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# THE FOURTH SEAL

*By The Same Author*

A FLYING VISIT

INDIA BY AIR



THE PALE HORSE

(From the *Old Believers' Apocalypse*)

# THE FOURTH SEAL

THE END OF A RUSSIAN CHAPTER

BY THE RT. HON.
SIR SAMUEL HOARE
LL.D., M.P.

"*And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*" —REVELATIONS, vi. 7. 8.



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

FIRST PUBLISHED NOVEMBER, 1930
NEW IMPRESSION DECEMBER, 1930

*Printed in Great Britain*
*at The Windmill Press*
*Kingswood Surrey*

TO

WILLIAM JOHN BIRKBECK

who first excited me with an interest in Russia

and

HAROLD WILLIAMS

who taught me much of the achievement, mystery and tragedy of a great people.

*"Give rest, O Christ, to Thy servants with Thy Saints; where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting. Thou only art immortal, the Creator and Maker of man, and we are mortal and formed of the earth, and unto earth we shall return; for so Thou didst ordain when Thou createdst me saying:*

*Dust thou art*
*And unto dust shalt thou return.*
*All we go down to the dust*
*And weeping o'er the grave*
*We make our song,*
*Alleluya, Alleluya, Alleluya.*

*Eternal memory to them."*

(Contakion for the Dead, translated by W. J. Birkbeck.)

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# INTRODUCTION

THIS book is not a history of Russia upon the eve of the revolution. If it were, it would tell of the heroism of the army, and the staggering sacrifices made by Russian troops on the allied altar of victory. It is no more than an account of what I myself saw in the least representative centre of Russian life, the centre of the Russian Government. In my little corner the ineptitudes and inefficiencies of the antiquated bureaucracy filled the picture. But the picture was not a picture of Russia. It was only the background of the purlieus of Government. The real Russia of 1916 was the Russia of the armies, just as the real Russia of 1930 is the Russia of the dispersion.

Though my story is altogether personal, many have helped me with its preparation, not least my Russian friends, who in the days of adversity have lost neither their courage nor their faith. Pre-eminent amongst them stands out Ariadne Williams, Russian patriot, subtle thinker, tireless worker, and wife of that brilliant Englishman whose name I mention in the dedication of this book.

S. H.

*July, 1930.*

# I

## A YEOMANRY REGIMENT AND A RUSSIAN GRAMMAR

"I've taught me other tongues—and in strange eyes
Have made me not a stranger;"

Byron. *Childe Harold.*

# THE FOURTH SEAL

## CHAPTER I

### A YEOMANRY REGIMENT AND A RUSSIAN GRAMMAR

THE war found me as it found most others, unprepared for its arrival and unequipped for its operations. For ten years I had been engrossed in domestic politics. A period on the London County Council, three Parliamentary elections and four years of party strife in the House of Commons had fully occupied my time. Educational questions, the Welsh Church and Irish Home Rule had left me neither the time nor opportunity to follow the developments of world politics or to study the needs of Imperial defence. Army affairs I had particularly neglected. Never even a Territorial, I had been repelled rather than attracted by the noisy campaign for national service, and oppressed by the portentous discussions that year by year I had sleepily heard in the debates on the Army Estimates.

It was only a fortnight before the outbreak of war that a chance meeting in a country house forced me to look round the blinkers in which I had been running.

We were staying with the late Lord and Lady Brownlow at Ashridge. I suppose it was one of the last parties that these two distinguished representatives of Victorian culture gave at their spacious home. The visit left a vivid impression upon us. On the Sunday afternoon Lady Brownlow narrowly escaped a serious accident, for her hat caught fire in one of the chapel candles, and it was only my wife's swift intervention that put out the blaze.

But there was another reason, though of a very different character, that makes me remember this week-end on the eve of the war. Lord Kitchener was amongst the guests, and I had never before had the chance of meeting him.

When the great man arrived, I wondered whether he would have a word for anyone so insignificant as myself. It was an agreeable surprise when, from Saturday evening to our parting at Euston on Monday morning, he scarcely ceased talking to me about army affairs. He had realised that I was the only Member of Parliament at Ashridge and, being anxious at the moment to interest Westminster in certain of his views, seized upon me as a possible instrument in his plan of campaign.

Someone of the party had perhaps told him that I took the duties of a private Member very seriously, and that I had scarcely left the House during the long discussions upon Home Rule and the Welsh Church. Be this as it may, the great man directed upon me a veritable stream of comments and confidences.

How different he seemed from the silent soldier

that I had imagined. A vivacious talker, indeed, almost a gossip, strongly opinionated and very indiscreet, he seemed one of those who use words as a smoke screen for their advance.

"Why don't you take up army questions in the House of Commons?" he said to me. "Tommy Bowles made a name for himself with naval questions. You ought to become the Tommy Bowles of the army."

When I told him that my capacities were far below those of so brilliant a fighter, and that I had no idea how and where to begin, he answered:

"Work at the Channel tunnel; the question has become very urgent, as the Committee of Imperial Defence has just been inquiring into it. Although I won and completely refuted Churchill's arguments in favour of the tunnel, the politicians may still press it in the House of Commons."

He then proceeded with almost religious fervour to deploy the case against the tunnel:

"If the tunnel is built, it will constantly warp and bias the whole structure of our foreign and military policy. At times of international tension, the British public will be thinking about nothing but the tunnel. In war, British tactics and strategy will be prostituted to its defence."

With words such as these he urged me at once to start a movement amongst the back benchers of the Conservative party against a project that he was evidently convinced would prove disastrous to Great Britain and the Empire.

Vehement in his opposition to the tunnel, he was equally vehement in his criticism of the Territorial army. No doubt it was the bias that he received in 1870, when he was brought into contact with several French Territorial units, that made him so contemptuous of Haldane's new model. He seemed to draw no distinction between the retired veterans of the French regular army and the young citizens who had joined the British Territorial units. In his eyes, all Territorials were equally inefficient, and a great mistake had been made in creating so undependable a second line of defence. When in a few months time I was myself a Yeomanry officer and helping to raise a Yeomanry regiment, I often remembered his tirade, and, in company with many others, wondered whether the creation of the new armies would not have taken a very different form, if it had not been for the presence of a young sapper officer with the French Army in the Franco-German War.

But neither the Channel tunnel nor the Territorial movement was to find me among the opposition in the House of Commons. Even if I had busied myself with the questions, as Kitchener advised me, I should have had no time to use my newly acquired knowledge.

He had told me to go to him for further details, but in a few days we were confronted by the declaration of war. When next I came into contact with him, I was myself one of the Territorials whom he had so greatly disparaged, and he the head of the department that he had so freely criticised.

The war came with its abhorred shears, and there was an abrupt end to all the Parliamentary plans that I had formed. Still worse, the stark truth emerged, that the stock in trade that I had accumulated, during ten years of political life, was practically useless for the new demand that the nation was making. What could I do in the emergency? Of the pursuits of war I knew nothing, and judged by pre-war standards I was already old for learning them. Should I take up civil work of some kind? Several years on the Education Committee of the London County Council had given me an understanding of the educational machine. Perhaps, therefore, the Board of Education might make some use of my services. When I asked the President for a job, I not unnaturally found that there was no opening. Should I return to municipal work and devote myself to activities in my constituency of Chelsea? There, again, it was obvious to me that many of the older men and women were capable of doing all that was needed, and no more than a few speeches at relief and recruiting meetings were required of me.

Moreover, day by day I saw more and more of my own generation moving into the ranks of fighting units. Now it was Walter Guinness, the first of the Conservative Members to appear in the House in khaki, now Alec Thynne, as dignified in his uniform as he had been in his frock-coat; now a host of unexpected politicians, whose connection with any military unit I had never suspected. The flood had burst into the Lobby and the Chamber. It was clear that I could

not stand before it.

Within a fortnight, therefore, I determined to withdraw from politics and to obtain a commission. A few weeks later my object would have been easily attained, but in the early days of August no one yet realised the need for expansion, and there were no vacancies in many units. I tried for a commission in the Brigade of Guards. I well remember the morning that I spent interviewing Commanding Officers in Wellington Barracks. Grenadiers, Coldstream, Scots Guards, all were full up. I tried my own Yeomanry, the Norfolk Yeomanry. There again, there were no vacancies. Driven almost to desperation, I went off to the Fulham Town Hall, and in a heterogeneous crowd enrolled myself as a special constable.

At length, after more fruitless searching, I heard that it had been decided to form a second regiment of the Norfolk Yeomanry. Here was a chance for me, and without any further delay I obtained a commission in it, taking with me the Conservative agent in Chelsea, himself a former sergeant in the 17th Lancers, and my butler, who during the next few years was to be with me in many strange situations.

For some weeks more the regiment was only a regiment on paper, and, indeed, it would not even have existed on paper if I had not myself gone off in a taxi to Woolwich, and stopped many hours at the Arsenal, until I had obtained a complete collection of all the necessary Army Forms. For without Army Forms no regiment can even exist.

My spare time I spent in cramming myself with Field Service Regulations and cavalry manuals in much the same way as I should have worked for an examination at the university or a speech in the House of Commons.

During the next few months my sole interest was this new occupation, with its routine of stables and drills, lectures and exercises. Our two chief excitements were our horses and the occasional scare of raids. As to the horses, being a new regiment, we started with none except the officers' chargers. Should we ever get any, and, if we got any, should we ever keep them? No one seemed to have a clear idea as to what should be required of a second line Yeomanry regiment, nor indeed what should be required of any Yeomanry regiment. Should they be self-contained units, trained and equipped for playing a distinctive part in the cavalry of the war? Or should they be Officers' Training Corps for other units, their officers and men constantly coming and going, their horses with them just long enough to have a little schooling before they were drafted to other units? Month after month, the authorities seemed to vacillate between contradictory answers to these questions; and month after month we struggled to become a unit, only to find our men and horses constantly taken from us. There was, I suppose, no real cause for complaint. Most of us realised the complexity of the problem with which the War Office was faced. Changes and contradictions of policy were unavoidable. None the less, for us small people, enthralled in our own work, it was irritating to see what

appeared to be uncertainty of direction, and waste of good money. Yet in spite of constant disappointments, the officers and men were as keen as their comrades in many other units facing similar difficulties.

Upon the personal side we were a happy party. There was the Colonel, Charlie Seymour, gay and debonair, as fine a horseman as any in the country, revelling in the many opportunities that new drafts made for training unridable horses and rejuvenating decrepit screws.

There was Prince Freddie Duleep Singh, one of the minor heroes of the war. A man already past middle age, with an oriental love of comfort and none of his ancestor, Ranjit Singh's love of war, he had devoted his recent years to society, archæology and music. Everyone liked him. In Norfolk, in London and on the Riviera he was equally popular. Amongst antiquaries he was respected for his knowledge of the old houses and parish churches of Norfolk, and amongst musicians he was remembered for his pleasant voice and knowledge of opera. Perhaps the most curious streak in his character was his romantic passion for legitimacy and the Jacobite movement. The old manor house in which he lived was filled with the kind of antiques that one finds in a really good curiosity shop. But amidst a strange medley of odds and ends his Jacobite relics, honoured by a room and a chapel to themselves, stood out in conspicuous prominence. When I was admitted into this holy of holies, I remember the horror on his face when, pointing to a French terracotta bust of James

Stuart, I asked him if it was the Old Pretender.

"My dear friend," he exclaimed, "I never expected you to say that. The bust is of James III."

Wishing to play his part in the life of the country, he had joined the Norfolk Yeomanry when it was started by King Edward. The social life of the annual training, I feel sure, he greatly enjoyed, for he had a marked talent for making friends and adapting himself to his surroundings. The horsemanship, I imagine, he always detested. His was not the figure of a beau sabreur, and rumour had it in Norfolk that King Edward had decorated him for the obvious suffering that he had endured whilst escorting the royal carriage from the station to the house at Sandringham. When war broke out, he had already retired from the regiment and was of an age when he might well have left soldiering to younger men. Yet, out of unmixed patriotism he returned to the Yeomanry, and endured the mud and cold, to say nothing of the riding that he so much disliked. Later on, when it was clear that the regiment would never go overseas as a unit, he almost fought his way to another that took him to the army in France. If it be true that the British Government behaved none too generously to his father, the spirit that made him leave the comforts of a bachelor middle-age, and take his chance with the risks and hardships of war deserves to be remembered all the more gratefully in the country of his adoption.

Then there was Hastings, the Adjutant, the one man of us who understood the details of administration, and

the military needs of a regiment, full of energy, overflowing with efficiency, intent upon the necessary task of turning a heterogeneous company of ignorant officers, easy-going farmers and plodding agricultural labourers, into something like a cavalry regiment.

The unit never went abroad, for after many vicissitudes its officers and men were drafted into other regiments, and as a crowning misfortune, bicycles eventually took the place of the horses for which we had all struggled so strenuously in the autumn of 1914. None the less, the work of these three men was not in vain, for it must have usefully permeated many channels, when we were all scattered over the various fronts of the war.

From time to time our routine life was enlivened by the scare of invasion or the threat of an air raid. Telegrams over some impressive signature would descend upon us, Yeomanry regiments would cover Norfolk like a veritable cloud of locusts. There would be galloping about country lanes, the studying of maps and the rush to so-called war stations. At one time the scares were taken so seriously that schemes of possible evacuation were worked out for the coastal population. As my own property is near the sea, it was necessary for me to explain the details, so far as they affected them, to my tenants and neighbours at a village meeting. Rightly or wrongly, I could never myself believe that invasion was possible, and in any case the particular schemes of evacuation seemed to me to be peculiarly impracticable. The roads and bridges would never

have taken the crowd of villagers who were to escape over them, and the paper plans would have been for the most part worthless. Fortunately, however, there was no need to put any of the instructions into execution, and the only result of these alarms and excursions was a greater alertness in our own unit, and the presence of innumerable Yeomanry regiments in the county. The local inhabitants, who had for centuries been remote from military activities, did not disguise their dislike of the invasion of the men whom they described as "foreigners." Scraps took place in many villages, and my poor head keeper, who had never seen his preserves invaded, was beside himself at the enormities of a Welsh brigade that had arrived from a country where the game laws were not as strictly observed as in Norfolk. He was somewhat highly tried when a party of officers who had shot with me one week, was found shooting another of my beats on their own account a few days afterwards. When I wrote a mild letter of protest to the senior of the officers concerned, the only answer that I received was an attack upon the keeper for having insulted him.

Even at the time, we all laughed at the incident, and I should not mention it now if it was not typical of the small things, now nothing more than diverting memories, that formed the gossip of our isolated circle.

Then, there were the spy stories to keep us excited, so many and uniform that they had become a by-word for conventional inaccuracy. We were posted at cross roads at all hours of the night and day to stop suspect motors that were supposed to signal to the Zeppelins

that intermittently flew over Norfolk and dropped bombs on its country towns and ploughed fields. The cars that we stopped were many, but they were the cars of Norfolk farmers going to and from Norwich market. If we caught no suspect, it was not our fault. As I afterwards learnt, when I was engaged in our own Secret Service, there was no single case during the whole course of the war in which any motor was discovered in Great Britain signalling to hostile aircraft.

With these occasional excitements and the daily round of our routine life, time passed quickly and few of us looked further afield than the regiment in which we were at work. Like many thousands of my contemporaries I was started upon a road that seemed to lead by regular stages to whichever of the fronts needed a Yeomanry regiment or a Yeomanry officer.

But my fortunes were unexpectedly to take another course. An illness contracted in the bad weather of the autumn took me away about Christmas time, and the doctors declared that whilst in any case my leave must be extended, it was probable that I should be invalided out of the army. Here, was a dull and disappointing prospect. At a time when all my friends had left the House of Commons, it looked as if I should have to return to it. Just when I had begun to accustom myself to a new mode of life, I was to go back to an old one that had lost its zest. Thinking over the future and wondering how I could force myself back into the main channel of interest and activity, I came to the conclusion that I had better try some path that had not yet been



THE MUJIK AS WE IMAGINED HIM

(From a Russian Broadsheet)

trodden by too many others. If there was no opening for me in France, could I not find a way to one of the remoter fronts where the services of an Englishman might still be required?

In the past I had taught myself several languages. Why not learn Russian, and find a job with the Russian Army? It was the moment when many were talking about Russia. The idea of the Russian steam-roller was being questioned, the Russian front was suffering startling vicissitudes, and mysterious rumours were reaching England of intrigue and treason in Petrograd, and even in the armies. No one in the west seemed to know accurately what was happening in the east, comparatively few Englishmen talked Russian, and even fewer understood Russian politics and Russian life. If in the space of a few months I could learn enough Russian to pass as an interpreter, I should have a good chance of finding work in one of the missions that from time to time were sent to the Russian Army.

Whatever might eventually happen, the idea had the merit of taking my mind from the worries of my illness and of concentrating it upon a new and entrancing branch of work. Fortunately, also, I had in William John Birkbeck a friend and cousin who was as well qualified to advise me upon Russia and Russian affairs as any Englishman.

Johnny Birkbeck, as everyone called him, was the representative of a family that has for generations been connected with banking and good works in East Anglia. Being a man of means, he had bought him-

self a considerable property near Norwich where he lived the life of a country gentleman. A historian by instinct rather than by training, a theologian possessing qualities that are rarely found in Englishmen, and an almost passionate enthusiast of everything Russian and Orthodox, he had equipped himself with a comprehensive knowledge of literary Russian, had made many visits to Russia, and numbered amongst his closest friends some of the most influential leaders in the Russian Church and State. Apart from the fact that we were cousins and neighbours, English Church politics had brought us together and many had been the efforts that we had made in past years for Church Schools and the Anglo-Catholic cause. Of all my friends none had a more curious fund of rare knowledge than this country squire, Quaker by origin, theologian by self-imposed study, who lived for the most part in Norfolk amidst pheasants and Russian ikons, immigrant woodcocks and equally immigrant foreigners.

It was, then, to Birkbeck that I naturally wrote for advice about the learning of Russian and the finding of a Russian teacher. Within a day or two, thanks to his help, Orlov, the delightful old man, who had for many years been chief translator at the Russian Embassy, and I were hard at work upon a task that was soon to take me far from the Norfolk ploughs and the daily round of a Yeomanry regiment in training. I shall not forget Prince Freddie Duleep Singh's astonishment when, coming to see me from Melton Constable, he found me struggling with a language that he did not

recognise, and a distinguished looking foreigner, whom he obviously suspected of being a German spy.

For the best part of a year I continued my studies. By the spring I was well enough to do some light work with the Yeomanry, and as the regiment was passing through a period of reorganisation, I was given command of the Depot, henceforth to be known as the Administrative Centre, in Norwich. My duties consisted mainly in recruiting men for the two regiments, and not even the most deliberate worker could have taken more than a few hours a week in carrying them out. No post, therefore, could have been better suited for the project that I had evolved.

As Orlov could not leave the Embassy, I persuaded the Cantor of the Russian Church in London to come to Norwich and speak Russian with me. He and I would sit together in my office in the Cattle Market and between the intervals of attesting recruits, chatter without ceasing in a language that made the neighbourhood think that the Yeomanry Depot must be the centre of an enemy plot.

When the Cantor was forced to return to his church, I found, through his good offices, a delightful young man, by name, Stefanovich, who had come to London to learn Chinese preparatory to his entering the Russian Consular Service in Mongolia. Stefanovich, a lanky and myopic Slav, astonished my friends in Norwich even more than had his predecessor. He was a man of original mind and most humorous nature. Although he knew no English, he had come to London because in

his view good Chinese was only to be learnt in the environs of the British Museum. I found him a lodging in a highly respectable Norwich boarding house. His companions were for the most part elderly ladies whose interests and relationships were centred in the Cathedral Close. I wish that I had seen them together. He used them as permanent targets for his bad English. He made them play bridge on Sundays, and surpassed himself by telling each in turn that she obviously wished to marry him, but that he could not stop long enough in Norwich to accede to so many desires.

With this original I talked unceasingly, and together we went for long walks in the country, discussing everything from the few newly arrived aeroplanes on Mousehold Heath to abstruse questions of Orthodox theology. Every morning there arrived with the *Times* and *Eastern Daily Press* two Russian dailies, the *Novoe Vremya* and the *Rech;* every week, the weekly review, the *Neva;* and there was scarcely a table in my house or office that was not covered with Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov and Kuprin.

In the course of time Stefanovich obtained his nomination for a consular post and, much to my grief, returned to Petrograd for his official training. We still continued to correspond with each other, and the last that I heard of him was that the Bolsheviks had deprived him of his appointment at Kashgar.

When he left Norwich I knew enough Russian to read it as easily as English, and to talk it with a measure of fluency. I was also lucky enough to find a lady, the

wife of the manager of the municipal tramways, who had lived in Kiev and who was kind enough to speak it with me two or three hours a week.

My plan, therefore, had so far developed as I had intended. I had now learnt enough to pass as an interpreter, and the moment had arrived when I felt sufficiently equipped to apply for a post with some chance of obtaining it.

The war had been going none too well on the Russian front, and Kitchener was evidently worried. Someone must have told him of Birkbeck, and his connections with Russia. With an instinct that had hitherto never failed him, he went outside the small company of Russian experts that surrounded him in London, and asked this country squire to come up to London to see him. From the description that Birkbeck gave me of the interview, it is clear that Kitchener had already realised the gravity of the Russian position. Instinct rather than knowledge had led him to conclusions that had not yet been reached by any other British statesman. When most people were still dreaming of the Russian armies in Berlin, he was saying to Birkbeck in his cunning and persistent way that he did not like what was happening, and that he wanted to discover the truth.

"You know the Emperor, you talk Russian and you have many friends in Russia. Why should you not go out there, talk to your friends, see as much as you can of the part that Russia is playing in the war, and then come back and give me your considered judgment?"

Birkbeck gladly accepted the invitation and returned

to Norwich, where he told me in detail every word that the great man had said to him. As I listened to his description of the interview, the idea at once occurred to me that he should take me with him. As a Member of Parliament, I could probably help him in his dealings with Russian politicians, and as an Englishman who talked Russian, I could at least be useful to him as an observer.

I suggested to him therefore, that I should go with him. He liked the proposal and at once began to investigate the possibilities of carrying it into effect. When, however, he took it up with the War Office, it was found to be impracticable. The success of his mission would mainly depend upon its informal character. So long as it appeared to be nothing more than one of the many journeys that he had made to Russia for the purpose of seeing his friends, no suspicion would be created, and he would be the more likely to obtain an unbiased view of the real state of affairs. If he had with him a Member of Parliament, who was also a Captain in the army, the visit would look like one of the official missions that were already beginning to descend in an unending stream upon the allied countries. The War Office was right and reluctantly I had to abandon a project that seemed to me to be heaven sent.

Naturally disappointed, I tried with equal want of success to have myself attached to a military mission that was then leaving for the Russian front. When this second attempt failed, my hopes seemed sadly dashed, and it looked as if my many hours' work a day

for many months had been to no purpose. In these circumstances it seemed necessary for me to go to London to see for myself whether my quest was hopeless or not. The House was meeting in the following week, and I decided that for the first time since war had been declared, I would attend its sittings and try on the spot for work that seemed difficult to obtain in a distant provincial city.

Accordingly, I left Norwich on a few days' leave and found myself walking down Whitehall to Parliament Square. The first of my friends whom I met was John Baird, who having served with the Belgian army was working in the Department of Military Intelligence. Knowing that he was in touch with many corners of the war, I asked him if he knew of an opening for one who like myself knew Russian and wished to go to Russia. He said that he would think the matter over, and let me know if there was a chance of employment. I returned to Norwich in due course, and in a few days received a letter from him, telling me to interview without delay one of the chiefs of our Military Intelligence. Good friend as he has always been, he had at once made enquiries, and had found what appeared to be an opening, very small as he deprecatingly described it, none the less big enough to let me through from the narrow life of a garrison town to the wider prospects of a distant country and a curious adventure. Big or small, it made little difference to me. What I wanted was a job of work in Russia, and without an hour's delay I was travelling to London to report at the address that Baird had named.

# II

## BUSINESS OF EGYPT

"ANTONIO: All last night I lay awake thinking of the affairs of Egypt; and I said to myself, I am wanted on the frontiers of Castumba on a certain matter.

MYSELF: Before I answer you, I shall wish you to inform me what business it is which renders your presence necessary in Castumba.

ANTONIO: It is an affair of Egypt, brother, and I shall not acquaint you with it."

George Borrow. *The Bible in Spain.*

## CHAPTER II

### BUSINESS OF EGYPT

So far as the main operations of the war had been concerned, I had lived in a distant backwater for eighteen months. I knew nothing more of them than what I had read in the papers, and I had no idea of the complexities of the great war machine that had been pieced together in Whitehall. The War Office had meant no more to me than some superhuman institution from which commissions, forms and complaints descended in a gathering flood upon the little people of the regiments and brigades. Of Military Intelligence I had scarcely heard, and even one of the growing army of Brigadier Generals had seldom crossed my path. In marked contrast, therefore, to my insignificant experiences were the series of interviews that I now had with the chief of our Secret Service, the Directors of Military and Naval Intelligence, and many others, officers and civilians engaged upon affairs of secrecy and moment.

