotator, *Tatiana Romanov: Daughter of the Last Tsar, Diaries and Letters, 1913-1918*, Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2016. 245 pp. Photos. Bibliography. List of books belonging to Tatiana. Index.

Reviewed by: Lee A. Farrow, Auburn University at Montgomery

In January 1916, V. I. Chebotareva wrote about Tsar Nicholas II's second daughter, "Tatiana Nikolaevna is so touchingly affectionate, even assisted with preparations, sat in the corner and cleaned the instruments." (p. 143) This is one of the things that stands out about Tatiana – her solidity, her stoicism, her strength in the face of adversity. Helen Azar, translator of Tatiana's diaries and letters, declares that many have seen Tatiana as haughty and cold, but a reading of her own writings reveals a young woman who was warm, caring, and tougher than her royal upbringing might suggest. Azar, who did a fine job in her previous book, merging Olga Nikolaevna's diaries and letters to create a portrait of the tsar's eldest daughter, now partners with Nicholas Nicholson to tackle the next of the royal daughters.

The early years of Tatiana's diary reflect on the expected things: reading, and lessons in physics, music, French, German, and art; time spent with family playing games and coloring eggs for Easter; and visits to and from friends. One is also reminded just how much time the royal family spent outdoors: with the exception of Empress Alexandra, who was often under the weather, and Alexei, whose hemophilia frequently limited his activity, Nicholas and the other royal children were regularly engaged in various types of athletic endeavors. Tatiana describes walking, ice-skating, bike riding, skiing, kayaking, tennis, swimming, and horseback riding. Those familiar with the last Romanov family will find the warmth and love between parents and children that is so often remarked upon. Her comments on other events are few and far between. Rasputin is rarely mentioned, for example, and the start of the war is marked only with the words, "we learned that the Germans had declared war on us. Brutes! God grant that it all turns out well." (p. 32)

Once the war begins, Tatiana's diary includes regular descriptions of her time doing charitable and official duties, visiting troops, handing out medals, visiting injured soldiers, and working at the hospital. Her assistance in surgeries and other medical procedures is impressive, particularly given her refined existence as a member of the royal family. She changes dressings on patients, assists in surgeries and amputations, comes into contact with all manner of human fluids, including blood and pus, and witnesses the death of soldiers.

With the first revolution of 1917, and the abdication of her father, Tatiana's diary ceases and her story continues with her letters. There is very little here about the political circumstances of her situation. Instead, she expresses regrets that she cannot see friends and relatives, thanks them for their cards and letters, but mostly her letters are sweet and cheery, focusing on the positive moments in her life and inquiring about the health of others.

Occasionally, one finds a hint of the larger drama occurring in Russia. On January 11, 1918, she writes, "So painful and sad, what they are doing to our poor Motherland, but there is one hope,

that God will not leave us and make these madmen see reason." (p. 214) Later, after the family has been moved away from Tsarskoe Selo, she regrets they cannot pray in a real church. In mid-April, Nicholas, Alexandra, and Maria were taken to Ekaterinburg, while the other daughters were left behind to care for Alexei until he was well enough to be moved. During their month apart, Tatiana described missing her parents and other siblings. The family was reunited in mid-May 1918 and, of course, died two months later.

Once again, Azar has done a good job of translating and assembling related primary sources to shed some light on Tatiana's life between 1913 and 1918. Nicholson annotates the documents, providing critical identification and context for the many names and events that are mentioned. This volume, like Azar's previous book on Olga, will be of interest to specialists and non-specialists alike.