In August, 1914, there had been brought together the framework upon which a many-sided structure had subsequently been built. In time of peace, a mere handful of comparatively junior officers had been sufficient to supervise the work of Military Intelligence. When

war broke out, their numbers were sparingly increased by the addition of others who had been set aside in paper schemes for this or that branch of the work, espionage, contre-espionage, censorship, wireless, war trade, and the like. Month by month, their activities had so startlingly increased in scope and importance that the Department of Military Intelligence already numbered its Staff Officers by scores and its less distinguished members by hundreds. An expansion, so sudden and huge, might have meant failure upon a wide and perilous scale. Most of the best men were in France, and the risk, always considerable in Intelligence organisations, of an invasion of applicants whose only qualification was a knowledge of foreign languages, had been made all the greater by the pressure of many who also wanted what they imagined to be soft jobs. It was mainly due to the men at the head of our Intelligence Services that the new entrants were on the whole satisfactory, and that great organisations were safely built up upon the necessarily narrow foundation of the old General Staff.

Each of the three Intelligence Services, at the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Foreign Office, was in the hands of a remarkable man. At the head of the Department of Military Intelligence was Major-General Sir George Macdonogh, an officer of varied training and almost encyclopædic knowledge. On the one hand, a professional soldier of distinguished service, and a trained Staff Officer of broad experience, on the other, a man of wide political knowledge, who from the

early days of the crisis grasped the new fact that the struggle was not so much a war of armies as a war of nations, that the rear was often as important as the front, and that civilians could sometimes play a part in the world of Intelligence that was denied to professional officers of more restricted training. Inevitably, some measure of professional jealousy and exclusiveness existed in the General Staff. How well could it be otherwise? Regular Officers would not have been human if they had not occasionally resented the intrusion of amateurs, who had passed none of the searching tests to which they themselves had been subjected. But, speaking generally, it may be said that of all the Departments that underwent extensive expansion during the course of the war, none was more ready to open its doors to men of every walk of life than the General Staff, and no chief was more anxious to utilise the services of politicians, men of business, and members of the civil professions than Sir George Macdonogh.

Of a very different type was the Director of Naval Intelligence. Small and very alert, his hair greyer than his years justified, his eyes as bright as any that I have even seen, known to many as Reggie, and to even more as Blinker Hall, there had, even in 1915, gathered around him an atmosphere of drama, mystery and brilliant achievement. Of his flair for exposing spies, of the cunning with which he tricked enemy agents, of the instinct that enabled him to sift the grain from the chaff in a heap of reports, the fame was already echoing throughout Whitehall.

Like his colleague at the War Office, he opened the doors of his Directorate to any talent that was available in the outer world. A well-known stockbroker was his right-hand man, and when I subsequently travelled from Rome to London with him, his confidants were a director of the Bank of England and a partner in a well-known brandy firm.

At the time that I was presented to him he was greatly discontented with the inadequacy of the intelligence that he was receiving from Russia. It was well that I listened attentively to his remarks, for in a few weeks' time I was to act as his liaison with certain departments of the Russian Naval Staff.

Thirdly, I come to the head of our Secret Service, a department that whilst serving many masters was technically under the Foreign Office, and to the man who was to be my immediate chief. What shall I say of this remarkable personage? If I describe him in detail, I may be charged, even though the circumstances of the work have completely changed, with disclosing secrets about the holiest of the Intelligence holies. If I pass him by with a word, it may be thought that he is not worthy to be placed as a peer in the company of General Macdonogh and Admiral Hall. Let me then confine myself to saying just enough to emphasise his qualities, but not enough to identify him or to disclose the details of his activities.

In all respects, physical and mental, he was the very antithesis of the spy king of popular fiction. Jovial and very human, bluff and plain speaking, outwardly

at least, a very simple man, who would ever have imagined that this was the chief who conducted the British "Business of Egypt" and employed secret agents in every corner of the world?

My first interview with him was typical of the man. I had expected to be put through an examination in the Russian language, and a questionnaire as to what I knew about Russian politics and the Russian army. I had imagined that I should have been almost blindfolded before being introduced into the presence of this man of mystery. Instead, there were a few conventional words in a very conventional room, a searching look and a nod to say that whilst it was not much of a job, I could have it, if I wanted it. What did it matter to me that the job was insignificant, and the surroundings of my chief so different from what I had expected? The chance would take me to Russia and plunge me into work that was certain to be of paramount interest. In the space of a few seconds I was accepted into the ranks of the Secret Service. For the following weeks I was to learn something of the work and to discover what kind of post was to engage my activities.

It is disclosing no secret, that has not long ago been divulged, to say that the Allies had Secret Service Missions in each other's countries. These Missions were engaged upon espionage and contre-espionage directed against the enemy, and not against the allied country in which they were operating. They were duly accredited to the various governments, working

in closest liaison with the Allies and usually installed with the allied army or in the offices of the allied army's General Staff. Such a Mission had in the early days of the war been sent to Russia and had for eighteen months worked with varying success in the Russian General Staff.

Being new, secret, and very indefinite, these organisations were bound from time to time to come into collision with the ordinary missions of peace-time diplomacy. Indeed, there were some who thought that the work that was being carried out might have been better undertaken by the Attachés, Military and Naval, of our Embassies and Legations. I do not myself think that these critics were right. The tradition that keeps British diplomacy free of Secret Service should not lightly be set aside, and the problem of war Intelligence was so novel both in its size and complexity that men who had been in recent and direct touch with the centre were more likely to deal successfully with it than those who, however excellent they may have been in their pre-war posts, did not always realise the new needs that the war had created. Be this as it may, the practical difficulties of organisation were considerable, and Whitehall, no less than the Chanceries of our overseas missions, often rang with interdepartmental disputes as to the exact place that Secret Service should hold in the official hierarchy. One of these controversies had been rumbling on in Russia for some time, and it seemed well to the authorities in Whitehall to send out a new officer to join the British Intelligence

Mission in Petrograd, whose first duty should be to smooth away some of the difficulties that had arisen. Besides, as the war developed, the need for Intelligence other than Military became more insistent, and it was considered that a Member of Parliament like myself might be useful in obtaining information for our various war trade departments. I was, therefore, to proceed to Petrograd and to work permanently in the existing Mission as an additional officer on its staff. But Intelligence questions were necessarily in a state of flux and within a few weeks this arrangement was altered, and it was decided that I should go to Russia for two or three months, study on the spot the problem of Intelligence and the organisation of the Mission and then return to London to make a report. This alteration of plan had the advantage of bringing me back to London in a comparatively short time, and of enabling me to give the War Office my general impressions of Russian affairs at a time when the Eastern front and Russian politics were enveloped in a baffling obscurity.

During the weeks before I left England, I was passed through an intensive course in the various war Intelligence departments. One day, it would be espionage or contre-espionage, another coding and cyphering, another, war trade and contraband, a fourth, postal and telegraphic censorship. The ever-widening territory of Intelligence was broadly divided into two provinces. On the one side, espionage and Secret Service covered the many activities by which information was obtained from enemy countries. On the other, contre-espionage

protected us from the multifarious attempts of the enemy to obtain information about the Allies. The mobilisation of propaganda had not yet been undertaken, nor had the dread possibilities of sabotage been fully explored.

It was upon this broad and enticing field that I had now set foot. Interview followed closely upon interview, for all the war departments in Whitehall had some commission for me to carry out in Russia. Two, indeed, of these commissions, I had to fulfil even before I left England. A foolish young Englishman had embroiled himself with enemy suspects. As he was an Attaché in the Diplomatic Service, his case looked serious in the eyes of the police. Would I go down to Brixton prison, interview him and advise the authorities as to what had better be done with him? According to the report that was given me, he was anxious to clear himself by undertaking war work of some kind and, being a linguist, he hoped to make himself useful in the field of Intelligence. My talk in the prison waiting-room sufficiently convinced me that he was very foolish, not at all dangerous, but altogether unsuitable for responsible work.

The second task was even more curious. One of the most notorious murderers of the last generation, whose capital sentence had been commuted to penal servitude for life, had been working in his leisure time at the Russian language. He now asked for an earlier release than his good conduct justified, in order that his knowledge might be used in the service of the country. As

I also had learnt Russian with this same object of escaping from a monotonous life, I was not inaptly asked to judge of the qualifications of my fellow Russian student. With so much in common, I did what I could for the industrious murderer. He had learnt a remarkable amount of the language when it was remembered where and how he had learnt it, but he did not know enough for Intelligence work. He had, however, behaved well in prison and his effort was accounted to him for righteousness. Though it was impossible to employ him for his knowledge of Russian, I was able to get his release antedated, and to find a chance for him in another field of war work.

I do not say that I was able to learn much in the course of those few weeks, but I at least learnt enough to realise the complexities of the war machine that had been created in Whitehall and the personalities of the foremen who were working it.

My guide through an army of officers and officials and a labyrinth of departments was my old friend, Freddie Browning, famous upon every cricket ground and in every racquets court, the friend of more people in the world than almost anyone I knew, and at that time the chief mainstay of the office in which I had taken service. He had become a General Staff officer of the first grade. A brass hat and red tabs had banished his Zingari tie, and the game that he was now playing was catch-as-catch-can with enemy agents.

My education seems to have proceeded so satisfactorily that at one time it was intended to keep me in

London as the head of a branch dealing exclusively with Russian Intelligence. Fortunately, the idea was dropped, and towards the middle of March, 1916, I was allowed to proceed upon my mission.

A journey to Russia was at that time something of an adventure. It involved travelling to Newcastle, leaving at an uncertain hour, and probably in a small steamer, spending two or three days on the North Sea, an equal time in Scandinavia and two days between Tornea, the frontier point between Finland and Swedish Lapland, and Petrograd.

As an allied officer was liable to internment in a neutral country, it meant my travelling in mufti and concealing my sword in an umbrella case.

For some days before my departure I collected letters of introduction, laissez-passers and visas of all kinds upon my passport. I was to take a Foreign Office bag, and I well remember that, just before the train left King's Cross, I discovered that I had allowed the whole collection to be sealed up in the sack. I had only a few minutes to spare to hurry back to the Foreign Office, have the seals broken and replaced, the letters extracted, and to find my seat in the train with General Germonios, a General of the Russian Artillery, and two or three other Russian officers over whose return to Russia after a mission in London I was to watch as best I could.

For fear of raids Newcastle was pitch dark when we arrived and, what with the Russians who spoke no English, my Norfolk soldier servant who had never before been abroad, and an unknown number of suit-

cases and boxes, it was a formidable affair to manœuvre everybody and everything on to the *Jupiter*. The *Jupiter*, the Norwegian steamer, that became very well known to travellers in Northern Europe during the war, was the best of the North Sea boats. An excellent officer, Captain Hansen, commanded her, and it fell to me upon a later voyage to present him with a gold watch as a token of the British Government's gratitude for the courtesy that he had always shown to British travellers.

No light was to be seen when we started down the Tyne, and I went to bed as best as I could in the dark. German submarines were reported to be near the mouth of the river, and not a match was lit on board. Should I go to bed, and if I went to bed, should I undress? That night I answered these questions as I answered them upon many other similar occasions during the war. I both undressed and went to bed. If there was to be a catastrophe in the night, I should at least have a comfortable hour or two's rest to my credit.

After my efforts with the Russian travellers and my struggle with the luggage I subsided into a heavy sleep and awakened in due course with the pleasant feeling that I had peacefully and successfully accomplished the first stage of the voyage. Not hearing the engines, I went on deck and found to my disappointment that, owing to further news of submarines, we had not moved out of the Tyne and were only a few hundred yards from the quay. This was not a very auspicious start for a journey that at that time seemed a formidable affair. However, as the day proceeded, either the sub-

marines departed or we became bolder, and we started at length across the mud-coloured waters of the North Sea.

Our passengers were of many nationalities, and I was the only Englishman. There were General Germonios and his officers, a party of Serbs, some French dressmakers and mannequins on their way to Petrograd, and an inspector of the Imperial china Works in Moscow. With this latter I had much diverting conversation. Like many of his fellow-countrymen he had a passion for good food, and, hearing that some time or other during my stay in Russia I intended to go to Moscow, was convinced that I was making the journey for the express purpose of eating sucking-pig in one of its restaurants.

"Come to Moscow," he said, "and see the little white pigs hanging in dozens in the markets and looking like newly born babies, and we will have one apiece for dinner with cranberry sauce."

The weather was not too bad, and we succeeded in making up much of the time that we had lost at Newcastle. We arrived at Bergen on the evening of the third day, the night train had not left, and I was able to instal myself and my luggage in a sleeper for Christiania.

During the next twelve months I was to repeat this same journey through Scandinavia several times, and on each occasion my visits to our Legations in Christiania and Stockholm stand out in my memory as delightful episodes in a monotonous week of travelling. For not only was I given the chance of a bath, a rest and a pleasant day in two comfortable houses, but I was

also brought into touch with two of the most remarkable British diplomats that the war revealed.

There could be no greater contrast, physical, mental or psychological than that between Sir Mansfeldt Findlay in Christiania and Sir Esmé Howard in Stockholm. Findlay, almost a giant, resolute to the point of rigidity, downright to the verge of bluntness, and Howard, a diplomat to his finger tips, with no iron showing beneath his velvet glove, and no harsh word on his lips to embroil Anglo-Swedish relations. Each of these men was confronted with the same almost insoluble problem, and each of them dealt with it successfully in his own way. How could we stop the passage of contraband through Scandinavian countries into Germany? And how could we stop it without trampling upon neutral trade and prosperity and turning neutral opinion against the Allies? No one who was not brought into direct touch with the intricacies of these questions can realise their difficulty and complexity.

Findlay faced them with the concentration and dour determination that I should expect to find in an Aberdeen man of business. Opposition went down before his well-directed blows. The Legation, turned into a busy office and working overtime to an extent that must be unique in the history of diplomatic missions, became the general headquarters of our blockade activities in Scandinavia. Here was a man after the heart of our Norwegian friends, simple, direct, determined. They liked him as they have never liked a British Minister. For all the interference with their trade and

shipping they accepted his policy and respected his personality. When I saw him for the first time I found him immersed in worries connected with the blockade, though for the moment a new anxiety due to the activities of Sir Roger Casement in Christiania was taking up some of his attention. Whenever I saw him again, the blockade was equally the centre of his life. The house was full of shorthand-typists and card indexes, the ballroom looked like the counting-house of a busy city firm, and shipping manifests and bills of lading were the chief subjects of conversation. Great Britain was fortunate to have such a man in this post of responsibility. When he left Norway, he left it with the double reputation of one of the best friends the Norwegians ever had, and one of the most efficient Ministers that the British service has ever possessed.

Howard's problem in Sweden was different and perhaps in some respects more difficult. He was dealing with people who were not instinctively pro-British like the Norwegians, but were, by the nature of their history and geography fundamentally anti-Russian. Besides this anti-Russian complex, Sweden, being far ahead of Norway in wealth and industrial development, had been for many years in the closest economic relations with Germany. It needed, therefore, something more than conventional diplomacy, if the British Minister was to obtain a restriction of contraband trading, and at the same time maintain friendly relations with the Swedish people. There were some who criticised Howard for what they considered to be

his weakness in dealing with blockade questions, and who compared his conciliatory methods with the bolder policy of Findlay. Neither the criticism nor the comparison was just. Two men of distinct types were dealing, each in his own way, with problems which, though they appeared to be the same in London, was very different in Christiania and Stockholm. Each of them was successfully adapting himself to conditions for which he had never been trained, and was at the same time maintaining the best traditions of the old diplomacy.

At Stockholm I had letters to deliver to the Crown Princess. This delightful lady was always anxious to hear English news during the war. Although she had not an enemy in Sweden, she must necessarily have felt from time to time the isolation of her position. Though the country of her adoption was neutral, the atmosphere of the capital was unsympathetic to the Allies, and the communications between England and Sweden were liable to delay and interruption.

Fortunately I had only letters for her in the bag. A former King's Messenger had taken a consignment of cod-liver oil for the children. Zealously watching over the heavily sealed sacks, and ignorant of what they contained, he had been horrified to see a thick liquid dripping from them on to his sleeper. It was only when he arrived at his destination, and the seals were broken, that the secret was divulged. I am afraid that, try as the Foreign Office would, bags not always restricted to confidential despatches time and again brought the necessities of life to distant countries with

which the post had practically ceased to operate.

A year later, for instance, when I was chief of the Military Intelligence Mission in Italy, I frequently arranged for the Papal snuff to come to Rome in my courier's bag. Will anyone blame me for so venial a breach of the regulations?

Before leaving Stockholm I went into the Grand Hotel to a see a friend and, having hung my fur coat on a peg, was amused to see a German agent immediately pick its empty pockets. Throughout the war, the northern capitals were filled with the agents of the various powers, and at this moment the German organisations were particularly active in Sweden.

From Stockholm to Happaranda at the head of the Gulf of Bothnia, the journey was peaceful and monotonous. At one point the train could not have gone more than five miles an hour, and ample time was allowed for excellent hot dishes at the appointed stations.

Happaranda, the Swedish terminus, was one of those unknown places that the war suddenly brought into prominence. In time of peace, no one had ever dreamed of travelling from England to Russia *via* the North Sea, Scandinavia, the Gulf of Bothnia, Swedish Lapland and Finland. The closing of the Baltic had driven passengers and freight to this long and circuitous route round northern Europe. Two lines of railway unknown to Englishmen suddenly became the trunk route to Russia, and a place that had scarcely been marked upon the map, was transformed into the critical

frontier point between a neutral and a belligerent power, and the junction of trade and traffic between the west and the east of Europe.

Upon the morning of my arrival at Happaranda, everything was dazzlingly white under a blazing sun. The snow had not a stain upon it, and the white sheepskin caps of the Swedish garrison looked yellow in the glare.

I had a mission to perform for the Stockholm Legation. There was a business correspondence between one of the Happaranda forwarding agencies and the Russian Government that urgently needed to be taken across the frontier, and I had promised to hand it to an accredited Russian representative at Tornea, the Finnish frontier station. As the Swedish firm bore a name that seemed generic in Happaranda, I had some difficulty in finding the right office amidst the wooden houses and packing cases that composed the little town. Eventually, however, I obtained the papers and returned to the station where I had left my servant with the luggage. Happaranda was still in the early days of its war time development, and sleighs drawn by reindeer were the taxis that in winter took passengers over the Tornea River to the Finnish frontier. Our reindeer reminded me of the tandem leaders of former days. When we were not bumping into packing cases, it was constantly looking round at us for further instructions.

Thus, we meandered across the broad river, cannoning against bales of merchandise and drifting into heaps

of snow, until we arrived in the middle of the river at a post of Russian gendarmes. For me this was an interesting moment. Not only was I entering Russia for the first time, but for the first time also, I was to put my Russian to serious use. Russian frontiers were never easy to pass, and Russian gendarmes had a way in the war of playing the village idiot, looking open-mouthed at laissez-passers, reading them upside down, and then interning the bearer for many hours in a stuffy guard-room. Perhaps I was lucky, for the sergeant whom I found understood my Russian, accepted my papers and at my request took me straight to the commanding officer at Tornea Station. Here, I quickly passed through the various formalities and made my way to a big Finnish restaurant where a retired Russian general met me, and took from me the trading papers that I had brought from Happaranda.

As the Swedes at this time suspected the Russians and the Russians detested the Swedes, the most meticulous precautions were taken by both for avoiding any possible correspondence between their respective train services at the frontier. Moreover, both Governments evidently wished to give their police sufficient time for examining passports and discovering spies and contraband. There was, therefore, always a wait of many hours at Tornea. In course of time I came to know only too well almost every detail of the dull grey buildings of the station and its garrison of gendarmes. This first visit had, at least, the merit of novelty and excitement, and, what with my talks with the officers, my mission with the

papers and my efforts for ensuring a sleeper, it passed without undue monotony.

When finally the train was made up, I found that I had a carriage to myself, and a carriage that struck me as particularly comfortable owing to the width of the Russian gauge that I now sampled for the first time. The engines were already burning nothing but wood and clouds of ashes blew into the open window. The train went very slowly, and the unchanging views of birch, spruce and many lakes made it seem to go even slower. At the frontier between Finland and Russia we stopped many hours. The gendarmes, as I was informed, were engaged in identifying a suspect, and during this monotonous wait a pleasant party of soldiers came and danced in front of the carriage. They danced so well that the passengers threw them some small coins and made them give us an encore.

Then, followed a heavy snowstorm, further delays and an arrival in Petrograd at three in the morning. In spite of the late hour a horse bus met me from the Hôtel de France, where a room had been engaged for me, and tired and shivering, I drove from the Finland station across the Neva and along the English Quay to our destination. How vast are the distances of Petrograd! Peter the Great could have no better monument to his ambitious conceptions than the interminable streets, the wide prospects and the massive buildings of his capital. As I then knew nothing of the city, the distance of the drive seemed interminable. The moon was practically the only light in the streets,

and I remember observing with surprise a barn owl that flitted across it, as I was passing down the English Quay.

But at least I had a bed after this long journey. The British Intelligence Mission, with kindly foresight and in the face of great difficulty, had found me a room, although every hotel appeared to be packed to the roof. For the city was crowded to its utmost limits by refugees from Poland and the Baltic Provinces.

# III

## MY MISSION OF SECRET SERVICE

" 'Cette action personnelle a un avantage: elle confirme fort à propos ce grand policier, trop sceptique pour prendre par le côté mélodramatique son redoubtable métier, dans une singulierè défiance des propos, rapports et confidences des agents et mouchards. " Il les comparait," disait Réal, " aux diligences qui doivent partir pleines ou vides. Un agent de police," ajoutait-il, " doit tous les jours faire un rapport pour gagner son argent et donner preuve de zèle; s'il ne sait rien, il invente; si par hasard il découvre quelque chose, il croit se rendre important en amplifiant son sujet.' Réal disait encore que " si à aucune époque la police politique ne fut mieux faite en France que sous Fouché jamais on n'employa moins d'agents, et cependant tous les jours Fouché remplissait deux ou trois corbeilles de rapports qu'il ne lisait pas."

Louis Madelin. *Fouché.*



THE AUTHOR

As Chief of the Mission

# CHAPTER III

## MY MISSION OF SECRET SERVICE

I HAVE purposely recounted at some length the details of my first journey to Russia and the events that led up to it. Unimportant in themselves, they may yet have an interest for those who knew nothing of the Finnish route; it may even be that others who made the journey may like to be reminded of little incidents that loomed very large in those days of difficult travel. If, however, I am to do justice to more serious events, I must abandon the method of a daily chronicle and take a wider view of the prospect about me. Stepping aside, therefore, from the round of trivial tasks, I will try to make some sort of picture of the more important scenes upon which I entered in Petrograd.

I will begin with a sketch of the Mission of which I was now a member and was soon to be the chief.

At the time of my arrival almost all its members were commissioned officers and every one of them a fluent Russian scholar. The wide mandate of Military Intelligence provided them with many activities, of which, perhaps, the more important were the identification of enemy units on the Russian front, and the interchange of information about suspect people and suspect goods.

The French possessed a similar Mission, and the two were installed side by side in the office of the Russian General Staff. Our rooms looked out upon the Winter Palace and the great Square in front of it. We found ourselves, therefore, at the very centre of the Russian bureaucracy. In the same huge block were the offices of the Governor of Petrograd, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and Trade and Industry, and the Headquarters of the Gendarmes. Beneath our windows were constantly drilling platoons of Russian recruits who, whatever the weather and however deep the mud, would charge across the square, and lie on their faces, as though they were advancing to take German trenches.

To one who like myself is an amateur of baroque, the scene was most satisfying, the great brick-red Rastrelli Palace, the endless block of brick-red offices, all of a piece with it, and a brick-red baroque arch to connect the centre of government with the city at large. True to Russian type, the façade was the best part of the building. At the back of the General Staff was a network of smelly yards and muddy passages that made entrance difficult and health precarious. Inside, the bureaucracy showed its unshaken power by maintaining a temperature that in those days of fuel shortage was far beyond the reach of any private house. As the windows were double and sealed up from the end of the summer until the spring, the power of the bureaucrats seemed to grow stronger as the year advanced.

Our caps and goloshes were left in the keeping of a

Finnish gendarme in a stuffy waiting-room. The Finn's other duty was to bring us tea during the day. Hour by hour, there arrived in every room of the General Staff glasses of tea and, unless the supply had run short, large quantities of sugar to take with it. The effect of prohibition had been to make some of the older officers require increasing quantities of sugar, and I well remember a general whose tower of sugar always overtopped the tea in his glass.

Soon after my arrival, two tiresome events happened in the Mission. One of my goloshes was missed from the waiting-room, and the samovar simultaneously struck work. Meanwhile, Petrograd had run short of goloshes, and the streets were a sea of mud, whilst the samovar either produced nothing, or tea of a curiously unpleasant taste.

At length, after several days of discomfort, the Finn entered my office with my lost golosh in his hand. He had been engaged upon the half-yearly cleaning of the samovar, and had found my golosh in it. His only sentiment seemed to be one of irritation with me for allowing my golosh to impede his duties as tea maker to the Mission.

There was a certain ritual in our work. As it was an offence of almost unparalleled enormity for a Russian officer to be seen without a sword, we had constantly to wear swords. When a Russian officer visited our office, or we a Russian office, it was necessary to shake hands with everyone in the room both on arrival and departure. Upon all public holidays the General Staff was

closed, and our office with it. So far as I remember there were no less than fifteen public holidays in the month of May and five on end in the last week of August owing to a perfect covey of saint's days and national anniversaries. During all these holidays the General Staff came to a standstill. Upon the Church festivals that were not important enough to be honoured with a whole holiday, services of considerable length would be held in the General Staff chapel, for no government office was without its chapel and religious observances. Even when the Department was working, the hours were uncertain, and it was never easy to make an appointment with a Russian colleague. I remember, for instance, that at the time of my arrival, the Quartermaster General, the senior officer of the General Staff, made a common habit of arriving at his office at about eleven at night, and of working until seven or eight the next morning. For those of us who worked by day such a mode of life made co-operation difficult.

What, I wondered, would the arch-organisers of London have thought of all these things if they had seen them? How would this haphazard existence have struck the methodical staff officers, the well-drilled typists, the card index experts and all that great army that had made the London machine a by-word for efficiency of office management? The longer I stayed in Russia, the more rigidly became crystallised the idea, that had long been flitting about my mind, that no one else was fighting the war as we were fighting it. The people in London, being heart and soul concentrated

upon their work, had no time for picturing to themselves what might be happening in other countries. They projected Whitehall into the Square of the Winter Palace. Little did they know of foreign conditions. If only parties of these excellent British officers and administrators could have been taken from time to time to the more distant fronts and to the lesser known Allies, how many misunderstandings might have been avoided, how many false hopes might have been nipped in the bud! Of all such visits a visit to Russia would have been the most profitable. For the Russian war effort I had most sincere admiration, an admiration all the greater for the difficulties with which it was met at every stage. But if there had ever been a referendum upon the war, and the peasants had understood the issue, I believe that there would have been an overwhelming majority against its declaration and when once it was declared, against its continuance. In a country in which the Government stood apart from the people, it was impossible to stimulate the kind of national effort that swept everything before it in Great Britain and France. In Russia, the war never had the full support of the hundred and fifty different peoples who made up the composite Russian Empire, and, as it progressed, the appalling casualties made it increasingly unpopular.

This fundamental division of national opinion made itself felt in every Government office. In Petrograd there was neither the sentiment nor the opportunity that made men and women of every walk of life undertake public service in government departments. The

old machine went rumbling on, protected from the outside critics by its guard of professional retainers, who, as often as not, directed it against the internal rather than the enemy front. The organisation with which I was dealing, however effective it may have been for a war in Turkey or Turkestan, seemed to me to be very inadequate for the unprecedented crisis into which Europe had drifted.

When I received urgent wires from London demanding at a moment's notice this or that information about a suspect or contraband trade or troop movements, there was no one man or single department that could give it to me. For hours, perhaps even for days and weeks, I must have recourse to official after official, and it was probable that by the time I received any answer, the information was useless.

My first duty according to my instructions was to put myself into the closest personal touch with the chief of the Russian Secret Service. I found that there was no such person. In Russia every department seemed to have a Secret Service and nobody exercised any central control. The General Staff, the headquarters of each army group and the Ministry of Marine had their own separate organisations, their own agents, and a jealousy so great of each others' operations that they would almost rather catch each other out than catch a German spy. Moreover, whenever I dealt with them I had the uneasy feeling that it was not they who chiefly mattered in Russia, but that the real Intelligence that interested the Government was the Intelligence obtained

by totally distinct organisations, the Secret Services of the Court, the Ministry of the Interior and the Holy Synod. How could I create an effective liaison, when there was an almost complete want of system, and when many of the most important officials were uninterested in our attempts at war espionage and contre-espionage?

The greater part of our Secret Service work was of a routine character, the signalling of suspected persons, the holding up of contraband, the transmission of agents' reports, and the exchange of departmental memoranda. The more confidential details of espionage each country quite rightly kept to itself. I may, therefore, not have known many things that were being done around me. What I did know, however, confirmed me in the view that there was no centralisation of effort, and that the great possibilities for espionage and contre-espionage that were offered by the Border Provinces were not being exploited. There, amongst the Finns, the Balts and the Poles were obviously to be found agents with excellent qualifications. Many of them were remarkable linguists, and most of them had connections with Germany and Austria. No doubt there was often reason to distrust their loyalty, but there was also reason to distrust the loyalty of other agents. Indeed, the chief trouble with agents was that so many of them were undependable. Yet, surely it would have been better if the Russian officials, setting aside their distrust of the Border peoples, had made more use of them for Intelligence purposes.

When I arrived in Petrograd, I found the spy mania that swept England in the first year of the war in full flood. German spies, no doubt, abounded, but it never seemed to me to be an effective means of catching them to prevent people talking German on the telephone, and at the same time to allow unchecked the circulation of defeatist and often blood-curdling stories about the guilt of people in high places.

The most notorious of these spy stories, the case of the War Minister, Sukhomlinov, I was at some pains to investigate. Sukhomlinov was accused of allowing military information to reach Germany through the agency of Colonel Myasoedov, the Gendarme Colonel at the frontier station of Wirballen. As Myasoedov was believed to be the lover of Madame Sukhomlinov, and all three were said to be in relations with Rasputin, every element of melodrama was present in the case. In due course they were arrested, and I believe that I saw the cortège that took Sukhomlinov to the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. As I was walking along the English Quay to my office, I met a troop of Cossack cavalry with drawn swords surrounding a very old landau with closed shutters. When I asked what the carriage contained, I was told that it was no less a person than the former Minister of War.

After many delays the trial took place and, so far as I could discover, no proof was forthcoming of Sukhomlinov's treason. Myasoedov was shot *pour encourager les autres*, Sukhomlinov and his wife were left to linger in obscurity until they were imprisoned by the

Bolsheviks and eventually left to die of starvation in Finland.

Sukhomlinov had certainly become a most incompetent minister, idle, self-indulgent, irresponsible. It was he who told the Emperor that there was no shortage of munitions on the Russian front; it was such as he who made the common people think that the Government was indifferent to their sacrifices and sufferings. An overwhelming case could have been brought against him for his incompetence and indifference. But the case that was actually brought against him was the kind of case that time after time was everywhere produced by war psychology. An army suffered a heavy defeat, an internal crisis made life almost intolerable for the people, and immediately there would be a demand for a scapegoat. This search for victims was one of the worst features of the war, and it was not peculiar to Russia. Any influence that my post gave me was thrown into the scales against the neurotic crowds, largely composed of maiden ladies, that shouted for victims.

From time to time even the routine work of the office was completely held up by the lack of departmental order. Once, for example, the Alexandrovsk cable, the cable over which our telegrams passed, went out of action for ten days, and although I continued to send several messages a day during the period, no one thought fit to tell me what had happened. As I was receiving no wires from London, I at last became anxious, and upon making inquiries discovered that the telegraph

authorities had withheld all information from me on the ground that it would worry me to know that my wires were being held up. Nor was the situation materially improved when, on the partial repair of the cable, short messages alone were transmitted, whatever their date, number or urgency. The authorities in London, understanding none of these things and almost refusing to believe them when they heard of them, were apt to rain furious reproofs upon my head, demanding urgent answers to their inquiries and angrily asking why this or that piece of information had not been immediately sent to them.

I early came to the conclusion that if the whole system of Russian government resembled the sections of it with which I was dealing, our Russian allies were fighting under a heavy handicap.

It must not, however, be supposed from these criticisms that my work in Russia was frustrated. It often happens in countries where there is no common standard of efficiency that, though the depths of failure may be deep, the heights of success may be outstanding. Under the highly efficient system developed in the war departments of London, the wheels went round without a creak; the paper, as much a raw material of war as shells, flowed from office to office and section to section; liaison officer met liaison officer, and interdepartmental committee was added to interdepartmental committee. An organisation so perfect never fell below a certain standard, but it often failed to reach the higher summits.

In Petrograd I was leading no such ordered life. Mine was rather an inconsequent adventure in which something both surprising and important might turn up in the midst of trivialities. I would wonder for days what good the office was doing, and then, unexpectedly, some piece of Intelligence would come into my hands that would compensate me for all my previous waste of time. Now and again, I would obtain a really important report upon the internal condition of Germany. I was, for instance, given the confidential statistics that were provided for a ministerial statement upon the supply of food and man power to be made at a secret sitting of the Reichstag. Sometimes, also, though not often, I obtained valuable information about the movements of the German Fleet in the Baltic.

Towards the end of my mission, when I was on intimate terms with certain officers of the Naval General Staff, I learnt many interesting details about secret codes and cyphers. In this branch of Intelligence the Russians excelled. Their experts could unravel almost any cypher in an incredibly short period of time. One of them implored me as a friend and ally to ask the British Foreign Office to change a cypher that he could read almost as easily as his daily paper.

As our terms of reference were very wide, and as everyone in the Mission spoke Russian, the office gradually became the centre not only of any British activities that were not already covered by the Embassy or our Military Mission with the Emperor, but also the clearing house for many Russian proposals, both official and

unofficial. A friendly critic called us "the indispensable interlopers." Not a day passed without the arrival of some bright idea for finishing the war. Now it might be a scheme for substituting British for German capital in Russia, now a plan for sabotage in Germany, now an offer of a complete system of espionage for the enemy countries.

Many curious requests were made to me. Even the Holy Synod came to me for help. The supply of wax was running short for church candles, and I was asked to obtain a consignment from England. The shortage was more serious than might at first sight appear to anyone who was not a member of the Orthodox Church. Wax candles, frequently held in the hands of the congregation, were the chief method of lighting Russian churches. Three quarters of a million *poods* of wax were needed annually for this purpose, and even in peace time it had been necessary to go to Germany and a German firm, Stumpf by name, to make up the growing deficiency of Russian bees-wax. Then the war came, the German supply ceased, and the Russian Church was faced with the imminent risk of unlighted services. My general clearing house was brought into action, and I was soon able to arrange for the needed supplies of wax to be shipped from England to Archangel.

Not only strange requests, but strange visitors as well found their way to my office or my flat. Three such visits I shall never forget.

I remember well a card being handed to me one morn-

ing in the early spring of 1916, with a name on it as well known in Paris and Warsaw as in London and Dublin. I asked the visitor to come in, and there entered a man who looked like the fallen star of a Victorian music hall, or a student expelled from an art school. He had come to offer me information about Casement, and the visits that he had paid to the Irish Brigade then forming in Germany. Casement had just been arrested off the coast of Ireland, and the Dublin rising quelled amidst the ruin of many fine buildings and the loss of many gallant lives. The British Government needed evidence about the rebels. What, I asked, did my visitor know about them?

Of Countess Marcievics he seemed to have a fund of curious knowledge, of Casement he knew less at first hand, but had gathered reports about his German activities. When I asked for his terms, he characteristically answered, "three bottles of vodka." I looked at him realising that the price was in keeping with his appearance, and I agreed to the bargain. Indeed, I went further. At his urgent request I gave him one of the three bottles in advance. My anxiety to obtain Irish Intelligence had swept away my habitual caution. He left my room, and I never saw him again, nor did I receive any of the reports that he had promised me.

I was greatly disappointed. I wanted the Intelligence, and I wanted also information about a man who had already made a lasting impression on me. Casement and I had once spent three days together. Our meeting was so incongruous that at the risk of some irrelevance

I must conclude the story of the wasted vodka with an account of the circumstances in which it took place.

Of all the incongruous places in the world, we had met in the stuffy atmosphere of Royal Commission House in Whitehall, where I was a Commissioner, and he a witness in the interminable Civil Service inquiry that preceded the war. By an absence or an excess of humour, I never knew which, the Foreign Office selected him as one of their representative witnesses on behalf of the Consular Service. What a contrast between the grave and frock-coated Commissioners, and the little man with the black beard, in a thick home-spun suit, sitting impishly with his feet in very new boots dangling before us. When we asked him the ponderous and conventional questions, his answers were altogether unlike those of the other witnesses. He told us how he had entered the Consular Service without examination and that when the Foreign Office ordered him to be examined, he had answered, " I am not prepared to pass to-day an examination in those various subjects; but I doubtless could pass them if I had a little time," and the Foreign Office surrendered. He told us also of the hazardous life and constant hardships of British consuls in remote tropical places, and he told us the story so vividly that I cannot help quoting his words.

" You have a gang of distressed British subjects three days in a week. My predecessor at Santos had a wire netting up to the ceiling of the consulate in order to prevent these distressed British subjects throwing things at him. I did not take over the wire net-

ting, but I took over the British subjects. . . . I went out to Delagoa Bay in 1895, a young man with no knowledge of the Consular Service at all and entirely untrained. They had built a consulate there at an expense to the Office of Works and to the taxpayer of £7,000 or £8,000—a large house. The man I was to relieve was being transferred to some other post. I received a telegram from him at Cape Town, asking me if I would buy his furniture for a fixed sum, if not he would sell it. Well, I was a poor man. The sum he named was quite beyond my means; I could not have bought his furniture. I wired back and said, 'Will you not wait until I arrive,' and I got a reply at Natal. 'Either you buy now or I sell.' I wired then from Natal at a point nearer Delagoa Bay on my way, 'Regret cannot buy but beg that you await my arrival.' I arrived at Delagoa Bay and he told me he was leaving by the steamer that had brought me. I arrived at ten o'clock and the steamer went out at two. He had sold every stick in the consulate. There was not a table, a chair, a pen, a bottle of ink, or a sheet of paper or a single thing. I took over the roof and bare walls. I had to sleep on the floor for three days. I had absolutely nothing with which to discharge my public functions. I had to furnish the house. I am not complaining of the absence of beds and chairs, but of the absence of public furniture for me as a public officer to discharge my public duties. He had sold everything. That occurs nearly every time that a consul is transferred, and it goes on to-day . . . At Delagoa Bay I could not afford

a secretary or clerk. I was bottle-washer and everything else. I had to sit in an office for two years and open the door to anyone who came in. You would be insulted. You have no means of keeping yourself apart from any drunken individual who would come in. There is absolutely no staff appointed, no equipment, and no means of discharging your duties. The same thing applied to Para in 1908, and I took over a consulate there in exactly the same circumstances, without a bottle of ink, a pen, or a sheet of paper."

When I asked him what he thought of the prospects in the Consular Service his answer brought a draught of fresh air into the stuffy room:

"I think, as the Consular Service is now constituted, it offers no inducement to a man of intelligence or commercial ability, because there is no promotion in it. It opens the door to nothing. People come in with all sorts of questions and want to see him or take his advice, or somebody is locked up, and the police come to say, 'So-and-so is in gaol,' or sailors have been drinking and have been arrested or they have deserted from a ship. You have a hundred and one duties to perform during those six or eight hours. It is only six hours by law, but it is generally eight in fact. When you have finished that, how are you to push the trade of your country? If you are in a very hot and unhealthy climate, the first thing you want to do is to get home and take a bath and change your clothes—you are wet through—and get some food and then you are not going out to rummage round the town and push

British commerce in boot-laces."

As he gave these descriptions, he literally made faces at Lord MacDonnell, the Chairman. When his evidence ended and he left the room, I turned to my neighbour, Sir Arthur Shipley, and said to him, "I am sure that that man is mad." The shorthand-typist, being a careful and meticulous official, recorded my remark upon the first draft of the evidence and I had, in due course, to cut it out of the final edition.

My subsequent inquiries into Casement's career confirmed my view. In the Congo and the Putumayo he was, by all accounts, a man strange by nature, strange in appearance, for in one official expedition of which I heard, he wore the thickest of Irish home-spuns in a temperature of 100° in the shade, a straw hat that appeared to have come from the rubbish heap, and no shoes or socks, strange also in his actions, for he was wayward and obstinate beyond belief. Yet, when full discount has been made for all these vagaries, his name deserves a place amongst the men who hated cruelty and fought oppression. Without his intervention the rubber scandals of the Congo and Putumayo would have continued unchecked, and whole tribes of unresisting natives would have continued to be tortured and massacred. The tragedy was that this Don Quixote of the nineteenth century persuaded himself into the belief that England oppressed Ireland as the rubber merchants oppressed the natives, and that, having made this phantasy an article of faith, he was impelled into a line of action that led to a traitor's death.

If my visitor had kept his word and told me more of the Irishman's doings in Germany, I should have felt that my three bottles of vodka were a cheap price for the curious information.

Another day, a swarthy visitor offered me secret intelligence about German propaganda amongst the Moslem populations of Asiatic Russia. His name was Mohammed Bek Hadji Lachet, his nationality Caucasian, and his occupation that of an officer in the Intelligence Department of the Holy Synod. For, as I have said, the Holy Synod had its own Secret Service like every other great Russian department. Indeed, of all the Secret Service departments that of the Holy Synod was one of the most extensive. It watched over the activities of the Jews, it kept under observation the Lutheran activities of the Balts, it followed in detail the Catholic propaganda of the Poles, it penetrated into the Moslem centres of the south and east. Of its far reaching organisation Hadji Lachet was one of the principal agents. He at least produced the reports that he promised me, and the India Office, whither I forwarded them, attached considerable importance to much of the information that they contained.

The time arrived when I left Russia. The revolution broke up the organisation that I had formed, and Hadji Lachet and the activities of the Holy Synod passed from my memory. It was many months afterwards that I was reminded of my visitor by the accounts in the press of a series of terrible murders committed in Sweden. The

murderer, as cunning and brutal as any criminal who ever lived, was this same agent of the Holy Synod who had given me the reports for the India Office.

Scandinavia rang with the crimes that he had committed. In July, 1919, a Russian named Ardashev mysteriously disappeared. The man was suspect in the Russian community where he was reputed to be a Bolshevik agent. Certainly, his claim to be a journalist and the publisher of a ladies' paper in Russia did not explain the large sums of money that were always at his disposal.

Within a few days fifteen members of the Russian colony in Stockholm were arrested in connexion with the crime, with Hadji Lachet as their leader. During the long proceedings of the subsequent trial, the full details of the Caucasian's crimes came to light.

After the revolution he had become the owner of a spirit distillery in Leningrad, where he gathered around him a group of ex-officers who had been persecuted by the Bolsheviks. When his anti-Bolshevik activities became known, he fled from Russia and started a small Russian paper in Paris. In November, 1918, he settled at Stockholm, where he declared himself to be a prominent member of the so-called "Military League for the Restoration of the Russian Empire." According to his own story, he was in active relations with General Yudenich, who was at this time organising an attack upon the Bolsheviks from the Baltic Provinces. Though the General denied all knowledge of him, he was none

the less accepted among the Russian community as a fanatical Russian patriot.

Gradually, he gathered around him a band of desperate men who, acting under the guise of a patriotic organisation, committed a series of atrocious crimes.

The same methods seem to have been adopted in every case. The victim was decoyed by a woman to an isolated villa in the neighbourhood of Stockholm, subjected to a mock trial, strangled, and thrown into the fjord. Hadji Lachet himself acted as executioner, and seems to have behaved as a raving lunatic during the murders. At the time of his arrest he was plotting further crimes, for the police discovered some suspicious excavations in the garden of the villa. According to one of the defendants they were the foundations of a prison that he was building for his victims, and connecting with a cupboard in his own room and a landing stage on the fjord.

The trial lasted for ten months and eventually all the accused were convicted. Hadji Lachet himself was condemned to death, but his sentence was subsequently commuted to penal servitude for life.

Was the man a common criminal, or was he an unbalanced fanatic who had been driven mad by Bolshevik atrocities? I am inclined to think that the true answer is somewhere between the two alternatives. On the one hand, his accomplices were ready to rob the victims of any money that they possessed. After Ardashev's murder one of them actually impersonated the

murdered man, took his luggage from the hotel and withdrew 17,000 Kröner from his bank account. On the other hand, Hadji Lachet was soon certified as mad by the prison authorities. Having served ten years of his sentence, he recently died in a lunatic asylum.

The third of these curious visits was of a very different character. It brought me into contact with another man who took human life. But there could be no greater contrast than that between the Cossack murderer and the Russian patriot Purishkevich. Purishkevich had been the leader of the Conservative die-hards. As black as any of the Black Hundred, he had once borne the reputation of a most bigoted reactionary. But there was this difference between him and his party. Whilst the war made many of them more narrow, it opened his mind and stirred into action a splendid stream of patriotic fervour.

I had first made his acquaintance when I visited the Duma in the autumn of 1916. I heard him speak more than once, and I was particularly impressed by his eloquence in the debate in which Milyukov, Maklakov and the Cadets attacked the " Dark Forces " that were gathered around the Emperor. I was in the diplomatic box behind Sir George Buchanan, M. Paléologue and Mr. Francis, the American Ambassador. At the end of the speech Purishkevich and the other members turned to the allied diplomats and cheered them to the echo. We were greatly moved by the scene.

Incidentally, we were also diverted by the American Ambassador, who, understanding no Russian and think-

ing that the demonstration was in honour of the United States, started bowing right and left to the upturned faces. Poor man! he was greatly disconcerted when Buchanan turned to him and said that he would immediately telegraph to the Foreign Office the news that America had joined the Allies.

A few minutes afterwards, Purishkevich himself appeared at the door of the box to shake hands with the Allied Ambassadors.

It was this man who, in November, 1916, sent up his card to me with a message that he wished to see me at once. When he appeared, he lit a cigarette and started a conversation that for its ease and composure might have been about the crops and the weather. Yet he had come to give me the first intimation of a terrible event. As if it had been an everyday occurrence of ordinary life, he informed me that he and his friends had determined "to liquidate the affair of Rasputin." At this time the Russian word "to liquidate" was on everyone's lips. It meant anything from the reorganisation of an office to the assassination of an enemy, and in this case my further questions showed that it meant the latter. I had heard so much, however, of former plots and attempts to "liquidate the affair of Rasputin," and my friend's tone was so casual that I thought his words were symptomatic of what everyone was thinking and saying rather than the expression of a definitely thought out plan. Upon this occasion, at least, something that had been foretold, actually fell out on the date and in the way that had been premeditated.

In a later chapter I will set out in fuller detail what I personally knew about Rasputin's death. For the moment I will restrict myself to saying that but for the resolution of my visitor at a critical moment on the grim evening in December, "the affair of Rasputin" might never have been liquidated at all.

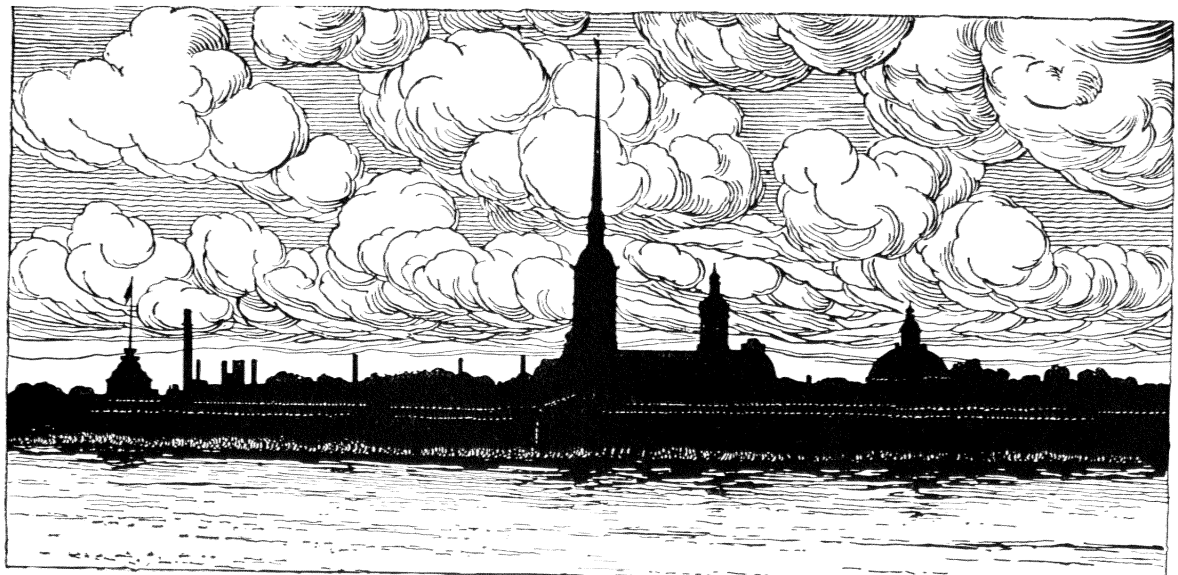
# IV

## THE TROUBLES OF LIFE

"C'était autre chose avant la guerre où ces difficultés étaient toute petites, presque inexistantes, où le pays regorgeait de richesses et de ressources, où aucune question ne se présentait sous un aspect aussi critique, aussi pressant. Vous aviez alors une vieille charrette qui, sur un sol uni et dépourvu d'ornières, sans côtes, poursuivant tant bien que mal son bonhomme de chemin. . . .

Alors que le sol est défoncé, que de terribles obstacles se présentent, que partout autour de vous le monde entier a évolué, vous prétendez sortir du hangar votre charrette et continuer comme avant. C'est une idée ridicule, bouffonne! Les autres ont des automobiles et des aéroplanes, et vous voulez vous utiliser votre vieil attelage. Quand il s'embourbe, vous vous contentez de changer une ou deux mules. Quoi d'étonnant si ce changement ne sert à rien."

Raymond Recouly. *Le Mémorial de Foch.*



THE FORTRESS OF ST. PETER & ST. PAUL FROM OUR FLAT

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TROUBLES OF LIFE

AMIDST the turmoil of 1916 the difficulties of daily life became increasingly troublesome. During the first weeks of my work I stayed in a hotel. The shortage of food and fuel was not then as serious as it became in a few months' time. In the ordinary course, being an officer, I should have gone to the Astoria, that had been taken over by the Government for officers of both services. But the Astoria was full, and I had no chance of trying at first hand the management of a great hotel by a committee of Generals and Admirals. Rumour had it that the Admirals, being of the blue water school, insisted upon their exclusive control of the bathrooms. The Generals, however, who were reputed to manage the rest of the hotel, had to depend upon the advice of a civilian manager. This fact I elicited in the school of hard experience. From time to time Sir John Hanbury-Williams, the British General accredited to the Emperor at General Headquarters, visited Petrograd and needed rooms in the hotel. As I was on the spot and in personal touch with the Russian military authorities, I was in the habit of engaging the accommodation that he required. At first, there was little

difficulty in obtaining what he ordered, but there came a visit when to my astonishment I was informed that there were no rooms available. I at once made angry inquiries as to how it was that there was no room in the official hotel for the British General Officer attached to the Emperor. I received what was not uncommon in Russia, two answers, the one official, and the other unofficial. Officially, there was not an unoccupied room from the basement to the roof. Unofficially, the civilian manager wanted a bottle of brandy, and under the prevailing system of prohibition, an Allied Mission was more likely to be able to obtain it for him than any of his Russian clients. Brandy was at that time unobtainable at Petrograd, and I had to send to Finland for the bottle. However, the game seemed to be worth the candle and, so far as I can remember, there was never again any trouble in finding suitable rooms for Sir John.

In the early summer I returned to England, having completed a general survey of Intelligence possibilities in Russia. I was then informed that I was to go back permanently to Russia, and that as the Mission was to be widely extended so as to cover questions of war trade and a system of passport control extending to Archangel, Harbin and Vladivostok, my wife could go with me and help me with my office work.

Accordingly, towards the end of June, we arrived in Petrograd together, and had to search for a flat or a house. At first, we were fortunate enough to be able to take the British

chaplain's apartment on the English Quay, some pleasant rooms overlooking the Neva that had with the English Church once formed a Sheremetev Palace. But the chaplain, who had been temporarily visiting Archangel, soon needed to return, and it was necessary for us to start upon a task almost as difficult as that of understanding what was really happening in Russia, the discovery of an unoccupied lodging. Every district of the city, rich or poor, was crowded to overflowing, small rooms were fetching fabulous prices, and my experience of the civilian manager of the Astoria had shown me the precarious character of life in a hotel. Only after almost unimaginable trouble did we find an apartment, a rather pretentious suite of rooms adjoining the French Embassy, on the French Quay, and then only at a great price and for a few weeks. When the owners returned, we migrated to the Mokhovaya, where after many negotiations we hired the apartment of the Emperor's florist. The florist was a Swiss, named Graff, who, having let his flat to us, attempted to return to Switzerland for a holiday. During the earlier part of the war he had several times made the journey without any hindrance from the German authorities. Upon this occasion he was detained upon the German frontier. So excellent was the German Intelligence in Petrograd that, although my tenancy had been privately arranged, the fact was immediately known to the German passport officials. For letting his flat to the chief of the British Intelligence Mission poor Graff, whose sympathies were certainly not Anglophil, had been at once blacklisted.

These rooms we soon found to be inconvenient for daily life and better suited for an office. When, therefore, the work of the Mission increased, I put the cypher staff into them, and we again migrated, this time, to a small apartment in the Moika.

The difficulties of daily life did not end with the finding of a flat. The servant problem was as acute in Russia as it was in the west, but in a very different way. In Petrograd there was still no dearth of potential servants, for thousands of unemployed refugees from the Baltic and Polish Provinces had invaded the city. The problem, difficult enough for a Russian, insoluble for a foreigner, was to find a servant who, whilst not too blatantly dishonest, would not leave for good without any notice and, for choice, at the moment when guests were arriving for luncheon or dinner. Lady Maud could write a volume upon our experiences of Russian cooks, housemaids and dvorniks. I will mention one typical incident in this history; I recall it because I was heavily engaged in the battle that it involved.

After many efforts we appeared to have obtained a cook far above our station in life or the size of our household. She was an oldish woman and had been in the Imperial Household at the summer palace of Livadia. Undoubtedly, she was a very good cook: undoubtedly also, she was more dishonest even than the average of Russian cooks. Each evening she would come to us and demand money for the food of the next day, and evening after evening her demands continued

to rise. As we could not afford an open rupture, we let things drift, until a demand, outrageous beyond imagination, forced me into a passage of arms with her. No moment of battle could have been more inopportune, for on the following day we were to have our first dinner party with M. Paléologue, the Buchanans, the Sazonovs, and one or two others as our guests. The cook left the room with a look of undisguised fury upon her face, and the next evening there was a full forty minutes between the arrival of the first guest and the serving of the soup. All this time, Lady Maud and I were looking anxiously towards the kitchen and wondering whether the cook had departed before dinner. But fortunately she had temporarily set aside her resentment, and was only conforming with the Russian habit of not cooking the dinner until the guests had begun to arrive. Our shattered nerves recovered, and the party went off well.

If it had been merely a case of habitual dishonesty, we should, no doubt, have kept her until we left Russia. Towards Christmas, however, she went definitely off her head, not quietly and discreetly, but ravingly and threateningly. Unluckily, I had again been ill; the trouble that I had in the Yeomanry was brought out again by the bad weather of a Petrograd winter, and had kept me in bed for many days. I could not, therefore, go out for meals. I was still ill and the weather was at its worst. It was at this moment that the cook displayed a homicidal mania directed against my English soldier-servant. The flat was minute and every sound

could be heard in every part of it. A homicidal cook, therefore, armed with a carving knife, raving on the other side of a flimsy partition, an English man-servant sitting in fear of his life in the passage and my humble self voiceless, ill and intermittently in bed with a high temperature, made up a picture of domestic discomfort that could scarcely be surpassed. Of course, we at once gave her notice. But notice was of no avail. Under some war time regulation in Petrograd it was forbidden to turn even a servant out of the house until he or she had found alternative accommodation. Particularly strict were these regulations at times of public holiday, and the long drawn-out Christmas festival was already beginning. Even if we could eventually get rid of her, there was a week or ten days during which the machine of government ceased to work, and in the meanwhile she must remain with us. In desperation we tried every possible expedient to have her dislodged. The Embassy solicitor, with the full power of the Ambassador behind him, totally failed; the Military Governor of Petrograd could not act until after the holidays. The situation was nearing the point at which we should have migrated into the street, and left the cook in sole possession of the flat, when my excellent friend, Major Alley of the Mission, induced the local Police Commandant of the district to come round and talk to me on the subject.

When this august personage, a Colonel of Gendarmes, arrived, we were in a state of great excitement as to our fate. He was shown into the salon, and a conversation ensued that is worth recording.

"High-born Sir," I said, for that was the way in which to address Colonels, "you find two of your country's allies in great difficulty. Our life is being made intolerable by a mad cook. I myself am ill, and if we cannot rid ourselves of this nuisance, I shall not be able to continue my work in Russia, and our most important British Mission will run the risk of coming to an end."

"You have," he replied, "my most sincere condolences. I would gladly do anything in my power for an allied officer, but in your case, what you ask, is impossible. The regulations are definite and explicit. You cannot turn out your cook unless she has somewhere else to go to."

As I heard this answer, I realised that my last hope was dissolving. With a final effort I pulled out a string of all my most supplicating Russian.

The great man seemed touched. In any case, he agreed to interview the cook and to try his hand at persuading her to leave.

The kitchen was adjoining, and the partition wall was thin. As we listened, we heard the sound of a sharp altercation and the opening of the kitchen door. Then came a series of bumps as though a train was going over some badly adjusted points. The Colonel returned, and with a smile of hardly-won achievement upon his face gave us the good news:

"The cook has herself left the house, and, having once departed, she has no right to return."

I made no enquiries as to the assistance that had been afforded to her exit, and hastened to thank the Colonel

for his successful intervention.

"Sir," I said, "I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to you. You must at least allow me to reimburse your out of pocket expenses." And I pressed a twenty rouble note into the hand that he offered to me. With a dignified movement of refusal he brushed aside any idea of reimbursement, declared that he could accept nothing from an officer and an ally, put the note into his pocket, and left the flat.

So ended an episode alike significant of the difficulties of domestic life and the methods of the Petrograd police in these strange days of confusion.

Truly, the Russia of 1916 could still provide the scenes and characters for the pen of a Gogol.

I have spoken of the housing difficulties, and I have described at length an example of the servant problem. More serious still was the food shortage, for it extended far beyond our insignificant inconvenience over the whole national effort that Russia was making in the war. To some extent we were in a favoured position. We could afford to pay exorbitant prices, and we periodically received rations from the General Staff. As to the prices, I well remember that, when we bought the last tin of biscuits that remained at Elisaev's, the Fortnum and Mason of Petrograd, we willingly paid the equivalent of four pounds sterling for it; whilst as to rations, I, like every other General Staff Officer, Russian and Allied, could often be seen returning from the Winter Square with a brown paper parcel of flour, butter or sugar under my arm.

No doubt, there was often a genuine food shortage in the city. The means of communication, both railway and road transport, had long since broken down under the strain of supplying the Russian front, and no capital could have been more inconveniently placed for commissariat purposes. Often, however, when supplies should have been available, the shops became mysteriously empty, and some necessary commodity, flour or butter for example, totally unobtainable. These were the occasions when an incompetent bureaucracy was attempting to control prices without possessing the power of ensuring supplies. In due course, the unworkable restrictions would be withdrawn, or would at least become a dead letter, and immediately, as by a magician's wand, flour and butter would again appear in the shop windows.

It was bad enough for one's own servants to waste most of the working day in waiting outside shops for some necessity. For us, it made the ordinary routine of life difficult and irritating, but for the hundreds of thousands of working women, who, badly clothed and miserably housed, stood hour after hour in queues amidst the snow and sleet of a Petrograd winter, and often went home with nothing for their families, it was a grim tragedy that led inevitably to bloodshed and revolution. In a later chapter I shall describe more fully the causes that seemed to me to be responsible for the final crash, but no sketch of the difficulties of Petrograd life would be complete without a reference to its most disquieting feature, the long lines of grey women

outside the bakers' and butchers' shops.

Society, as it was known in Petrograd before the war, had come to an end. Most of the men and women who had made it so brilliant in pre-war days were at the front, and for those whose households and fortunes were limited, entertaining had become almost impossible. In the official world the British and French Embassies still struggled on against adversity. Both ambassadors would give a series of dinners, and a gallant attempt would be made to maintain the high standards of their former hospitality. My English servant would help with the waiting, donning one evening the white livery of the Buchanans, and on another the blue and red of the French Republic.

Two of these dinners at the British Embassy I remember in particular. The first was to do honour to Sazonov, and the Grand Cross of the Bath that the King had given him upon his retirement from office; the second, a very grim occasion, when Sir George was forced to have an official entertainment for Stürmer, the new President of the Council. Both evenings were somewhat strained. Sazonov's obvious weariness showed itself in his repeated declarations of relief at his release from office. Stürmer sat through the party, silent and wooden, obviously ill at ease in the house of a man whom he cordially disliked.

Of other big entertainments there were scarcely any. A party given by Countess Kleinmichel, to whom Lord Freddie Hamilton had introduced me, a dinner at the Polovtsovs on the French Quay, an occasional luncheon with no more than a handful of guests might give us a

faint idea of what Petrograd society had once been. A few people still played bridge, and being Russians played it well, quickly and very linguistically. I remember one of my partners who, when asked what I had made, replied quite naturally in five words and three languages, "On govoril one sans atout."—"He said one no trumps." But apart from these few attempts to maintain a little gaiety, Petrograd society was finished, and the assurance and spontaneity upon which it once depended had finally disappeared.

Only the ballet went on unchanged. Just as the Comédie Française continued and prospered through every national crisis, so the Russian ballet played week after week before a house in which there was never an empty seat. As long as we were in Petrograd there was never a stall or box at the Marinsky Theatre to be bought in the open market. Abonnements passed jealously from hand to hand, and a seat was left in a man's will to his heir amongst the most cherished heirlooms. Sundays and Thursdays were the principal evenings, and all that were left of the world in Petrograd, would then be in their places. As a rule, we went to the Embassy box, whence we could follow with interest the subtle and meticulous criticism that a highly trained audience directed upon each movement of the dancers. Between the acts, every officer in uniform had to remain standing, the theory being that the Emperor or a member of the Imperial family might be present. In actual practice, I never saw a soul in the huge Imperial box. Night after night, a blaze of electric light would expose its

emptiness, night after night, its guards, at attention and with fixed bayonets, would remain outside it, night after night, the gilded void would be made the more apparent, by the contrast of the thickly packed theatre. Upon the evening when the news arrived of the Allied capture of Monastir, we were in M. Paléologue's box, and the orchestra went through the whole ring of allied national anthems. During all this time the audience stood staring at the empty, overlighted box that seemed to many of us to symbolize a capital that the Emperor seldom visited, and a society that the Emperor never saw. The only evening that I ever found the theatre empty was the evening of the Emperor's birthday, when an official performance was given of Glinka's "Life for the Tsar." The men, who were present, were all in uniform, but the many empty places showed how small a part the Emperor was already playing in the life of his capital.

Perhaps it was the very fact that the old lavish entertaining of pre-war Russia had come to an end that enabled us to make certain intimate friendships to which we shall always look back with gratitude and pleasure. Of the Buchanans, the Sazonovs and the Odoevskys I shall have more to say at a later stage in this book. But I must not here forget the Frank Lindleys, as delightful a couple of British diplomats as have ever been posted to a foreign capital.

Amidst these pleasant associations I would also mention the friendship that we made with Count and Countess Stackelberg and the circle of friends and

relations that surrounded that remarkable old lady, Madame Pashkov, a convinced disciple of the late Lord Radstock and a dangerously candid critic of successive Russian Governments.

Count Stackelberg was the first well-known man to be murdered in the streets of Petrograd after the outbreak of the revolution. Hearing the sound of firing he went out into the Moika to see what was happening, and his General's uniform unfortunately attracted the ignorant rage of the mob.

A revolution, blind by its very nature, always sacrifices the wrong people. It was in keeping with a mob's brutal stupidity that the first victim to lose his life was the cultured and agreeable gentleman, who upon his retirement from the army, had devoted his life to Red Cross work and had withdrawn himself from an official world of whose men and methods he disapproved.

It was such as these, the Sazonovs, the Odoevskys, the Stackelbergs, the Pashkovs, and the Musin-Pushkins that helped us to take a truer and kindlier view of Russian life. But for them, we might have judged it from the sole angle of a cosmopolitan capital in which the administration had broken down, and the ties of society had been strained to breaking point.

# V

# THE LAST DAYS OF ROUMANIAN NEUTRALITY

"Quanto alla neutralità, il qual partito mi par sentire approvare da molti, a me non può piacere, perchè io non ho memoria, nè in quelle cose, che ho vedute, nè in quelle che ho lette che fosse mai buono, anzi e sempre stato perniciossimo."

Machiavelli. *Letters.*

## CHAPTER V

### THE LAST DAYS OF ROUMANIAN NEUTRALITY

BEFORE I had been many days in Petrograd I received a confidential wire about our Intelligence Service in Roumania. Roumania was at that time prominent on the Allied horizon, its corn and oil were serious factors in the problem of blockade, and the moment was evidently arriving when the Government must terminate its neutrality, and choose between the Allies and the Germans. There was much, therefore, that our General Staff wished to know about the local situation, and the country, being isolated from the west, had hitherto provided little of the information that was required. It was decided that I should make a visit to Bucharest, and there discuss the many interesting questions that were coming to an issue, with the British Minister, Sir George Barclay, Colonel C. B. Thomson, our Military Attaché, and a third officer who, living as a civilian, represented our Secret Service.

A journey to Bucharest was at that time a tedious and by no means easy enterprise. It involved the problematical correspondence of several trains, it necessitated the crossing of a frontier where Russians and Roumans regarded each other with the deepest suspicion, and it took the best part of a week. As I started at short

notice, there was little time for making preliminary arrangements, and the only place that I could obtain upon the train was a seat in a first-class smoking carriage with three Russian Generals. Our first stage was Kiev, and for two days and nights we rumbled leisurely on, the central heating at full blast, the windows sealed up for the winter, and the three Generals talking and smoking incessantly night and day. When we stopped for any length of time, I staggered on to the platform for a breath of air, and, when finally we reached Kiev at about nine one morning, I lost not a moment in hurrying off to the hotel, where I hoped to find a bedroom and a bath before I joined another train. But the hotel was full. Every bedroom was taken, and beds had been made up even in the hall and the sitting rooms. The forty-eight hours of talk, heat and smoke had, however, made me desperate, and slipping a large tip into the hand of the porter, I told him that by fair means or foul he must find me a room. Accordingly, he went upstairs to see what he could do, and soon returned to tell me that the chamber-maid had just turned on the hot water of a bath that had been ordered by a lady visitor. If I would rush straight into the bathroom, I could forestall the lady, who was already late for her bath. I must confess that I succumbed to the temptation and ungallantly entered the bathroom, where soon I heard the blows of the dispossessed lady beating upon the door.

This respite of a few hours enabled me not only to visit the Pechersky catacombs, but also to start upon the

next stage of my journey with less headache and a better frame of mind.

I was now travelling further from the war zone, and the trains, being emptier than they had hitherto been, enabled me for the greater part of the journey to retain a carriage to myself. The broad Russian gauge kept the train steady, and there was much to attract me in the rolling plains and broad rivers of Southern Russia and Bessarabia. As we approached the frontier, there were many places to recall historic memories, Benderi with a fortress that had seen more than one battle with the Turks, the Prut with its memories of the great Peter and the scarcely less great Charles XII, Kishenev with its sinister record of Jewish pogroms in our own days.

At last, after a final stage in a narrow gauge train in which I had a long and animated conversation with a professional water-diviner, we reached Ungeni, the frontier point between the two countries.

Having been warned of the difficulties that were there placed in the way of travellers, and having heard of the troublesome officiousness of the Gendarme Colonel who controlled the station, I at once adopted a high-handed attitude, advertised to the world my many laissez-passers, and demanded the treatment that was due to a very important personage. These methods had the desired effect, and although I had to wait many hours before the Roumanian train started, I was at least able to spend them at my own discretion, and not in a locked waiting-room.

When at length I crossed the Russian frontier, I

found myself at once in a completely different world. I had suddenly passed from the north to the south. The colours were brighter, the officials looked, and even spoke like Italians, and the *wagons-lits* were my old acquaintances of the Riviera express. The journey to Bucharest occupied the afternoon and night, and before it grew dark I had a good view of Jassy, a town situated on a commanding eminence and looking much better from a distance than near at hand.

When I reached Bucharest in the morning, I found the hot weather already started, and a city in every way the antithesis of Petrograd. Its Chaussée recalled the Champs Elysées, its outward life the world of Paris, and its houses of the rich, all of them built within the last generation, the homes of millionaires in any southern capital.

At once I was plunged into an unbroken series of interviews, luncheons and dinners. Sir George Barclay, one of my many distant cousins, was still trying to entertain. For many years his knowledge of wine and cooking had won him fame in the world of diplomacy. But he, like everyone else, had fallen upon evil days. The isolation of Roumania brought with it difficulties of food and drink, and the fatal day was already approaching when existing supplies would inevitably be exhausted. None the less, he did his best in the face of approaching crisis, and, when defeated in his own house, would take refuge with M. Poklevsky, the Russian Minister, who, being as well known for his chef as for his bridge, had been provident enough to accumu-

late a more generous supply of the necessaries of life.

To do me honour, Sir George collected together enough raw material for an official banquet to Bratianu's Government. I shall never forget the silence that came over the party at one moment in the dinner, and the anxiety with which I watched our host, whose eyes were fixed upon the door. I wondered what terrible event was interrupting our proceedings. The door opened, the servants appeared with their dishes, and I heard Sir George in a deep and thankful whisper murmur, "The first peas of the season."

But I must not be unkind to this handsome and hospitable diplomat. If he liked the good things of life, he was none the less ready to bear courageously and uncomplainingly its adversities. In a few months' time Bucharest was to be in German hands and the Allied Ministers refugees in Jassy. There was then no question of champagne and green peas. A grim and uncertain struggle for the simplest food had pushed the old days of chefs and restaurants into a very distant past. Sir George, although an old man and in bad health, bravely faced the unwonted privations, and helped to make the allied name stand higher in the minds of the Roumans, than it ever stood in the irresponsible and extravagant days of Bucharest.

On his staff I found an old friend in Frank Rattigan, with whom I had often played games of cricket and racquets in the past. In Bucharest he had the reputation of a fine shot, who had killed many duck

with a shot gun in the Danube marshes, and many bustard with a rifle in the newly grown maize.

The Military Attaché, Colonel Thomson, I had never met before, and I was soon to make with him a friendship that, begun almost by chance, has entwined itself into other phases of my life. It was indeed a curious coincidence that brought together these two future Air Ministers, and that having brought them together, made them interchangeable at Whitehall, over a period of several years.

At that time Thomson was little understood either at G.H.Q. in France or by the General Staff in London. Having a more subtle mind than many of his fellows, he was not then convinced as to the wisdom of Roumania's entry into the war, nor was he altogether happy in the peace time atmosphere of the British Legation. In Roumanian society, however, he was everyone's friend, and no one could have taken greater trouble in arranging for me interviews and entertainments of every kind. I had audiences with the Queen, whom I found sitting with a boar-hound in a room that looked like the hall of a Scottish baronial castle. I had talks with Bratianu, the silent Giolitti of Roumanian politics, whom his critics called *l'odalisque fatiguée.* I visited more than once Take Jonescu, more English than the English, and more French than the French, and met at his house the two Transylvanian leaders, Goga, the poet, and Lukatch, the priest.

Thanks also to Thomson I made my bow to Princess Marthe Bibesco, a lady distinguished in many worlds,

whose books have more than once been crowned by the French Académie, and I saw the Brancovano Palace that she was restoring, and the garden that she was creating with the help of a Scotch gardener from Mentmore. Once, indeed, at this delectable spot I was delayed by a thunderstorm, and staying on longer than was expected, found myself in conversation with a dark and distinguished-looking man who had just motored out from Bucharest. This was Czernin, then Austrian representative in Roumania, and soon to be Foreign Minister, confidant and almost dictator to the Emperor Carl.

To each and all I adopted the same attitude towards the war. I ignored the criticisms that everyone seemed to be making of allied policy; I freely admitted the many mistakes that the Allies had made, but I firmly maintained the contention that, though Great Britain always lost the early battles of a war, we invariably won the last. Blatant propaganda was out of place in this sophisticated society, and the best chance of persuading the Government to side with the Allies seemed to be the adoption of a tolerant and detached attitude towards the past, and an air of cynical assurance as to the future.

Outwardly confident, I had none the less the uneasy feeling that the Russians would never co-operate with the Roumans on a basis of equality and friendship, and that the western Allies, whilst clamouring for Roumania's entry into the war, knew little of the difficulties and dangers of a campaign on the Roumanian front. It was not, however, for me to be influenced by doubts and hesitations, and I spent my time learning some-

thing of the state of public opinion in this country, and enquiring into the various activities that the Allies had started in Bucharest.

The principal British organisation at this moment was the newly created bureau for the purchase of the Roumanian harvest. A commendable attempt was being made to prevent Roumanian wheat from reaching Austria and Germany. Like many other war efforts, the conception was bold and excellent, but the execution altogether inadequate. It appeared to me that the Roumanian farmers were engaged in the highly lucrative enterprise of selling their crops first to the Allies, secondly to the enemy Governments, and then delivering them to neither. Gigantic deals like the purchase of the Roumanian harvest needed more expert knowledge than a handful of diplomats and minor officials could give them, if waste was to be avoided and success achieved. I subsequently gave the Foreign Office my views on the subject, and I well remember how bitterly the Department resented my intervention. The Department was probably right. My business was to provide Military Intelligence, and not criticism of the methods of wheat purchase.

When I kept myself to my immediate and legitimate task, I discovered many interesting facts about allied Intelligence. There were, for instance, fourteen separate organisations of Russian Intelligence operating simultaneously in the country. More often than not, and unknown to each other, each organisation employed the same Roumanian agent, with the

result that identical reports would reach Petrograd from several Russian sources, and the uniformity of their contents would be immediately accepted as proof of their reliability. Happy was the lot, therefore, of the Roumanian farmer who was twice paid for corn that he never delivered, and of the Roumanian agent who sold the same story to more than a dozen Russian Secret Services.

When I gathered together the various impressions that my visit had made upon me, I came to the conclusion that the one outstanding fact in this curious country was its dislike of Russia, and its fear that a Russian alliance would mean a Russian occupation.

I was soon given a vivid proof that this dislike was mutual, and that, if Roumania feared Russia, Russia despised Roumania. Upon my return journey I stopped at Odessa. Try as I would, I could not avoid the advances of the local press. What were my impressions of Roumania? What did I think of the Roumans, and were they likely to enter the war on the allied side? My efforts to put these questions aside were unavailing, and I was at last driven to give the reporters a conventional answer, in which I unstintingly praised Roumania and everything connected with the country. Next morning, there appeared to my horror accounts of the interview and editorial comments giving it to be understood that I regarded the Roumans as contemptible people whose only interest in the war was to sit on the fence, as long as they could, and to make as much money as possible out of the difficulties of other countries

without any risk to themselves. When I reached Petrograd I at once saw M. Diamandy, the charming and intelligent Roumanian Minister, and described to him how grossly I had been misrepresented. Knowing the state of Russian public opinion he was not in the least surprised at what had happened, and readily accepted the explanation, that the papers had published not what I had said, but what they had wished me to say.

I took the lesson to heart and looked forward with all the greater anxiety to an alliance between two peoples who so obviously suspected each other's intentions.

# VI

# THE DARK FORCES

"Chacun s'était trouvé ébranlé dans sa condition, troublé dans ses habitudes, ou gêné dans son industrie. . . . La Nation n'étant plus d'aplomb dans aucune de ses parties, un dernier coup put donc la mettre tout entière en branle et produire le plus vaste bouleversement et la plus effroyable confusion qui furent jamais."

De Tocqueville. *L'Ancien Régime.*

# CHAPTER VI

## THE DARK FORCES

WHEN I had first left England for Petrograd, no doubt had crossed my mind as to the part that Russia was playing in the war. Birkbeck had let me read the inspiring memoranda that from time to time his Slavophil friends sent him from Moscow. The struggle was to open a new and magnificent page in the history of Slav development. Upon the threefold basis of Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationality, a greatly strengthened Russian Empire would emerge from it, embracing Constantinople in its boundaries, and Santa Sofia amongst its holy places. Poland, from its Catholicism a foreign body in the Orthodox world, would be given independence, and the golden age of Orthodoxy would begin. If the small circle of Moscow notables, who were responsible for this programme, had represented an organised public opinion, or if even one or two of them could have exercised an influence on the conduct of affairs, the history of subsequent years might have been very different. I was a stranger in the land, and the grim realities only gradually forced themselves through the screen that was surrounding me.

My suspicions were first aroused by the startling dis-

organisation of the General Staff and the Government Departments with which I came into personal contact. At first I excused the want of method and order on the ground that all the best men were at the front, and that only the old and infirm were left in the public offices. But as my experience expanded, so I discovered that confusion and disorder were not peculiar to Petrograd and that they extended over the whole system of Russian Government. No doubt, there were brilliant exceptions that stood out all the more conspicuously from this dark background. Just as some Russian armies were magnificently commanded and others hopelessly mismanaged, so there were excellent administrators side by side with the useless and incompetent. In the west, we may have made too much of a common denominator that standardised every kind of war effort. In Russia, it seemed to me that there was no common denominator at all. If the heights were high, the depths were very low. Moreover, there was on all sides an undisguised undercurrent of depression, suspicion and defeatism.

Looking around, I saw at once that this state of affairs must seriously react upon the effort of the armies, and from the first day of my arrival I repeated with an iteration that became monotonous, my conviction that the rear in Russia mattered more than the front, and that politics were often more important than strategy and tactics. This belief explains my constant interest in Russian politics and in the daily life of Petrograd and Moscow.

Being a politician I had what in Intelligence circles

is called "cover" for dealing with these affairs. It was altogether natural that a Member of the British Parliament, even though he was for the time being a Staff Officer, should associate with Russian Ministers and politicians, and freely discuss with them Russian and British politics. From this vantage ground, I set out consciously and unostentatiously upon a methodical investigation of Russian public opinion. I purposely kept in the background. If I had pushed myself forward and advertised my activities, my Russian friends would either have become suspicious, or would have assumed that I had come to supplant our existing diplomatic and military Missions. I was on this account most careful not only to work in the closest and friendliest liaison with the British Embassy and our Mission at General Headquarters, but also to make it known to the whole world that there was no rivalry between us. I describe at greater length in other chapters the intimate relations that always existed between Sir George Buchanan, Sir John Hanbury-Williams and myself. Any interesting report that I obtained, and any significant movement that I noticed, I at once reported to the one or the other, according as it was of political or military importance.

Setting out on these lines, I began my inquiries in the spring of 1916. On the domestic side, I tried to follow up the long chain of causes that left the Petrograd shops bare of food, and the Petrograd streets full of hungry food queues. A French diplomat had described to me the condition of Germany as "*la famine*

*bien organisée.*" Why was the famine so badly organised in Russia? Why, indeed, was there any famine at all in a country that normally exported large quantities of wheat, and had recently enjoyed a good harvest?

If, as seemed likely, the answer was political, I must acquaint myself with Russian politicians and Russian public opinion. Whenever, therefore, I had time and opportunity, I went to the Duma or the Council of Empire, and saw what I could of the party leaders.

My visits to the two Chambers seemed to help me to answer the questions that I had asked myself. Each alike appeared to have been side-tracked at a moment when it might have played a useful part in providing a platform for grievances, and in strengthening the temper of the national morale.

Of all the legislative assemblies that I visited during the war, the Russian upper chamber, the Council of Empire, depressed me the most. Not because it was not a sovereign or responsible body—I had no predilections about its parliamentary powers—but because it seemed to me to be almost entirely composed of very old bureaucrats, who were totally out of touch with the war and the new problems that were filling the national horizon. The members were much the same old men whom a generation ago Repin had painted for the Alexander Gallery, aged and dignified officials, now indeed in frock coats, but at the time of their portraits in blue and gold uniforms with the red sashes of St. Anne or St. Alexander Nevsky about their chests. At

half-time in their afternoon sessions there was an adjournment for tea, and the dignified company would sit around a long and well-covered tea table. At one such tea party I was greatly diverted by a furious attack that my neighbour, a former Russian Ambassador in Constantinople, made upon the British nation. Thinking that I was German, he no doubt felt that it was a good opportunity for speaking his mind. Moreover, being stone-deaf, the protests and explanations of his neighbours entirely failed to stop his invective.

When I went to the Duma, I found a state of affairs very different, but none the less disquieting and oppressive. Instead of the warmth and comfort of the Marinsky Palace, there was the chill and emptiness of a pavilion that a court favourite had long ceased to inhabit and of a conservatory that was filled with deputies instead of exotic plants. No building could have been worse adapted to a popular assembly than Potemkin's Palace. The acoustics of the chamber were as bad as they could be. The meetings were uncertain and liable to arbitrary adjournment. The Ministers, appointed and dismissed by the Emperor, and in no way responsible to the assembly, generally kept away, and upon the rare appearances that they were forced to make, sat at a table upon the President's platform. The few perfunctory ministerial declarations that I heard, even the speeches of the President of the Council, Trepov, an honest man and a loyal friend of the Allies, would have soon destroyed any western administration under a parliamentary régime. Worst

of all, the deputies themselves, impotent and irresponsible, were obviously disillusioned and embittered by the hopelessness of their position. The Duma had, in fact, become the kind of assembly that a country can get on neither with nor without. Out of touch with reality, cold shouldered by authority, it was eking out a precarious and often purposeless existence. All the more significant, therefore, was the stirring of its dry bones in the autumn of 1916 and its sudden outburst against what were known as the "Dark Forces."

Everything bad in Russia was at this time laid to the account of the "Dark Forces." Did an offensive fail at the front, was a popular Minister dismissed, were food and fuel unprocurable, each and every calamity or inconvenience was in the public mind due to the "Dark Forces" that were supposed to control the Court. No doubt, the Russian public went too far in so to speak anthropomorphising the causes of their troubles, and in assuming that all the results of a great crisis were due to some hidden hand. But exaggerated or not, there was no denying the solid foundation of the general suspicion. Sinister events followed too closely upon each other to be assigned to mere chance. With a monotonous iteration, honest and open-minded Ministers were struck down. Now, it would be the War Minister, Polivanov, who had objected to a reactionary attempt to stifle the work of the voluntary war organisations. Now, it would be Ignatev, the progressive and patriotic Minister of Education. Even the Emperor's personal aide-de-camp and one of his

oldest friends, Prince Orlov, fell a victim to these mysterious influences. And, finally, Sazonov, the Foreign Minister, whose loyalty to the Emperor and to the Allies was alike unquestioned, and whose word counted in every European capital, was supplanted by a narrow-minded bureaucrat who was as personally unpopular as he was politically suspect.

The Duma, in this respect fully representing public opinion, assigned all these disastrous events to the evil influence of Rasputin. When its excited protests broke out towards the end of the year, the favourite's name was for the first time mentioned in public discussion in Petrograd. The liberal Milyukov, the moderate conservative Shulgin, and the die-hard Purishkevich, each alike focussed his speech upon Rasputin as the creator and director of the "Dark Forces." Let the Emperor only banish this man, and the country would be freed from the sinister influence that was striking down its natural leaders and endangering the success of its armies in the field.

It is difficult to see how anyone living at that time in the atmosphere of Petrograd could have come to any other conclusion. With so much scandal and intrigue in the air, it was humanly impossible to take a detached view, particularly as certain of these events were indisputably due to Rasputin's influence. Of the broader causes that, quite apart from Rasputin's intrigues, were responsible for the confusion, the general upheaval of the war, for instance, and the antiquated machine of Government, I shall say more in my final

chapter. It is here sufficient to observe, that for me, engrossed in my inquiries into Russian public opinion, no less than for the members of the Duma and the general public of Russia, the existence of the "Dark Forces" was the central fact in the picture, and the activities of Rasputin and his camarilla the hidden power behind the anti-war parties.

I did my best to keep London informed of these dark developments; and in addition to the shorter messages that I sent the authorities by telegram, I adopted the practice of periodically writing long letters to the Director of Military Intelligence. Some of these reports contain details that are still worth remembering. In any case, if they have no other interest for the world of to-day, they will at least show that I am not now trying to be wise after the event, or projecting the more mature calculations, that are now possible, into my day to day impressions of a very confused period. Here, then, are four typical letters written in the critical days between Christmas 1916 and March 1917.

"22nd December, 1916.
(Namely, a week before Rasputin's death.)

"The State of Public Opinion in Russia.

"My double position of Officer in Charge of the British Intelligence Mission on the General Staff and Member of Parliament, has given me exceptional opportunities for meeting representative public men in Russia.



THE DARK FORCES

(From the *Old Believers' Apocalypse*)

Whilst in the General Staff I hear a good deal of army gossip, I have also had the chance of meeting the principal politicians of all parties, and of attending the more important debates in the Duma and the Council of Empire.

"Making every allowance for the fact that Petrograd is a notorious hotbed of gossip and that fantastic rumours of every kind are current in society, I think that the following estimate of the present state of affairs is generally accurate.

"The outstanding feature, unique in the history of Russia, is that all sections of society are united against the small group, half Court, half bureaucracy, that is attempting to keep the complete control of Government in its hands.

"In the army there is both wide and deep-seated discontent. Officers and men are under the impression that 'Dark Forces' in the rear are rendering useless their efforts and sacrifices at the front.

"Three examples may be given of this feeling of discontent. One of Stürmer's most far-reaching acts was to alter the regulations in munition factories under which premiums were given for increased output, and by the alteration extensively to restrict the output of shells. The army freely expressed its discontent and disgust at Stürmer's action. Secondly, the Government has time after time impeded the development of the private organisations for Red Cross and commissariat work. The combined meeting of the various branches of the 'Zemsky and Gorodskoi Soyuz,' the principal organisa-

tion, has been prohibited by the Ministry of the Interior. The discontent which the army feels with the Government's policy has been frequently shown in the conflicts between the military and civil authorities as to the holding of meetings and the organisation of voluntary work. Perhaps, however, the most notable example of the feeling in the army was the intervention of Shuvaev, the Minister for War, in the opening debate of the Duma. Whilst Stürmer fled from the Chamber within twenty minutes of its opening amidst the hoots of the members, and no other Minister appeared to answer the attack upon the Government, the Minister of War and the Minister of Marine unexpectedly intervened with two popular and patriotic speeches. Moreover, Shuvaev ostentatiously shook hands with the members, and amongst them with Milyukov, the leader of the Cadet party, who had made the fiercest attack of any upon the Government.

"As to the politicians, there has of course always been a gulf fixed between the legislative assemblies and the Government. The Government is in no way responsible to the Duma or the Council of Empire. Ministers are appointed and dismissed entirely at the discretion of the Emperor. There is, therefore, neither Cabinet responsibility to the legislative assemblies nor Cabinet homogeneity within the Government itself. In addition to this continual cause of controversy between the Government and the assemblies, there have been during the war persistent attempts on the part of Ministers to encroach upon the constitutional powers of

the Duma. Under Article 87 of the 1906 Constitution, the Council of Ministers is empowered to issue decrees in exceptional circumstances. During the war Ministers have used this power to such an extent that they have practically absorbed all the legislative functions of the legislative assemblies.

"Such controversies always have and always will divide the Government and the assemblies until a system of parliamentary government is adopted. What, however, should be particularly noticed in the present situation is that all parties, not only in the Duma, but in the home of retired bureaucrats, the Council of Empire, are now united against the Government. Both the Council of Empire and the Duma passed with practically no opposition resolutions in almost identical terms, protesting against the 'Dark Forces' that are undermining the body politic. After Markov, the notorious reactionary, had insulted the President of the Duma, almost the whole of the right party, including several most reactionary priests, dissociated themselves from his action. Purishkevich, before the war the blackest of black reactionaries, made the most sensational, whilst Shulgin, another conservative, made the most impressive attack upon the Government.

"To both assemblies alike the outward and visible expression of the Government's insincerity is the Minister of the Interior, Protopopov. Protopopov, it will be remembered, is the former Vice-President of the Duma, who posed as a liberal and a friend of the

Allies, but who subsequently accepted the Ministry of the Interior, the most reactionary office, from the hands of Stürmer, after having had an interview with a member of the German Legation in Stockholm, and embroiling himself in some unexplained financial transactions connected with the founding of a new daily paper, *The Russian Will*. Since his appointment to office, Protopopov has brought back the most notorious police agents and various officials connected with the worst forms of political repression. For instance, Kurlov, who was Chief of Police when Bogrov, the Police spy and *agent provocateur* murdered Stolypin in the theatre at Kiev, has been brought back to office, after having been dismissed by Khovostov, and has recently been acting as Assistant Minister of the Interior. As no formal appointment had been announced, the Senate, the body that registers laws and decrees, refused to accept his signature as Assistant Minister. None the less, he is Protopopov's right hand man, and as Protopopov is a minister of very limited capacity, he is the virtual director of the Ministry of the Interior.

"An example of the policy of repression may be seen in the work of the censorship that, during the first days of the Duma debate, stopped the publication of all the principal speeches.

"Even the upper classes are filled with discontent and distrust. The most reactionary of all assemblies, the United Council of the Nobility, at which the representatives of all the provincial nobilities meet together, passed last week a unanimous resolution against the

'Dark Forces.' This resolution is the more remarkable from the fact that in the decrees prohibiting meetings a particular exception was made in favour of the United Council of the Nobility, on the ground that its deliberations were certain to give support to the Government.

"A further example of this discontent may be found in the recent action of Princess Vassilshchikova, a well-known lady at Court, and the wife of one of the Emperor's gentlemen-in-waiting, who last week wrote a letter to the Empress, imploring her to rid herself of Rasputin and the 'Dark Forces.' The first result was an order within a few hours from the Ministry of the Court that she and her husband should leave Petrograd in disgrace. The second has been that two hundred of the best known ladies in Petrograd society have signed an address to the Emperor supporting her complaint and asking for her recall.

"As to the working classes, the feeling of discontent is mainly concentrated upon the appalling state of the food question. Although the supplies within the country should be more than ample for the demands of every class, owing to disorganisation, deficiency of transport and particularly speculation and dishonesty, there is a dearth, amounting in some places to famine, of all the necessities of life.

"There have recently been several ominous strikes in Petrograd and other centres of industry. I am informed upon good authority that in a recent strike in Petrograd the men of one of the regiments quartered

in the city refused to fire upon the crowd and have, as a punishment, been sent to Siberia, and that well-known *agents provocateurs* were at work amongst the strikers.

"The only other section of society with which I have not dealt is the Church. Here, again, the discontent is as general and deep-seated as elsewhere. After the opening debate in the Duma, the next most important attack was directed against the mis-government and disorganisation of the Church. The scandals that have recently taken place are almost beyond belief. Bishops have been appointed by the help of the 'Dark Forces' who could not even read or write. After Rasputin's, the most active personality behind the 'Dark Forces' is that of Pitirim, the Metropolitan of Petrograd, a notorious intriguer and jobber. His name was frequently mentioned in the debates in the Duma, and no one could say a word in his defence. So far, the only result is that the Emperor, by an act obviously intended to flout the Duma, issued on his Name Day a special Rescript, thanking the Metropolitan for his services.

"The overwhelming feeling of discontent, expressed and unexpressed, in Church and State, and in every section of society, is brought about by two main causes.

"The first cause is the food crisis, the outward and visible sign of the complete breakdown of the Government and bureaucracy.

"The second cause is the crop of scandals to which I have already made some allusion. Perhaps, however, I have not noticed what seems to me to be the

worst case in these *chroniques scandaleuses*. Manasevich Manuilov, Stürmer's principal secretary, is awaiting his trial for bribery and blackmail. This man, who was a secret police agent in Paris, is everywhere notorious. None the less, he was Stürmer's right hand man, and now declares that the bribes that he was accepting were shared by his master, the Prime Minister. The case, that will come on in a few weeks, should provide some interesting evidence.

"Two other cases that are likely to produce no less interesting revelations are the libel action which Stürmer is bringing against Milyukov for his speech in the Duma, and the case of a man who gives the name of Serge Prokhozhy, who declares that he was hired by the editor of the *Russky Znamya*, an extreme reactionary journal, to murder Milyukov.

"The picture that I have sketched, is a black one. There is none the less a satisfactory side to it. The opposition to the 'Dark Forces' is so overwhelming that, in spite of checks and obstacles, it appears to me to be invincible. That this is so, is shown by the growing importance that is attached to the Duma. Goremykin, Stürmer's predecessor, attempted to govern without the Duma. He failed, and in the autumn of 1915 had to summon it. Stürmer summoned the Duma, but attempted to treat it as a powerless debating society; his attempt ended in his own downfall. As a result the Duma, instead of being a tiresome assembly of cranks and extremists, is becoming the mouthpiece of the nation.

"Further, the stupidity and inept dishonesty of the clique that are known as the 'Dark Forces' have played into the hands of the opposition. The result is that pro-Germanism, identified in the minds of the public with this clique, has become unpopular. The strikes, begun as demonstrations against the war, ended as demonstrations against the Government. Trepov and the Foreign Minister, Pokrovsky, are both strong supporters of the Allies. With the backing of the anti-German feeling of the country and the example of the failure of Stürmer and his associates as a lesson, it is to be hoped that they will keep the Government straight. Whether they will be able to do so, it is, however, impossible to say, for although the 'Dark Forces' will sooner or later be defeated, it is beyond the power of anyone to gauge the amount of vitality that still remains in them."

"26th December, 1916.

"The political situation is still most unsatisfactory. The general impression seems to be that as soon as the Duma is adjourned on Saturday, the 30th December, several repressive measures will be adopted.

"A foretaste of this reactionary policy was the prohibition of the general meetings of the Zemsky and Gorodskoi Associations in Moscow. For some time past these general meetings had been arranged and delegates summoned from every part of Russia. The principal subject of discussion was to be the disorganisation of the food supply, a subject that directly concerns the

Associations, from the fact that the greater part of the commissariat work of the Army and the administration of hospitals is in their hands. A few days before the general meetings, the Mayor of Moscow, Chelnokov, received a letter from Trepov, stating that the meetings were prohibited owing to firstly the fact that the Duma and the Council of Empire had already discussed the food question, and secondly that it was inadvisable to withdraw so many social workers from the local centres of their work to Moscow. By the time that Trepov's letter arrived in Moscow, most of the delegates were already there. When, however, they appeared at the appointed places, they were met by the police, who were already in occupation of the halls. After some altercations and the passing of resolutions and protests, the meetings were dissolved. As the Associations are the centre of some of the most useful work that is now being done in Russia, this act of repression has created the worst possible impression.

"With reference to the peace proposals, the position seems to me to be as follows. Whilst the German proposals had little effect upon public opinion, the American proposals seem to have created a marked impression. It is probably correct to say that a very great majority of the civilian population of Russia is in favour of peace. The American Note has provided an opportunity for the expression of these views. It is probably on this account that Pokrovsky, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was careful in an interview with the Petrograd journalists, to concentrate attention upon the unpopular

German proposals and to leave the American Note in the background. Responsible people in England should be alive to this state of Russian opinion. The conditions of life have become so intolerable, the Russian casualties have been so heavy, the ages and classes subject to military service have been so widely extended, the disorganisation of the administration and the untrustworthiness of the Government have become so notorious that it is not a matter of surprise if the majority of ordinary people reach at any peace straw. *Personally, I am convinced that Russia will never fight through another winter.* The danger of an immediate peace has been for the moment removed by the fact that the peace proposals are identified in the public mind with the intrigues of the reactionary clique that has lately made itself so unpopular. People in England should not, however, be blind to the fact that amongst the civilian population of Russia there is little enthusiasm for the war.

"I have, during the last week, had an opportunity of meeting persons who have recently been in Archangel and on the Kola railway. The War Office and Admiralty have no doubt received full reports as to the explosion in Archangel and as to the condition of the Murman Railway. None the less, it may interest you to know that the explosion in Archangel was nothing like as serious as the Germans made it out to be. Probably about 4,000 to 5,000 tons of munitions, machinery, metal, etc., were blown up, and about 500 lives actually lost. The principal harm done seems to have been the

partial destruction of two ships, the wrecks of which are likely to block the channel, already a very narrow one.

"As to the Murman Railway, an Englishman who has recently travelled over it informs me that it will be ready for goods traffic about February 1st. It is then hoped that it will be available for 1,000 tons a day of traffic up to the middle of April. He seemed doubtful whether it will be really able to carry so large an amount. In any case, a great part of the line will break up as soon as the winter ends. This will mean that for the next two or three years a large section of the line will have to be re-laid every summer."

Rasputin's murder followed close upon this letter, and for the following three weeks I was chiefly engaged in sending the reports that I have included in the chapter devoted to the crime. The next letter is, therefore, written after an interval in which it was possible to take stock of the new situation.

"20th January, 1917.

"In my letter of December 22nd, I stated that, whilst every section of public opinion seems united against reaction, it is impossible 'to gauge the amount of vitality that still remains in the "Dark Forces" to which Russia has recently been subjected.'

"Recent events show that there is still strength latent in the forces of reaction.

"The policy that recently prohibited the meetings of the County Council and Town Unions at Moscow

has been ruthlessly applied in many other directions.

"Almost the whole of the Russian press has been subjected to the special police control that is known as the 'Preliminary Censorship,' whilst British correspondents tell me that the Censor stops practically everything that they are attempting to telegraph to the United Kingdom. These restrictive measures are a very real danger to the cause of the Allies. It is obvious from the recent copies of *The Times* that I have seen, and from what British correspondents here tell me, that few people in the United Kingdom have any idea of the gravity of the internal situation in Russia. The matter is so serious that the Ambassador is making special representations both to the Russian and British Foreign Offices.

"The press regulations are only one phase of a comprehensive system of repressive measures. Trepov was an extreme conservative official. He had no sympathy with the voluntary work of the Town and County Council Unions, nor with the liberal aspirations of the Duma. None the less, he found the position of Premier impossible, and resigned. Since his resignation practically all the important Ministers have either followed his example or been dismissed. The greatest loss is the dismissal of Count Ignatev who, as Minister of Education, had shown himself sympathetic to public opinion. Count Ignatev, although one of the Emperor's oldest personal friends, had received no notice of his dismissal when he read the news of the appointment of his successor in the paper. The example of the principal

Ministers has been followed by a large number of Assistant Ministers. Even Makarov, the very conservative Minister of Justice, has been dismissed. The reason of his dismissal was that, whilst he had no objection to administrative action being applied to save or condemn political prisoners, he objected strongly to the case of Manuilov, Stürmer's secretary, being stopped after it had actually passed into the province of the Law Courts.

"The new Ministers who are being appointed, are notorious officials of the most reactionary type. Two of them, the Minister of Education, Koulchitsky, and Dobrovolsky, the Minister of Justice, are, it is curious to note, spiritualists.

"The result of these changes has been to strengthen the position of Protopopov, the Minister of the Interior. A month ago, it was assumed that Protopopov was certain to be dismissed. His colleagues actually refused to allow him to attend the Council of Ministers. The result, however, surprising to everyone, has been that his colleagues have been dismissed and that he himself has stayed, and stayed with increased powers. His principal instrument, the unpopular and reactionary Kurlov, has now been given unlimited powers in the Ministry of the Interior.

"There have been two other conspicuous examples of the reactionary campaign; the quashing of the Moscow municipal elections and the packing of the Council of Empire.

"The history of the Moscow municipal elections

is very significant. The Moscow City Council, elected in 1912 for a period of four years, consisted of 77 progressives and 69 moderates. Owing to the fact that 40 per cent. of the electors were at the war, and 9 progressive members actually serving at the front, the Mayor of Moscow asked that the elections, due to take place in 1916, should be postponed. Stürmer, however, thought that the fact that nearly half the electorate was away, gave him a suitable opportunity for striking a blow at the progressive influence in Moscow. Accordingly, against the unanimous wish of the city, he insisted on the elections taking place. The elections took place in December and resulted in a complete defeat of the Moderate Party. Of the 160 members, 150 progressives were returned and only 10 moderates. This was a knock-out blow for the reactionaries. They, therefore, determined to quash the elections. Accordingly a Committee was appointed consisting of five reactionary officials and four representatives of various other interests. The reactionary officials voted solid, with the result that, although the conservative President of the Moscow Nobility voted with the municipal representatives, the elections were quashed, and quashed not because anything irregular had taken place, but because Stürmer's instruction, imposed it should be remembered against the wish of Moscow, was held to be out of order.

"The packing of the Council of Empire is not a less significant event. The Council of Empire, the Second Chamber of the Russian Constitution, consists of three

categories; nominated members, elected members, and members who do not take part in the sittings.

"The Emperor every year adds a certain number of nominated members, and removes certain members to the category of those who take no active part in the deliberations. This year, the opportunity has been taken to remove a number of well-known moderate conservatives and liberals and to put in their place the most notorious reactionaries. For instance, Pleve, the son of the murdered Minister of the Interior, who himself two years ago tried to wreck the work of the County and Town Unions, and the official who, between 1899 and 1905 destroyed the Constitution of Finland, have both been appointed members. As a result of this purge the extreme right have now a majority in the Council. When it is remembered that the Council of Empire has full powers of veto over Duma bills, this is a very significant fact.

"What, it may be asked, will be the result of all these blatantly reactionary measures?

"It might be expected that in view of the fact that public opinion is practically united, the Government and the 'Dark Forces' of reaction would be swept away by a great wave of feeling. The Duma would be the natural channel of this outburst. The Duma, however, has never shown itself capable of dealing really effectively with a great crisis and, from what I hear, it is unlikely that it will fill the position that is required of it.

"If the Duma fails to become the centre of a great

national movement, the next hope is the army. It is significant that, for the first time since the war, committees and individuals are already appealing to the army and to the army leaders. It is even more significant that political questions are daily being discussed at the front, and that to my certain knowledge, placards against the reactionaries are put up in the trenches, and that upon at least one occasion a regiment has refused to advance until, as its officers said, 'the enemies behind them were destroyed.' Personally, however, I do not see who would be the army leader of a great national movement. Alexeiev is the obvious man. Alexeiev, however, is seriously ill, so ill indeed that he cannot even be informed of the course that events are taking.

"The third possibility might be a lead given by one of the Grand Dukes. The murder of Rasputin, in which one of the participants was a Grand Duke, concentrated public attention upon the members of the house of Romanov. Apart, however, from the Grand Duke Nicholas in the Caucasus, who, it should be remembered, is only a cadet of the house, there does not seem to be any Grand Duke capable of carrying out a *coup d'état*. It is noteworthy that the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, who took part in the murder of Rasputin, even if he did not actually shoot him, has been banished without a protest to the Persian front.

"The forces of reaction, therefore, being carefully and cunningly organised, at present hold the field. The Police have never been more numerous nor better organised than they are at the moment, whilst their

numbers have been increased by the influx of the Russian detachments from Poland and the occupied provinces, and their pay and conditions improved by Stürmer and Protopopov.

"When I was in Moscow I had the opportunity of meeting the principal military and municipal officials. Both alike spoke with remarkable candour as to the intolerable condition in which Russia is now placed. The Chief of Staff, for instance, of the Moscow Military District, told me that, although he was the strongest of conservatives, he had come to the conclusion that the present régime is hopeless. It goes without saying that the municipal authorities, for instance, Chelnokov, the Mayor of Moscow, and Prince Lvov, the President of the County Council Unions, regard the situation as unbearable. What, however, surprised me was the outspoken manner in which officers like the senior General of the Moscow District, and the Chief of Staff discussed the situation with me. The army, in fact, seems honeycombed with discontent. The organisation of the rear, for example, the commissariat on the S.W. front, has, owing to Government obstruction, become worse. Regiments are openly saying that a particular Grand Duke is their candidate for the Imperial Crown.

"In my opinion three things may happen. The Duma or the army may declare a Provisional Government. I do not think myself that this will happen, though it is much nearer than might be supposed. Secondly, the Emperor may give way as he gave way in 1906, when the Duma was established. Thirdly,

things may continue to drift from bad to worse as they are drifting now. The second and third alternatives seem to me to be the most probable and, of the two, I think the third the more likely.

"In any case, the situation is most unsatisfactory."

31st January, 1917.

"The forecast that I made in my last letter that matters were more likely to drift from bad to worse than to take any sudden or revolutionary turn has been proved to be correct.

"On the one hand, the party of reaction has, whilst proceeding unswervingly upon its policy of repression, thrown certain sops to the public in Russia and the Allies abroad.

"On the other hand, the parties of progress have been embarrassed by the adjournment of the meeting of the Duma and by their desire to avoid any action that may impede the success of the allied Conference in Petrograd.

"Let me give three examples of what I call the 'sops' that the reactionaries have been throwing to the public.

"The most remarkable instance is the Emperor's Rescript to the new Prime Minister, Prince Galitsin. Prince Galitsin, upon three occasions after taking office, categorically declared that nothing would stop the opening of the Duma on January 8th. Great prominence was given to these statements throughout the Russian press. Within a few days, however, the

announcement was made that the Emperor had adjourned the meeting of the Duma for a month.

" Naturally enough all faith in the word of the Prime Minister was destroyed. A few days afterwards, however, an Imperial Rescript was published, expressed in liberal terms, and instructing Prince Galitsin to work in harmony with the legislative assemblies. Whilst few people here believe in its promises any more than they believe in the word of the Prime Minister, it has had the effect, that was no doubt intended for it by its authors in the foreign press where it has been received as an outward and visible sign of the beginning of a liberal policy.

" Secondly, there is the case of Sazonov's appointment to London. Naturally enough the Allies are unanimous in their welcome to a statesman of Sazonov's record. No man is more universally respected in Russia than he, and no minister holds a better record for honesty of purpose and loyalty to the Allies. He is indeed so greatly respected and so sincerely loved in Russia that everyone is saying that his appointment to London, whilst, on the one hand, it is a sop to England, on the other hand, is a means of getting out of Russia one of the few open-minded statesmen who might be likely to take a prominent part in any political movement.

" The third assortment of sops is of a different nature to the other two, and is intended for home consumption in Russia. The *causes célèbres* of Manuilov and Rubinstein, after having been stopped by administrative authority, are to be resumed. It will be remembered that

Manuilov, Stürmer's former secretary, is accused of receiving bribes and of attempting to blackmail a Moscow bank, and that Rubinstein, who was Rasputin's principal financier, was arrested by the Military Police for extensive trading with the enemy. At first, people were much surprised when the announcement was made that the trials were to be continued. It now transpires, however, that the serious charges are not to be proceeded with, and that the defendants will probably be convicted on one or two minor and quite incidental charges. This will give the Government the opportunity of saying that they have not interfered with the course of justice, and that they have allowed the trial of two such influential persons to be carried to a conclusion.

"The changes in the various Ministries still continue. For the moment Bark and Pokrovsky still hold office, no doubt for the benefit of the allied Conference, for without Bark to negotiate with Lord Revelstoke and Pokrovsky to deal with the diplomats, it is difficult to see how the Conference could have continued.

"General Shuvaev has been dismissed, no doubt for his speech at the opening of the Duma. The method of his dismissal is significant. In accordance with the usual practice, he visited Tsarskoe and presented his periodical report. The Emperor was quite affable, and there was no sign of his impending dismissal. When he returned to Petrograd, he found that General Belaev had already been appointed his successor.

"General Belaev's appointment is badly received here. It is not forgotten that he was General Sukhom-

linov's Chief of Staff and cannot escape responsibility for the munition scandals of 1915. More recently, he came in for some very scathing criticism in Guchkov's correspondence on behalf of the War Industries Committee with General Alexeiev.

"Protopopov goes from strength to strength. His daily visits to Tsarskoe are eagerly awaited by the Imperial family. If he is late in his arrival, there is quite a commotion in the Palace. In the Ministry of the Interior, he is surrounding himself with a phalanx of all the most discredited reactionaries. Many people say that he is mad. Certainly his innumerable conversations with representatives of the press and anyone he meets, show that he is in a state of unbalanced mental excitement. A few days ago, for instance, he talked for five hours to a representative of the *Russkoye Slovo*, to whom he confided the fact that he was prepared 'to drench the country with blood.' To others of his visitors he has expounded a policy of expropriating the nobility in revenge for their criticism of the powers that be, and of dividing their property among the peasants. Another proposal that he frequently discusses is the complete removal of Jewish disabilities and the enlistment of Jewish capital and Jewish brains on the side of the reactionaries.

In the meanwhile, the progressive parties continue quietly to organise themselves. Their leaders are determined to take no action that will play into the hands of the enemy in the field or the enemy in the rear. With this end in view, they are taking every precaution

throughout Russia to prevent a repetition of the anarchical explosions that discredited and destroyed the revolution of 1905."

I need make but a short comment upon these letters. Two broad conclusions stand out from the details that they contain. In the first place, the " Dark Forces " had become temporarily stronger as a result of Rasputin's murder; in the second place, the Russian effort was spent, and, whilst the country might struggle through the ensuing summer, it could never face another winter of war.

# VII

# THE DEATH OF RASPUTIN

"Madame Adélaïde me fit raconter l'aventure Mortier qui mena à celle des Praslins, et, selon l'habitude de nos conversations, nous arrivâmes promptement à la politique et à la situation du pays.

Je lui rapportai une partie des inquiétudes dont on m'entretenait chaque jour, des dangers si menaçants pour la couronne et du peu de résistance qu'on y opposait."

Madame de Boigne. *Mémoires.*



THE REIGN OF THE BEAST

(From the *Old Believers' Apocalypse*)

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DEATH OF RASPUTIN

On New Year's Eve, 1916, I sent to London an urgent wire, coded for greater secrecy by Lady Maud, that on the previous morning, Rasputin had been killed in Petrograd in a private house. Mine was the first news of the assassination that reached the west, and I was the first non-Russian to hear afterwards of the finding of the corpse.

Had I ever met the strange and sinister man who had been murdered? What did I know of him at first hand? Were all the stories, that were then running round the west, true of him? These were the questions that my friends put to me, whenever I discussed Russian affairs in England. In answer, I had to confess that, although I was in Russia for a year, and was involved in many secret affairs, I never saw the man who was reputed to control the destinies of the country.

Once, indeed, I arranged an interview with him. But my nerve failed me when a day or two before the appointment, I read in the Russian press the announcement that "the Chief of the British Intelligence Mission was to have a meeting with a mysterious person of great importance." It was obvious to me that

the papers knew all about the projected interview, and were prepared to regard it as an intrigue between the British Government and the Imperial favourite. I cancelled the engagement on the ground of ill-health, and lost my one chance of seeing this notorious man.

Not a day passed without some rumour reaching me of his activities, and, from time to time I received more specific information as to the varying strength and weakness of his influence. I have still in my possession a half-sheet scrawled in his peasant's hand demanding an appointment for one of his friends, and I also have a copy of the statement that Volzhin, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, made to his Department when the Emperor had decided "finally to liquidate the question of Gregory Rasputin, and, as soon as a new masseur was found for the Tsarevich, to banish him from the court." I mention these papers, as they were actually given to me, just as I record the phases of the affair that came within my direct personal knowledge. I purposely do not linger upon the many details of Rasputin's life and death, that have been so fully set out in the contemporary literature of almost every country. The interest of the reports that I reproduce in this chapter is not that they contain new or fully accurate information, but that they were sent to London within a few hours of the murder, and provided at that time the best available information about a man and a murder that few people then understood.

Anyone, Russian or foreigner, who lived in Petrograd in 1916 was certain to be constantly talking about

Rasputin. Birkbeck had told me much of his dark history before I came to Russia, and I was as keenly interested as any in the scandals that surrounded his name. But it was not until my interview with Purishkevich that I really came to realise the evil influence that the Siberian peasant was exercising not only upon the Russian Empire, but upon the whole course of the war. Rightly or wrongly, the Russian people regarded the favourite as the personification of reaction at home and of treachery to the allied cause abroad. To Purishkevich and his fellow members of the Duma, the man stood in the way of all the brave hopes and high ideals with which he and his friends had entered the war.

In spite of the Duma debates and the general discontent, it seemed, in the autumn of 1916, as if this evil man's power was growing stronger rather than weaker. As I knew that he was well guarded, I doubted the practicability of Purishkevich's threats, unless, setting aside his habitual caution, he broke out in one of his intermittent orgies, and was murdered in a street brawl. When, therefore, the news came of the assassination, I was as greatly surprised as anyone. Perhaps I cannot do better than reproduce the exact picture that I immediately sent home to the Military Intelligence Department.

" Jan. 1st, 1917.

" The Death of Rasputin.

" In the early morning of Saturday, December 30th, there was enacted in Petrograd one of those crimes

that by their magnitude blur the well-defined rules of ethics, and by their results change the history of a generation.

"Gregory Efemich Novikh—for Rasputin, 'the rake,' was only the nickname that his excesses gained him in his village—had governed Russia since the day, four years ago, when first he showed in the Imperial palace in Poland his healing powers over the Tsarevich. To describe the influence that he possessed, the scandals that surrounded his life and the tragedies that followed in his path, is to rewrite a Dumas romance.

"Three times he was within an inch of being murdered. Once, an outraged peasant girl from his native Siberia stabbed him—the wound did not prove fatal. Next, the monk Heliodor seemed to have him at his mercy in the Petrograd cell of the Metropolitan of Kiev—Rasputin's great strength and the arrival of help saved his life. Again, only ten months ago in a reserved room of one of the best Petrograd restaurants, the Bear, certain officers of the Chevalier Gardes would have killed him, if his familiars of the secret police had not appeared in time. The papers said nothing of these things. Indeed, to mention his name brought a fine of three thousand roubles. Day and night, the secret police were near him. Because he withdrew them, Khvostov, the Minister of the Interior, was dismissed. Only from time to time the mujik's uncontrollable appetite for debauch left him defenceless before his enemies. There is in Moscow a former officer of the Guards, now relegated to the Gendarmes, who

boasts that the achievement of his career was the beating he gave Rasputin during some wild orgy. There are others who have seen him madly drunk in the streets and public places. Of one of these incidents there is a photograph, and a photograph that is said to have been shown to the Emperor. True to his nickname, it was at an orgy that Rasputin met his death.

"On December 29th, the Duma session was abruptly closed twenty-four hours before the appointed time. On November 14th the debates had begun with Milyukov's fierce attack upon the 'Dark Forces' that had become the synonym for Rasputin's activities, an attack in which for the first time a Member dared to mention Rasputin by name. They ended with another onslaught, less personal, less sensational, but hardly less effective. 'The atmosphere is charged with electricity,' so ran Milyukov's peroration, 'no one knows where or when the blow will fall (applause).' The following morning the blow, the effects of which cannot be gauged, had already fallen.

"On Saturday afternoon I was at the Restriction of Enemy Supplies Committee. Several times during the sitting individual members left the room and returned with whispered messages to their neighbours. At the time I paid no attention to these interruptions of business. When the Committee broke up, I went with the chairman and the secretary to another room for the purpose of discussing various points connected with the publication of the Russian Black List. Before we could

go far with our discussion, a well-known official of the Ministry of Commerce entered with the news that Rasputin had been murdered that morning by the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and Prince Yusupov. Professor Struve, Chairman of the Committee, at once sent out for an evening paper. In a few minutes the *Bourse Gazette* was brought in with the news actually published in it. The *Bourse Gazette* is always a paper of headlines. In this case, the first heavy type was devoted to the peace proposals, the second to the fight in Roumania. Then came a headline, 'Death of Gregory Rasputin in Petrograd.' In the body of the paper there was little more than a single line, and that on the second page. The announcement ran as follows: 'At six o'clock this morning Gregory Rasputin Novikh died after a party in one of the most aristocratic houses in the centre of Petrograd.'

"To one who has only been in Russia a few months the news was almost overwhelming. To Russian public men like Professor Struve, a publicist whose name has for a generation been in the forefront of Russian political and economic life, it seemed almost incredible. As I had no wish to appear to meddle in Russian internal affairs, I did not attempt to discuss the situation nor, needless to say, could I continue our prosaic conversation about the Black List.

"Since Saturday, I have made it my business to discover as many details as I can about the murder, and I have been in touch with various people representing different classes and sections of opinion.

"The result of my inquiries is as follows: Rasputin has not been seen since the evening of Friday, the 29th December, when he left his flat in company with an officer in a motor car. Prince Yusupov had a party on the same evening that was attended by one or two of the Grand Dukes. On the evening following Rasputin's disappearance, the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich had another party in his rooms in the Palace of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the upper floors of which are used by the Anglo-Russian Hospital. The party seems to have been of a most riotous description and did not break up until 7.30 on Sunday morning.

"The details of the story vary. Some people say that Rasputin was got into a room and told to kill himself. I have heard it said that he did kill himself. I have also heard it stated that he fired the revolver that was given him at 2 o'clock in the morning in self-defence. The generally accepted story, however, is that he was shot. A motor is supposed to have taken the body to the Islands, where it was thrown into the sea or one of the rivers. This story is generally supported in Petrograd.

"There seems also general agreement that he was killed either by the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich or by PrinceYusupov. Many people say that lots were drawn as to who should kill him and that the lot fell upon the Grand Duke Dmitri, but that Prince Yusupov undertook the duty.

"The Grand Duke Dmitri was brought up by the Grand Duchess Elizabeth in the palace in which he

is now living on the Nevsky Prospekt. He has had a gay career, and not long ago was in disgrace for some escapade.

"Prince Yusupov, who is also Count Sumarokov-Elston, is the Count Elston who had so great a success in London society a year or two before the war. It will be remembered that during one season he was regarded as the greatest catch in London. This view of his eligibility was certainly correct, as he is one of the richest men in Russia. He has since married the Grand Duchess Irene, who a fortnight ago signed the protest of Princess Vassilshchikova to the Empress against the 'Dark Forces.'

"Whether it was the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich or Prince Yusupov who actually did the deed, it seems certain that it was planned and carried out by some of the best known people in Petrograd society. I am informed that the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich and Prince Yusupov were together all the afternoon of December 31st, and that, when asked, they make no secret of the fact that Rasputin has been killed. Perhaps the fact that Rasputin had recently been meddling more than usually in the domestic affairs of the Imperial family hastened the event.

"There have often been rumours of Rasputin's death. As recently as March *The Times*, for instance, published a telegram from Bucharest announcing his murder. It will, therefore, be suggested that this is another rumour, and that after a few weeks of retirement he will reappear.

"What then is the evidence that differentiates this case from the groundless rumours of the past?

"It should be stated at once that the story is officially denied. The denial, however, is half-hearted, and given with conflicting details. The official answer was at first that nothing had happened. It now seems to have been modified to the extent of admitting that something has happened, that Rasputin has been wounded, but that he is going on well.

"I am informed that an inquiry at his flat in the English Prospekt brought the answer that on Friday evening, the 29th December, he left in a motor with an unknown officer and has not since been seen. In the meanwhile, interested people seem to be purposely spreading fantastic and impossible rumours with the object of discrediting the whole story. The fact that no one has seen Rasputin's body goes to support all these official denials and contradictions.

"The following facts, however, seem to afford overwhelming proof for the fact of Rasputin's death.

"In the first place, the whole of Russia regards it as established beyond doubt. The news published in the *Bourse Gazette* has already been circulated through the provinces. The mysterious telegrams that are already appearing in the Petrograd press show how widespread is the conviction of the truth of the announcement.

"Secondly, Rasputin's entourage is in a state of deep depression and great anxiety. His flat is filled with commotion and lamentation. His principal supporter

at Court, Madame Vyrubova, has refused to leave her rooms and the guard of secret police outside them has been trebled.

"Far more conclusive, however, than this hearsay evidence is the attitude of the Petrograd press. The *Bourse Gazette* would never have risked its existence for a rumour. Even had it done so, a mere rumour would not account for the meeting that was held on the evening of the 30th December of representatives of all the Petrograd press, at which they discussed the question as to what policy they should adopt with reference to the publication of the news. The matter was decided for them, for during the conference they received a notice from the censorship, forbidding any publication of the event. None the less, both on the 31st December and 1st January there have appeared numerous indirect and mysterious references to the murder in most of the Petrograd papers. For instance, in the *Novoe Vremya* in a remote corner and in small print there is the following paragraph:

> "'On December 30th, at the Zeloti Concert, as a result of a unanimous request, in view of events that are taking place, the National Anthem was sung amidst tumultuous applause.'

"Still more marked in the *Ruskaya Volya* there are no less than four more remarkable references to the event. It should be remembered that the *Ruskaya Volya* is a new daily paper that has just appeared, and

that it is supposed to have particularly close connections with the Government. In addition to a poem, the motif of which are the words 'rasputin' and 'novikh' (Rasputin's names, and also the word for 'rake' and the genitive plural of the word 'new'), there are two leading articles in which the clearest reference is made to the news. In the first of them, Alexander Amphiteatrov, the editor, ends with the following words:

> "'I wrote so far, and then there came the news of the *Bourse Gazette*! In its big type was announced the sensational news that there had passed from the scene of life the strangest and the most notorious embodiment of the present reactionary might.'

"The second article, entitled 'Short Chronicle,' deals in detail with the great excitement in Petrograd and states that never had the city passed through so nervous a day; never had the telegraph worked so incessantly as on Saturday, December 30th.

"'Yesterday was the great day. About it no one can say more.'

"Again, on page 6, there is a paragraph of twenty lines, headed:

"*Shooting in the Street.*

> "'Yesterday about six o'clock near the house of Prince Yusupov, Count Sumarokov-Elston, Moika 94, several revolver shots in succession were heard in the neighbourhood of a motor car that was standing close by.

"'The shooting was heard by a constable of the 3rd Kazan District and other constables who were standing on the opposite side of the Moika in the direction of the Admiralty District police station. The Kazan police station constable hurried to the spot and as he approached, the motor car went off at great speed.

"'It is supposed that a number of young men, after a good supper, had shot into the air.'

"On January 1st these references became more explicit. The *Rech*, for instance, published in its 'Latest News' the following paragraphs:

"'At three o'clock on the night of December 30th, a constable standing at the point opposite the Kazan section in the Ofitsersky Street, heard cries and a noise issuing from the garden of No. 21. At the same time, constables standing on their points upon the Moika Quay, not far from the Prachashnaya Bridge, also heard the noise from the same garden, that looks out upon the Moika. The garden at 21, Ofitsersky Street, stretches almost to the bank of the Moika and is enclosed on the side of the quay by a two-storeyed house, No. 92, belonging to Prince Yusupov. The next house to No. 92 also belongs to the same owner.

"'The constable in the Ofitsersky Street, some time after hearing the cries, saw several men coming out of the garden gate of No. 21. He tried to find out what had happened, but did not succeed.

"'A short time after this a motor car was noticed to arrive at the garden and seen afterwards to leave it.

"'According to the statements of passers by, another motor car arrived at the same garden from the Moika side about 3 o'clock. An examination shows that there were blood stains upon the snow in the garden. The manager of the house declared that this was the blood of a dog that went mad during the night and was shot. Samples of the snow with the blood have been taken for examination. The body of a dog that has been found in the garden will also be submitted to examination with a view to discovering whether the dog was mad or not.

"'In the course of December 30th, the news arrived that a mysterious motor car had been seen at the Petrovsky Island during the night. On December 31st the river was examined in the neighbourhood of the Petrovsky Bridge. A freshly made hole in the ice was discovered and footsteps passing backwards and forwards to it in different directions. Divers were given the duty of examining the bed of the river.

"'Some men's goloshes were found in the snow on the bank with suspicious dark stains.'

"The *Bourse Gazette* of January 1st, in a remote corner of its pages and in very small print, publishes the same story under the heading of 'Mysterious Discovery.' The only additional detail that it gives, is that the divers found nothing.

"The *Novoe Vremya* has another small paragraph entitled 'Mysterious Crime.' Much the same details are given in it with the addition that the secret police are guarding the river, and that photographs have been taken.

"The feeling in Petrograd is most remarkable. All classes speak and act as if some great weight had been taken from their shoulders. Servants, isvoschiks, working men, all freely discuss the event. Many say that it is better than the greatest Russian victory in the field.

"What effect it will have in Government circles, it is difficult to say. My present view is that it will lead to the immediate dismissal of Protopopov and of various directors of the Secret Police, whilst in the course of the next few weeks the most notorious of Rasputin's clientèle will gradually retire into private life. I would suggest, for instance, that careful attention should be paid to any changes that take place in the Department of the Interior and the Holy Synod, where Rasputin's influence was always strongest.

"It is certainly fortunate for the cause of liberalism in Russia that the crime cannot even be remotely identified with the democratic movement or any revolutionary plot.

"Further evidence of his death will, I also suggest, be forthcoming in the developments of such *causes célèbres* as those of Sukhomlinov and Manuilov. For the moment, owing to the pressure that Rasputin applied, both trials have been stopped. If the pro-

ceedings are restarted, the fact will provide confirming evidence of the removal of the guiding hand that had hitherto stopped them.

" Nowhere will any regret be felt for the crime except amongst those over whom Rasputin exercised a hypnotic influence, and the unscrupulous intriguers whom he used for his own ends and rewarded with innumerable appointments in the Church and State.

" Of such a man no one can honestly say ' de mortuis nil nisi bonum.'

" If one cannot write good about the dead, one can at least say about the death ' nothing but good.' "

" *Death of Rasputin.* Report No. 2. Jan. 2nd, 1917.

" Since writing the above memorandum I have received definite information that the body of Rasputin has been discovered in the river Nevka, near the Petrovsky Bridge. I received this information in strict confidence from the Chief of the Department of Military Police in the General Staff. He has himself seen the body. It appears that traces were purposely left about the hole in the ice, into which the body was thrown, in order that it should be discovered. The chief officials of the Ministry of the Interior, the Petrograd Prefecture, the River Police and the Department of Public Prosecutions have held investigations upon the spot, and a rough map has already been published in the *Evening Times* under the heading of ' Mysterious Murder.'

" It is also certain that Rasputin was actually killed in Prince Yusupov's house, and not in the motor. During the evening there seems to have been a certain amount of promiscuous shooting, in which a dog was killed in the courtyard and a window broken. Early in the morning, six men appeared in the courtyard with a body dressed in a *shuba*, that they put in a motor that was waiting. I understand that these facts are stated in detail in the report of the four secret police, who were waiting for Rasputin in the courtyard. A very well-known Russian told me that one of his friends had seen this report, in which were stated all the details of the arrivals and departures to and from Prince Yusupov's house during the evening.

" It is also said that the company did not assemble at the house until very late in the evening, as most of the people had previously been to a party at the house of Mme. Golovina.

" I am also informed, upon absolutely reliable authority, that the Empress was informed of the crime either late on Saturday night or early on Sunday morning. As late as six o'clock on Saturday afternoon, when the news had already been published in the *Bourse Gazette*, she appears to have known nothing of what had happened. On Sunday morning, however, she ordered that a Liturgy should be performed in the Imperial chapel at Tsarskoe, and that special prayers should be said for Rasputin.

" I also hear, but on less reliable authority, that Her Majesty sent the following telegram to the Emperor,

who was still at the Stavka:

"Our friend has been taken from us. Dmitri and Felix (Prince Yusupov) are parties to it."

"A cousin of Yusupov told me that his intended departure to the Caucasus had been stopped, and that the Grand Duke Dmitri and he had both been placed under domiciliary arrest."

"*Report No.* 3. 5/2/17.

"*Further details obtained from the Examining Magistrates and other reliable sources.*

"The following particulars may be taken as quite accurate as they have been given by people directly connected with the affair.

"For some days before his death, Rasputin had been nervous and unwell. He had received a shock from what appeared to be the attempted suicide of the Cossack officer who was engaged to his daughter. As he was always in fear of his life, he took the greatest precautions for keeping his movements secret. He, however, always made it a practice to tell his two confidants, Simonovich and Bishop Isidor, where he was and where he was going. Simonovich is an unbaptised Jew, a curiosity seller, and Isidor a bishop who, for bad behaviour was compelled to retire from his see. They live together in the Nikolaevsky Street. It was Rasputin's habit to telephone to them, whenever he left his house, and to tell them where he was to be found. On

the evening of the 29th December, he was at his flat at No. 64, Gorokhovaya, with his two daughters, a niece and a secretary, all of whom acted as servants for the flat. Late in the evening he sent away the detectives of the Secret Police, and told them that they were not wanted any more. Shortly afterwards, a motor with a cape cart hood arrived and someone came and knocked at the back door. This proved to be a boy who frequently visited Rasputin, and to whom Rasputin always opened the door himself. The boy said something to Rasputin, and Rasputin answered "I will come with you." The two then went off in the motor in the direction of the Fontanka, and at the Fontanka Bridge were seen to turn to the right. Nothing more can be heard of the motor. A motor shortly afterwards drove up to Prince Yusupov's house. This, however, was a closed motor, and not the motor that had been seen to leave 64, Gorokhovaya. The dvornik at Prince Yusupov's house seemed either very stupid or very clever, and very little could be got out of him. He, however, admitted that the driver of the motor was in uniform, and was a very simple-looking person. He is supposed to have been the Grand Duchess Irene's brother.

"At 12.30 the *gorodovoi* (i.e. the policeman) outside the Ministry of the Interior in the Moika heard four shots. This fact he reported to the Criminal Investigation Department, that is situated close by. At 3.30 the *gorodovoi* standing outside Prince Yusupov's house was called into the house by a man in general's uniform.

The unknown general said, 'Do you know me?' To which the *gorodovoi* replied, 'Not at all.' 'Are you a patriot?' was the next question. 'Certainly.' The general then said, 'Rasputin is destroyed, you can go.'

"Shortly afterwards a motor left the house and was not seen again. The *gorodovoi* seems to have taken some time to think about what had happened, but after a time went off, and reported the matter to the nearest police station.

"In the early morning the Minister of Justice, Makarov, was rung up by an unknown voice that said 'Rasputin has been murdered, look for his body in the Islands.'

"As a result of these incidents, two examining judges, Sereda and Zarvatsky, and the police, went round in the morning to Prince Yusupov's house. The only trace that they could find of the murder was some blood stains on the snow outside the small door, that leads into the bachelor rooms which Prince Yusupov used before he married. They carefully collected the snow for examination. While they were there, Prince Yusupov came out, and said that he could explain the whole incident, and that all that had happened was that the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich had shot a dog that had attacked him. The examining judges then went off to the Minister of Justice and congratulated themselves on having escaped the risk of being taken in, when all that had happened was the shooting of a dog. While they were waiting in Makarov's ante-room, Prince Yusupov arrived and went into the Minister's

room. Shortly afterwards Makarov came out and said to the judges, 'It is all right, Prince Yusupov has explained everything; it was only a dog, thank you, you can go.'

"At Gorokhovaya 64, Rasputin's flat, there was in the meanwhile great excitement. At seven in the morning Simonovich and Isidor arrived. They could not understand why Rasputin had not told them where he was to be found. Shortly afterwards, there entered Mlle. Golovina, Rasputin's friend, who said 'I know where he is, he is all right, I will telephone.' She then, for some reason, telephoned in English, and, having got an answer, said to them, 'He will be back soon.' However, she seemed dissatisfied, and went out to telephone again, this time at the public call office in the street, as she evidently did not wish Simonovich and Isidor to know what she was saying. She then came back and said, 'He has left the place where I thought he was and has gone away.'

"In the meanwhile, in view of the mysterious telephone message and the reports of the police, a search had begun. When, therefore, a golosh was discovered near the Petrovsky Bridge, it was taken to 64 Gorokhovaya for recognition. The Rasputin family at once recognised it as Rasputin's. The river in the neighbourhood was carefully searched. The great cold made this difficult, as the divers were not at all anxious to work. Eventually on Monday morning, something was seen in the ice. After great difficulty it was pulled out, and found to be Rasputin's body, completely frozen into a block of ice. Both his hands were raised, and

one side of his face was badly damaged by the fall into the river. The body was put into a motor lorry, and ordered to be taken to the Vyborg Military Hospital. The whole party, examining judges, police, and the rest, then went off to have luncheon with a German Jew who is now known as Artmanov. They had not begun luncheon, when they received a telephone message from Protopopov saying that on no account must the body be taken to the Vyborg side, because it was a workman's quarter, and there might be demonstrations. They replied that it had already been sent there, but Protopopov said that it must be stopped. They asked how could it be stopped. He said that he did not mind how, but that stopped it must be. Accordingly, they informed all the police at the street corners along the route through which it was to pass that they were to stop the lorry, when they saw it approaching. The lorry was finally stopped, and was ordered to proceed instead to the Chestminsky Almshouse, a desolate institution on the road to Tsarskoe.

"The examining judges had previously arranged that the post-mortem examination should take place after twenty-four hours, as the body was so frozen that it was impossible to make any examination before that time. Protopopov, however, telephoned to say that the examination must be finished by eight o'clock next morning. The judges and the doctor declared that it was impossible. Protopopov, however, said that it was necessary, and that the body was to be returned to the relations at 8 next morning. The judges then asked, how were

they to reach the almhouse, that was some distance from Petrograd, as they could not afford a motor, that would cost 200 roubles. Protopopov said that it would be all right as far as payment went. Accordingly Sereda, the examining judge, got hold of Kosorotov, the well-known surgeon, and went off with him in a motor to the almshouse.

Their difficulties were not ended. Although the almshouse was lighted with electric light, there was no light in it at all when they arrived, and no means of lighting it. The three *gorodovois*, who were there, said that no light was necessary, as "dead men need no light." The judge and the surgeon declared that they must have some light. Accordingly, they sent out, and obtained two small lamps to hang upon the wall, whilst one of the *gorodovois* held a lantern. After a while, the *gorodovoi* declared that he felt ill, and that he could not hold the lantern any more. The judge and the surgeon, therefore, were left alone in the partially lighted room.

"They found that Rasputin, although 46 years of age, had the look of a man of only 36. He was dressed, as was his habit, like a Russian mujik. He was wearing, however, a pair of very expensive boots and a blue shirt with yellow cornflowers sewn upon it. This shirt had lately been given him by the Empress. It should also be noted in this connection that two days afterwards, when a small and periodical operation was being performed on the Tsarevich's knee, the blue shirt was noticed by the surgeon to be under the operating table.

"The examination showed that there were three wounds, one in his back and two in his head, all showing signs that they had been made by shots at a very close range.

"Whilst the examination was proceeding, one of the *gorodovois* announced that two ladies had come for the body. Sereda and Kosorotov declared that this was impossible. A message then came back that they must give up the clothes. This, they did.

"At last the examination was finished, and Sereda and Kosorotov returned, frozen and dispirited, to Petrograd. Since then, Zarvatsky, the other examining judge, has resigned, and another judge, Staravitsky, has been appointed to replace him. The body was subsequently taken to Tsarskoe. Whilst it was being conveyed from the station to the church, the garrison was confined to barracks in order to avoid any demonstration. Bishop Isidor, and not the Metropolitan Pitirim, conducted the service in the church."

Such were the reports, exactly as I wrote them within a few hours of obtaining the news. Although, subsequent writers, eyewitnesses amongst them, have added further details to the story, there has not been disclosed much new information to supplement, still less to correct, my account of the affair. If here and there there is an incorrect detail, I can at least claim that the story was sent to London many days before any descriptions reached the allied capitals through other channels.

I can add three further details to those that I have recounted.

The first is that the two ladies who arrived at the Chestminsky Almshouse were the Empress and her lady-in-waiting, Madame Vyrubova.

Secondly, on the morning that the body was found in the canal, the Colonel representing the Corps of Gendarmes in the General Staff came into my office, and announced that in view of our friendly relationship, he was ready to confer a great favour upon me.

"They have just found Rasputin's corpse. No one of importance has yet seen it. Would you like to go with me, and be the only foreigner to see it?" It was one of those black and cruel Petrograd mornings, and I was just recovering from a serious chill. Was I therefore very cowardly and unenterprising when, after thanking him for his kindness, I declined the offer that he had made to me? I fear that I seemed to him sadly lacking in nerve and that my stock fell heavily in his estimation.

The third detail is curiously significant of the suspicions of the capital.

Throughout the autumn of 1916 it was the fashion amongst the reactionaries known as "The Black Hundred," to connect British diplomats and officers with supposed intrigues against the Emperor and his entourage. It was not surprising, therefore, that Rasputin's death should have been the occasion of a crop of wild rumours about British participation in the crime. The fact that I was known to have been in relation with

Purishkevich, and that my office was notoriously well informed about Russian affairs, gave a ready excuse to the anti-British clique of reactionaries to father the plot and even the murder on me and my staff. I knew nothing of this outrageous charge until Sir George Buchanan told me of the rumours that were reaching him. Though the story seemed incredible to the point of childishness, the British Ambassador had solemnly to contradict it to the Emperor at his next audience at Tsarskoe Selo.

It will be noticed that in my reports I fell into two errors common to the great majority of Russians, firstly, that Rasputin was the incarnation of the devil and, secondly, that his death would liberate the forces of heaven. When I wrote of the favourite as the very embodiment of evil, I was expressing what most Russians thought, though they dared not express it. But was the truth as simple as I imagined? Was the Russian world a chess board of black and white squares, with Rasputin and his friends on the black, and the rest of the world on the white?

Within a few weeks of his death I was not so sure of the infallibility of the public verdict. Could a man, so wholly and so coarsely wicked, as he was reputed to be, continue to influence good people, and to keep his hand on the wheel of state for so many years? The strands of character are finely intertwined, and when they come to be unravelled, shades of varied colours are unexpectedly discovered.

To many, Rasputin was the Beast of the Apocalypse.

It was sufficient for one of the Empress' closest friends and most devoted ladies, Princess Vassilshchikova, to see him leave Tsarskoe Selo station in an Imperial carriage to make her break with the court and go into exile.

On the other hand, Bishop Feofan, Rector of the Spiritual Academy of St. Alexander Nevsky, acute judge of character, experienced confessor, and trained psychologist, was convinced for many years that Rasputin was a religious mystic. Even when the stories of his *louche* conduct were well established, Feofan still hesitated to believe the charges against his pupil. If it needed a Dostoievsky to analyse the teacher's searchings of heart, it needed him even more to recount Rasputin's last visit to the Spiritual Academy. No incident of this strange man's life more vividly exposes the contradictions of his character, and the confusion of the impressions that he made on his associates.

When the whole world was ringing with the scandal of his conduct, Feofan begged him to come to the Lavra, and to clear himself.

Rasputin made no answer to the invitation, and on the evening of the day for which he was bidden, Feofan departed to Moscow. But within the institution there persisted a foreboding that Rasputin would still appear. One of the younger students, now an Orthodox Bishop, was so firmly convinced that the strange man would break in upon him, that he bolted his door and implored the porter to keep closed the gate of the monastery. The lights had been put out and the students had gone to bed, when a ringing of bells and a great knocking

were heard, and in a few minutes Rasputin had broken down the protests of the porter, and entered the building. A moment later, and he had forced his way into the monk's cell, and was confessing his sins with the fervour of a Christian penitent. Hour after hour, he held the young man in his grip, and at the end, none could say whether he was the greatest saint or sinner in Russia.

" I am a man with a mission," he shouted, " I am not as other men. I can do everything." At length he rushed from the cell in a storm of exaltation.

Evidence such as this, first-hand, vivid, authentic, has sometimes made me doubt the full justice of a verdict that identified the favourite with the power of undiluted evil.

Secondly, I was premature and over-sanguine, when I imagined that the murder would destroy the " Dark Forces," and enable Russia to continue her war with a singleness of purpose that had hitherto been impossible. I was too confident. I did not realise the danger of any sudden shock to the rickety machine of government. Politics had reached such a pass, and public opinion become so morbidly excited, that any startling event was certain to aggravate the dangerous fever from which the country was suffering. It was the old story of the *collier de la reine* and the murder of the Duchesse de Praslin. When a political crisis is imminent, there is nothing so dangerous as an arresting crime or a reverberating scandal. At a moment, when authority needed to be strengthened rather than weakened, an explosion

occurred that shook the crazy structure of government to its very foundations.

The letters, that I print in my account of the " Dark Forces," show that I quickly corrected my first impressions, and that I realised that, so far as the conduct of the war was concerned, it would have been better if the murder had never taken place.

# VIII

# THE TSAR WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN AN ENGLISH SQUIRE

"He had an excellent understanding, but was not confident enough of it; which made him often times change his own opinion for a worse, and follow the advice of men that did not judge so well as himself. This made him more irresolute than the conjuncture of his affairs would admit: if he had been a rougher, and more imperious nature, he would have found more respect and duty."

Clarendon. *The History of the Revolution and Civil Wars in England.*



THE TSAR THE PEOPLE WANTED

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TSAR WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN AN ENGLISH SQUIRE

On New Year's Day a service known as the "Many Years" was held in honour of the Emperor in the principal cathedrals of Russia. I attended it twice, once in the ancient Cathedral of the Uspensky in the Kremlin, and once in the new Cathedral of the Saviour outside the Kremlin walls. The long list of the Emperor's titles was chanted, I would almost say shouted, by the officiating priest, and at the end of each grandiloquent dignity, the choir and the congregation thundered in reply "Many Years." The whole of Russian history seemed to me to be embodied in the list of titles. One by one, they told of the conquests of former Tsars, and of the transformation of Muscovy into Imperial Russia.

It may well be that this dramatisation of Russian history will never again take place. Title followed title, as champion followed champion in the lists of the Odyssey and the Iliad. Slav sibilants hissed hatred against the enemies of Holy Russia. Patronymics, place-names and primitive titles turned a thanksgiving service into a triumphant song of battle.

" Nicolai Alexandrovich.
Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias.
Tsar of Moscow, Kiev, Vladimir, Novgorod, Kazan, Astrakhan, Poland, Siberia, The Tauride, Chersonnese, Georgia.
Lord of Pskov.
Grand Duke of Smolensk, Lithuania, Volhynia, Podolia and Finland.
Prince of Esthonia, Livonia, Courland, Samogitia, Bielostok, Carelia, Tver, Yugoria, Perm, Viatka, Bulgaria.
Lord and Grand Duke of Novgorod, Chernigev, Riasan, Polotsk, Rostov, Yaroslav, Belosero, Udoria, Obdaria, Condia, Vitebsk, Mstislav and all the region of the North.
Lord and Sovereign of the countries of Iveria, Cartalinia, Kabardinia and the provinces of Armenia.
Lord of the Princes of Circassia and the Mountains.
Lord of Turkestan.
Heir of Norway.
Duke of Slesvig-Holstein, Stormarn, the Dithmarses and Oldenburg."

So, as though by a herald, was portrayed the hatchment of the Houses of Rurik and Romanov.

When the crowds in the cathedral shouted their response of " Many Years " to this magnificent Emperor, nine out of ten were thinking, consciously or unconsciously, of some great leader of romance or tradition, of a Rurik, a Vladimir, an Ivan or a Peter,

who had subdued his enemies, and ruled his people with a rod of iron. For the minutes of the service the Tsar had ceased to be a twentieth century monarch, and once again had become a superman, almost a divinity, of Russian history. With these splendid titles resounding through the Cathedrals of Moscow at a moment of overwhelming crisis in the nation's history, how could it well have been otherwise? Only the cynical and the sophisticated could have failed to be transported into a distant past, and for a moment at least to have imagined the Emperor of All the Russias a majestic conqueror amongst the peers of his House.

When people have made up their minds as to what they expect from a monarch, and the monarch falls short of their ideal, disappointment and disillusionment are apt to be dangerous. In the world of to-day, it is just as it was in the Greek world of Aristotle. Everyone wishes to identify in flesh and blood his mental conception of this or that public man and to be able to say, "This is he." Just as in an opera we are glad to recognise the characters by the airs that have been attached to them, so in actual life we are satisfied when we find a public man who personifies our conventional conception of his characteristics and who acts true to the type that we have mentally created for him.

"There is the Grand Old Man," we like to say. "Did you hear his booming voice? Did you see his high collars?" "Good old Joe. There are his orchid and cigar!" "Yes, I saw Lord Epsom in the paddock all right, with his grey hat and gardenia buttonhole."

That is what the crowd likes. The popular actors must play the parts that the public has given them. When they come upon the stage, there must be no doubt as to who they are, and what they are doing. If the people expect the Emperor in his purple, and are fobbed off with a retiring and conscientious gentleman in mufti or khaki, they will stop the play and cry for their money to be returned. When the drama of the war began and a Tsar was to play the title-role, they waited for Ivan the Terrible with his clubbed stick, or for Peter the Great with his executioner's axe. Who was this shy and sensitive gentleman, who called himself the Tsar of all the Russias and Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies?

The leader whom they wanted was the Tsar of the "Many Years," a man of blood and iron, who would govern and conquer. They did not need a prince who, however admirable and well intentioned, was incapable of forcing the country to follow him. It seemed, indeed, in these difficult days that even a Nicholas I would have been better than a Nicholas II.

Whenever I saw the Emperor, I could not help making a mental comparison between the Tsar, for whom the people were shouting in the Kremlin, and the kindly prince whose conversation was so amiable and intelligent.

From time to time I went in the course of my duties to the Russian General Headquarters known as the Stavka. I have kept full notes of these visits and, reading them again, I find that in almost every word



MOGILEV

they emphasise the contrast that I am attempting to describe. Instead of a leader of men, I found a detached student of affairs; in place of the state and ceremony that I had associated with the Tsar, I found the intimacy of an affectionate family. I had expected to be speechless in the presence of a great autocrat, and I found myself talking freely with an agreeable companion.

The surroundings in which these interviews took place fitted well into this curiously domestic picture. The General Headquarters of the Russian armies were at Mogilev, a provincial town on the Dnieper, half way down South-western Russia. The town was at a great distance from the front, and being mean, dirty, and inhabited for the most part by a Jewish and Catholic population, seemed to be ill-suited for the Headquarters of the huge Russian front. Here, the Emperor, as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies, spent much of his time, living in the Governor's house and frequently surrounded by the Empress and his whole family.

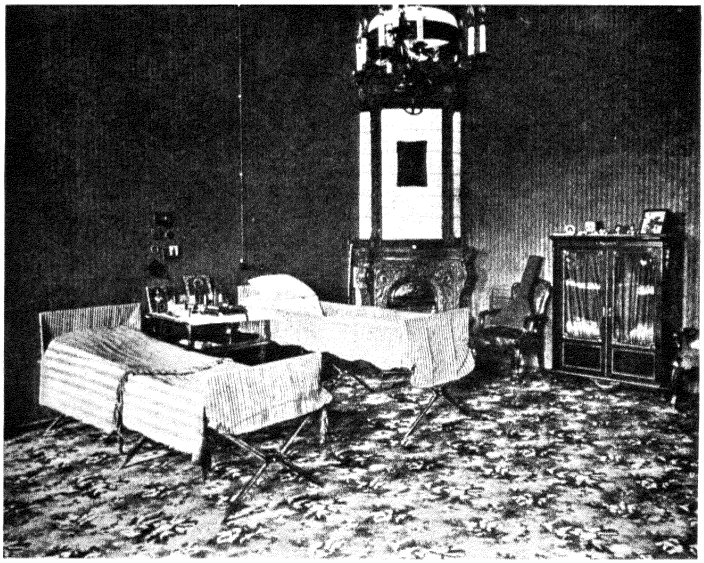
The house consisted of two white two-storeyed blocks and looked like any typical *préfecture*. Behind, was a modest garden and, in the distance, the fine river of the Dnieper, along which the Emperor took walks of many miles.

Inside, the rooms were mean and uncomfortable. It was usual before meals to meet in a square *salon* with practically no furniture but a large map of the Russian front. It was here that the Emperor and

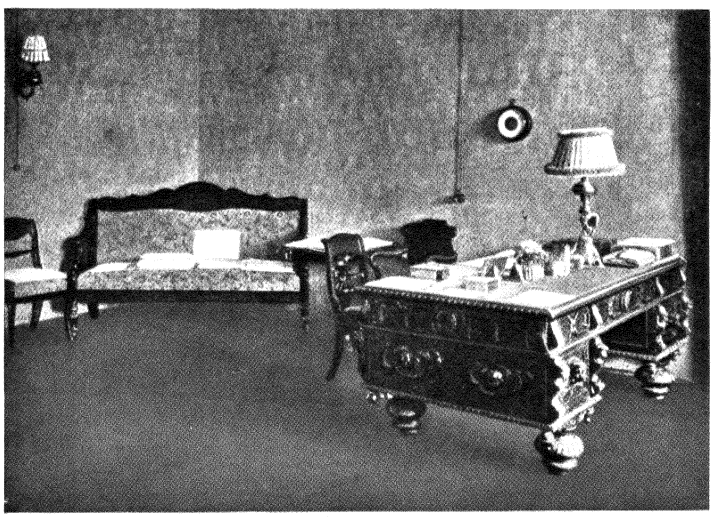
the Imperial family would make the circle of the guests. The dining-room was in keeping with the *salon*, a bare, oblong room with two or three modern chandeliers and a long narrow table that would take between twenty and thirty guests. The Emperor's bedroom I never saw, but I am told that there was little more in it than two camp beds, one for himself and the other for the Tsarevich, and an ugly modern stove for heating. His sitting-room I visited more than once. A large and German-looking writing table, a small sofa, two or three chairs, bare walls, and nothing more. Altogether it was an unattractive house, and very inconvenient, I should imagine, for the conduct of great affairs. Moreover, it was filled to overflowing, firstly, with the family whenever they visited the Emperor and, secondly, with the many officers and officials who were inevitably about the Emperor's person.

If one's immediate impression was of the meanness of the house, one's second impression was of its very domestic atmosphere. The first time that I went into the *salon* before lunching with the Emperor, I found the Tsarevich playing hide-and-seek behind the maps with his tutor and the younger Princes. The Empress, the Tsarevich and the four princesses were all at luncheon, and but for the Imperial footman in khaki, and the large number of men guests, it might well have been a family party in a country house.

I sat next the Grand Duchess Tatiana. Like all her sisters, she had inherited her mother's good looks, but, in her own case, with a memory of her father's promi-



The Bedroom of the Tsar and the Tsarevich



The Tsar's Sitting Room

RUSSIAN G.H.Q.

nent cheekbones and somewhat fore-shortened features. Being rigidly brought up, she said no more than a word or two about the garden and the weather. No doubt, she and her sisters were enjoying the change that a visit to the Stavka meant after the monotonous routine of Tsarskoe Selo. At least they saw new faces and heard something of war activites; at least, they were dispensed from their afternoon drive in an Imperial landau with their governess facing them on the back seat. What wonder if, with this background, my neighbour had no small talk? In point of fact, as I afterwards learnt, she was endowed with unsuspected talent. The poems that she wrote at Ekaterinburg, on the eve of her murder, give her a place in the company of poet captives whose pathetic memorial is to be found on the walls of their prisons, and the scraps of paper that their gaolers discover after their death.

Nothing could have been simpler or swifter than the menu, and nothing more informal than the talk both in the dining-room and in the garden after luncheon. Here, indeed, was a country gentleman in the midst of his large family, pleasantly entertaining his guests.

Both before and after luncheon the Emperor, the Empress, and the Imperial family made the circle of the company, saying a word or two to each of us. Upon the occasion of my first visit they stopped before me for several minutes asking me questions about the British Royal family, and particularly Queen Alexandra, who had given me letters for them.

True to the royal instinct, the Emperor looked at the

badges on my uniform and at my sword.

"What do the Royal Arms mean on your tunic? I thought that only the Household Cavalry had a badge of this kind?"

I told him that it was the badge of the King's Own Norfolk Yeomanry, the regiment that King Edward had founded and of which King George was Colonel-in-Chief.

"Is that the new British cavalry sword that you are wearing?" he next asked me.

Here, I was badly caught out, for I had found the regulation cavalry sword so heavy and inconvenient for daily wear in Petrograd that I had substituted for it a much lighter Artillery weapon. Somehow or other I made out a suitable answer, and the question dropped.

"Does the King still have a great many pheasants at Sandringham, and is he as good a shot as ever?"

These and other similar questions followed in quick succession. Close by, the Tsarevich, one of the best-looking boys that I have ever seen, was laughing and joking with his sisters and the younger members of the suite. Even the Empress, whom the world imagined to be shy and silent, talked freely and appeared at her ease in this domestic atmosphere.

When the Emperor spoke of serious affairs, he still seemed much the same companionable host, though I was struck by his remarkable knowledge of the details of the war.

Twice, indeed, I had the chance of testing his good nature in circumstances that might have irritated him.

The first occasion was in the early spring of 1916, when I was asked by Sir George Buchanan to say what I could in support of a change in the command of the Black Sea fleet.

Hitherto, the Black Sea fleet had kept to the harbour of Odessa during practically the whole course of the war, and had been almost useless both to Russia and to the Allies. Those who knew about it, for instance the excellent British Admiral, Sir Richard Phillimore, who was attached to the Emperor, were convinced that only a change in command would end this inaction and impotence. Time after time, the Emperor had been asked to make a change. Admiral Phillimore had tried his hand, French Admirals had protested, the British and French Ambassadors in Petrograd had made representations, and all to no avail. The Emperor, regarding himself as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian navy, and resenting allied interference in the affairs of his own command, sometimes actually refused to do anything, and had always done nothing. When, therefore, Sir George Buchanan, hearing of my impending visit to the Stavka, asked me to add my very small voice to the volume of complaints that had already been made by the great, I was certain that the Emperor would ignore anything that I might say, and I was almost as certain that he would resent it.

I none the less agreed to try my hand. The difficulty at the audience was first to bring the conversation anywhere near the Black Sea, and secondly, to say what I had to say in a way that would not be resented. I had

some letters to present to the Emperor from the members of the British Royal family, and it took some time to divert the conversation from the channel of family affairs. Gradually, however, it twisted round to the subject of young men, and to the need for introducing new blood into the responsible posts of the war. Once on the fairway, the course to the green was easy, and we were soon talking of the ages of Admirals, and eventually of the age of the Admiral then commanding the Black Sea fleet. When I actually reached the flag, I thought it much better not to hole out. For I am sure that by this time the Emperor had realised the moral of the story. Perhaps his mind was already moving in the direction that the Allies desired. It was certainly remarkable, and it cannot have been due to the observations of so insignificant a person as myself, that within a few days he had dismissed the old Admiral, and had appointed in his place a young officer far down in the list of seniority. The name of this young officer was Kolchak. The world outside Russia had never heard of him, but the Russian navy knew him as their youngest Admiral, who without influence had already made himself a brilliant reputation for courage, leadership and intellectual distinction.

Perhaps it was this happy ending to my talk with the Emperor that impelled Buchanan to make use of me upon an even more difficult occasion. As the spring advanced, it was clear that the "Dark Forces" were gaining ground and that the allied cause would be confronted by a very critical winter. At the moment the

internal struggle that was beginning to paralyze the country, raged round the person of Sazonov.

Sazonov, as I shall show in a later chapter, was a strong conservative and a convinced monarchist. Amidst the black reactionaries, however, who composed the majority of the Cabinet, he stood out as a liberal and almost a revolutionary. As long as he remained Foreign Minister, the Allies could depend upon Russian support and the determination of the Russian Government to carry on the war to the end. When, therefore, the rumour became current that Sazonov was to be dismissed, consternation spread over Downing Street and the Quai d'Orsay. Sir George Buchanan, Sazonov's close personal friend, was in the depths of depression.

Although the rumour became more persistent, and was freely current in Germany as well as in England and France, it was extremely difficult for the Allies to intervene. If the Emperor had resented their suggestions about the military conduct of the war, still more would he resent their interference in the conduct of Russian political affairs. Moreover, it was only a rumour and, credible as it unfortunately sounded, it was obviously dangerous to act upon it whilst it was still unconfirmed. Buchanan, who did what he could with suggestion and indirect pressure, had short of a formal protest shot his bolt. Knowing that I was visiting the Stavka, he asked me, as a forlorn hope, to refer to the rumour in any conversation that I might have with the Emperor.

When I arrived at Headquarters, I found that my

audience was to take place before luncheon, and that, if I was to say anything, I must say it quickly. Risking, therefore, a breach of most of the ten commandments of the protocol, I started upon the complexities of internal politics during the war, and of the need for the Allies to have Ministers who were not only trusted at home but were also popular in the allied countries. Wishing to avoid as long as I could any appearance of meddling with Russian affairs, I took the career of Mr. Lloyd George as the text of my observations. Here, I said, was a man whom I, as a Conservative, had always opposed, but whose vivid personality and war record were already making him popular with our French and Russian Allies. Such a man, even though we Conservatives disliked him as a politician, gave confidence to the Allies, and his removal from office would be regarded by them as a sign of weakening in the effort that we were making.

By this time I was reaching the danger point and I noticed that the Emperor became very reticent. When luncheon was announced, the conversation ended, leaving me with the impression that he had clearly seen the direction of my remarks, but leaving me also in complete uncertainty as to whether or not he wished to follow the signpost to which I had pointed.

Within a few days Sazonov went to Finland for a short holiday. No word of warning was said to him at his final interview with the Emperor, no word of thanks was offered to him for his patriotic work at the Foreign Office. When he arrived in Finland, he found

that the Emperor had dispensed with his services, and had appointed Stürmer in his place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With this visit to the Emperor vividly impressed upon my mind, I thought uneasily of Sazonov's dismissal.

How could it happen that a man so obviously honest and intelligent could sacrifice without a word one of his ablest and most loyal ministers, and put in his place an old and discredited *arriviste*, whose word no one trusted, and whose capacity everyone despised? Some said that the Emperor was altogether heartless. Yet, it is beyond doubt that he was the most affectionate father and husband. Others called him a coward. But cowards do not face death as he faced it. If the impression that he made on me is any guide to his baffling character, I would say that his was one of those oversensitive and self-conscious personalities that create around them an atmosphere of doubt and hesitation. Characters such as this fail to inspire friendship, and often excite suspicion and dislike. Dilatory for long periods, at times they become unaccountably rash. Even their best actions are misunderstood. Having neither the strength to impose their will, nor the singleness of purpose to carry out their good intentions, they are trusted by no one, and hated by not a few. One of my friends, a brilliant and lovable Russian woman, told me that through all her early life she had hated Nicholas so bitterly that she had wished to kill him. Was it conceivable that anyone should wish to kill the modest

and conscientious gentleman with whom I had been talking? Yet, upon the evidences of his public record, I suppose that a black case could be made out against him. He sacrificed his friends, he was unforgiving to his enemies, he showed few generous impulses in the conduct of affairs, he let the ship of state drift on to the rocks, a rudderless wreck. None the less, and admitting all his faults, I am convinced that he was a good man, and that history will appeal against the partially considered verdict of to-day. For history judges in *foro conscientiae*, and in that court intentions no less than achievements are admitted as evidence. If he sacrificed his Russian friends, he never abandoned his Allies in arms. If he stumbled and hesitated in the field of government, he never wavered in his steadfastness in the orthodox faith. A loving father, a devoted husband, a veritable slave in the routine service of his state, he will be numbered amongst the unfortunate princes who were meant, like Henry VI, to rule quiet kingdoms in quiet times, and whose excellent intentions were overwhelmed by an upheaval of overpowering force.

When he and the Empress were prisoners at Tsarskoe, and had been deprived of their chaplain, they were wont to make their confessions to the parish priest. The priest was neither courtier nor conservative; the stories that he had heard prejudiced him against the Imperial captives. Yet, this was his judgment when he had seen them in the testing day of adversity and danger. "These two are children. But they are not only

children, they are saints." A verdict such as this, given *in limine mortis*, must be remembered when the good and the bad are finally sifted in the Emperor's record.

Pending the ultimate findings of a more impartial generation, it is difficult to say how far the obvious faults of his public career contributed to a catastrophe that may in any case have been inevitable. It may, however, be confidently affirmed that in private life no husband or father was more affectionate or beloved. Had he been an English squire instead of a Russian Tsar, how useful, popular and attractive would have been his domestic record of high principle and unselfish service!

At the end of a long life, a mourning concourse of neighbours and tenants would have laid him to rest in the village churchyard, and one would have said to another: "We have lost a man who can ill be spared in the county. Yes, and we have lost also a kind friend, whose death means a gap in all our homes."

# IX

# THE REAL INTELLIGENTSIA

"The intelligentsia must hold fast to the conception of 'Great Russia.' The strength of the state *vis-à-vis* the foreign world offers no hindrance to internal political development, that which aims at domestic welfare; the intelligentsia, therefore, must become permeated with the idea of statehood, and must abandon its futile radicalism."

Masaryk. *The Spirit of Russia.*




St. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

(War Loan Poster)

# CHAPTER IX

## THE REAL INTELLIGENTSIA

It was Sir Bernard Pares who first introduced me to Peter Struve and his little circle of war workers. Pares arrived in Petrograd after one of his adventurous visits to the Russian front, where he surprised even the Russian privates by his complete indifference to the comforts of life. We met in the Hôtel de France the day after my arrival in Petrograd and, falling into a long conversation about the state of Russia, we came to discuss the deficiencies in the machine of government. He then told me of the remarkable effort that a group of intellectuals was making to stem the tide of disorder, and of their work in the Department of Trade and Commerce. Deeply interested by the conversation, I arranged with Pares to give me an introduction to Peter Struve, the leader of the group. Within a few days I made an acquaintance that developed into a close friendship with a very remarkable man.

At our very first meeting Peter Struve seemed to me to represent outwardly and inwardly my conception of a Russian intellectual. Built upon a big scale, with a beard that made him look older than his real age, subtle in argument and metaphysical in his outlook upon the

world, he was able to give me an excellent idea of the attitude of the best intelligentsia towards the war. In early life he had been a disciple of Karl Marx, and his first book, *Critical Notes on the Economic Development of Russia,* published in 1894 when he was only twenty-three, had marked a distinct epoch in the economic thought of his country. His mind, however, had been far too active to remain confined within the pedantic limits of Marxist socialism, and from 1901 onwards had more and more fully developed on independent lines. When he left Russia at the beginning of the century, his friends thought he had left it for good. At Stüttgart, where he settled, he founded and edited a Russian paper, *Osvobozhdene,* as the organ of the radicalism that had now supplanted his former Marxism. The paper gave him considerable influence amongst the Russian parties of the left, and undoubtedly played a notable part in the movement that led to the abortive revolution in 1904-5. In 1906 he returned to Russia, but being himself ineligible for election had to content himself with helping to organise from outside the Cadet Party in the first Duma. His disqualification was afterwards removed, and he later sat in the second Duma. Though he had taken, however, some part in active politics, his true rôle was that of a thinker and economist rather than a politician, and it was as a man of ideas rather than as a man of action that during the ten years immediately preceding the war he chiefly influenced Russian life. Step by step he was driven by the logic of his mind further and further to the right. At

the outbreak of war he found himself in the same detached position that had been reached by many thinkers of the left who, like him, had been forced by the hard teaching of experience into an admission of the grim realities of the war. Heart and soul, he threw himself into the national effort and in the course of time made for his circle a centre of war work in the Ministry of Trade and Commerce.

In Petrograd there were no new Government offices dotted about the public parks like the archipelago of huts in St. James's Park or Burton Court; there was no easy entry for volunteer helpers into the fortress of bureaucracy. How, therefore, Struve forced his way into a Government department, and how he obtained control of a most important section of it, I can only explain by his own determination and persistence.

It seems that during the whole of the first year of the war no one gave any serious attention to the Russian aspects of the blockade. An inter-allied Conference upon blockade questions was certainly held in Paris in 1915, but the Russian Government was only represented at it by the junior personnel of their Paris Embassy, and, so far as Russia was concerned, no practical result ensued. Eventually, however, the Naval Attaché in Paris started communications with the Russian Naval Staff, and out of the correspondence emerged a proposal to form a committee in Petrograd for the Restriction of Enemy Supplies. The staff officer into whose hands the communications passed was Captain Nordmann, a Naval Reserve Officer who, after distinguished service

in the Japanese War, had entered the High School of Economics in Petrograd and had studied political economy under Professor Struve. Nordmann at once realised the urgent importance of the question, and succeeded in interesting Admiral Rusin, the Chief of the Naval Staff, in the proposed committee. At first the Ministry of Marine attempted to retain the work in its own hands. Then, the Council of Ministers wished to bring the committee under many masters. At length it was wisely decided to make one Minister and one Department responsible, the Minister being Prince Shahovskoi, a young and energetic man, who was also an officer of the Naval Reserve, and the Ministry being his Department, the Ministry of Trade and Commerce. Shahovskoi, with Nordmann as his adviser, and Krivoshen, the Minister of Agriculture, to support him in the Cabinet, succeeded in appointing Struve as president, and in leaving the Committee a free hand to work out their procedure. Out of this small and almost haphazard beginning developed the only blockade organisation in Russia.

The committee was composed of officials from the various Departments that were concerned with the blockade, with myself as the representative of Great Britain. Though it always remained an advisory body, it soon imposed its influence upon the whole field of the economic war. Its work was twofold. On the one hand, it was faced with the urgent need of stopping the diversion of supplies to Germany that were in transit to Russia. On the other hand, it had to advise upon the

imports that were required for Russian industry. By 1916 the time was long overdue for dealing with these questions. It was common knowledge that large quantities of transit goods were finding their way into enemy countries. The presence of the British submarines was evidence of the need to stop the iron ore trade between Sweden and Germany, and I had myself seen in my journeys across Scandinavia how wide open was the door in the blockade wall, when no one tried to shut it from the Russian side. Moreover, when the Black Sea was closed to Russian commerce, Russia herself was almost completely isolated, and the problem of supplying her with machinery for her munition factories had become one of the most urgent with which the Allies were faced.

For both these groups of questions the Restriction of Enemy Supplies Committee provided the spring for government action and the channel for communications between Petrograd and London. Incidentally, also, the Committee deal with economic Intelligence from the enemy countries and advised the Russian General Headquarters upon the economic aspects of the war.

Certain of the reports prepared for this purpose were of the greatest value. I remember in particular three of the Committee's memoranda on the economic and financial position in 1917. In great detail and with the cautious impartiality, that only trained economists maintain, a careful analysis, based upon all the available data, and, in the case of Germany, particularly upon the Health Insurance statistics, was

made of the actual state of affairs in Germany and Russia.

These reports were amongst the most useful that I sent to London. Indeed, of all my work in Russia, there was none that seemed to me so important as the part that my membership of the Committee enabled me to play in the blockade. Without the Committee, the door into the enemy countries would have remained open, and without the membership of a British representative, the blockade authorities in London, and particularly the War Trade Intelligence Department, would never have received the information that was essential to the general success of their policy.

Not the least interesting result of my work came from the personal intercourse that I had with Struve. As the year wore on, I could see his growing anxieties. The reports that came to his Committee, whilst they confirmed the gravity of the crisis in enemy countries, pointed to an even more serious state of affairs in Russia itself. Though upon the whole the various Departments were anxious to co-operate with the work of the Committee, the slowness of their movements, their fear of responsibility, and jealousy of each other, must have been painfully obvious to so active a mind as his. Outside the Ministry of Commerce, there was a host of political friends to tell him of the breakdown of Government. Inside it, there was growing evidence of the truth of what they said.

By the time, therefore, that the allied Mission arrived in Petrograd, Struve was thoroughly worried

about the future. From time to time he and I discussed the position, and it was evident that he was determined to avail himself of the presence of the British delegates to convince the Allies of the imminence of danger. He was glad, therefore, that Lord Milner was the head of the British delegation.

Lord Milner he knew by report as a fellow intellectual. Lord Milner, therefore, was more likely to appreciate his disclosures than any of the other members of the allied Mission. But before he reached this conclusion he had many searchings of heart. Was he justified in washing his country's dirty linen in front of a foreign statesman? Were his pessimistic views really justified, or were they only the impressions of an over-sensitive intellectual? Questions such as these made him ponder deeply, first over the projected interview, and secondly over the two reports that he intended to hand to Lord Milner.

When he finally decided in favour of the meeting, I arranged that they should both dine at our flat. They duly came, but I cannot honestly say that the talk appeared to me to be as profitable as I had hoped. Lord Milner did not wish for an interpreter, and talked German. Being out of practice, he found it very difficult to make himself understood. Struve, on the other hand, no doubt from a desire to make it easier for Lord Milner, frequently embarked upon English, a language that he did not then pretend to talk with any fluency. Perhaps, it was this language gulf that seemed to keep the two men apart. Perhaps, Lord Milner had been

so greatly wearied by futile conferences and ceremonial banquets that he did not gauge the importance of what Struve was trying to say. Perhaps, also, for small things often set great affairs awry, he was put out by being an hour late for dinner. His staff had given him the wrong address, and knowing no Russian himself, he had been wandering round most of Petrograd in his attempts to find our flat.

At the end of the talk, Struve handed Lord Milner two memoranda, the first upon the general state of Russian affairs, and the second upon the shortage of food. Each of these reports led up to the same conclusion, the impossibility of carrying on the war in the existing conditions. Each is written with a moderation that may appear to be exaggerated to the point of dullness. But the documents were not intended to be sensational. Indeed, they were expressly designed to explain cautiously and accurately the views of an intellectual and highly patriotic Russian, and were offered to an Englishman who could appreciate the value of words. They seem to me to be worth recording as a sober description of the real state of affairs in February, 1917.

The first is headed " The State of Affairs in Russia," and I give it in full.

" 7th February, 1917.

" Two features characterise Russian internal affairs at the present moment:

(1) Economic difficulties connected with the war.

(2) A deep and ever-deepening conflict between the Crown and the people.

"The importance of the first of these requires no explanation, but it is impossible to consider it apart from the second factor, political discontent. The political discontent in the country has become extremely acute and clearly defined. It is quite evident that in order to wage the war with the utmost possible vigour and bring it to a successful conclusion there must be a national union, based on compromise between different interests and on subordination of these interests to a single, supreme aim. In the body of the nation such an agreement has undoubtedly been attained in principle, and various elements and representative bodies in the population have given this definite expression. The Crown, however, not only has not drawn the necessary conclusions from this state of affairs, not only has not organised the Government and laid down a definite policy, but on the contrary continues systematically to defy public opinion, losing time precious for national union, depressing true patriots and on the other hand inspiring with hopes those who desire Russia's position as a Great Power to be weakened. It is impossible sufficiently to emphasise the fact that by its reactionary policy the Crown is weakening precisely the most moderate and cultural sections of the community, is cutting away the ground from beneath the feet of the patriotically minded elements, and is letting loose state Nihilism.

"Hence comes the feeling, that is to be found everywhere in Russia, and with which, too, officer circles

in the army are deeply affected, that the conflict between Crown and people has really done nothing less than set Russia face to face with a state revolution. The patriotically-minded elements of society and of the army are fully conscious of the enormous historical responsibility that attaches to internal conflict in time of war, and it is only this consciousness that explains the complete calm that reigns in a country where all thinking people are continually meditating and discussing the tragic difficulty of the situation. The difficulty is further intensified by the fact that common report declares that the persons who stand nearest to the Crown are pro-German in their sympathies. This view cannot now be uprooted from the public mind by any mere words. Only a reorganised Government, so organised as to allow of complete control and enjoying national confidence, can clear this unhealthy atmosphere of suspicion and fear which is at present fettering the national energy.

"However distasteful it is to testify before foreigners, even though allies, to such a state of mind and such political conditions in one's own country, it is none the less essential that this testimony should be given. For we must maintain the solidarity between the Allies, before which all the more or less conventional considerations that are perhaps necessary in time of peace, fall to the ground.

"At present all well-intentioned and politically educated persons have only one wish, that the Crown should not commit an irrevocable and absolutely un-

justifiable act by dissolving the Imperial Duma under the pretext that its mandate has expired and that new elections must be carried out.

This step would finally compromise the Crown and would at the same time weaken the conservative state elements in the country, who have united for the national purposes of carrying on the war and of bringing it to a successful conclusion. A fateful part in events is evidently being played by the present Minister of the Interior, who has entirely lost the esteem of his fellow-countrymen of all schools of thought, and can scarcely even be considered a psychically normal person.

"It should be noted that the old cry, 'struggle with bureaucracy,' has lost its meaning. In the present conflict all the best elements of bureaucracy are on the side of the people.

"Such is the present state of affairs in Russia."

To the second, upon the food question in Russia, I added the following words of preface:—

"This memorandum has been drawn up by Professor Struve at the suggestion of Prince Lvov, the President of the County Council Unions. These two men probably know more about the question than anyone else in Russia. It will be noticed that Professor Struve quotes no statistics. He has made this omission purposely as he was afraid of overburdening the memorandum with details. Should, however, any statistics be required, he has them at his disposal and can fully

support with them the conclusions that he draws in the memorandum."

" 19th February, 1917.

" *The Food Question in Russia.*

" The position of the food question in Russia is determined by two factors:

(1) Conditions relating to the actual production and distribution of food products.

(2) The political conditions that prevail in the country.

" As regards the first of these, it should be noted that in Russia the productivity of agriculture has so far not been lowered to any considerable extent by the conditions of war time, and that in consequence the 1916 harvest yielded sufficient quantities of the chief articles of food. The food difficulties which Russia is experiencing at present are not difficulties relating to actual production, but difficulties in extracting what is actually produced from the hands of the producers and transferring it to the direct consumers, the army and the non-agricultural population.

" The visible result of these difficulties is that in spite of there being sufficient supplies of grain in the country, some of the largest flour mills have occasionally to stand idle and that in certain places there is at times an acute shortage of flour. This is due to the insufficient deliveries of grain and fuel to the flour mills

and to the disorganised labour supply of the latter. In places, again, even when there actually is a sufficient supply of flour, the supply of bread is insufficient, since owing to the new levies for military service very few bakers are left, and the lack has not been made good by public organisation. In addition, it cannot be denied that the agricultural producers are unwilling to part with their produce, in the first place because they are in a position to await a further rise in prices and, secondly, because they are often unable to obtain the products they themselves require. The products demanded by the rural population are often simply not to be had. Thus there is a real iron famine in the country districts, the result being that agricultural implements and buildings fall into disrepair or even become utterly useless.

"The difficulties which may make their appearance in the future, namely, in the coming agricultural season, are of a far more serious character. It is to be feared that if serious measures are not taken in time, the draining away of the labour force of the country may then lead to a diminution in agricultural production, for example, the area sown, etc., that may have deplorable consequences, especially if attended by unfavourable conditions in respect of weather and of the vegetation period.

"What is the way out of this position, which, serious enough at present, may in the future become positively critical, unless steps are taken to deal with the utmost possible energy and foresight with the questions in-

volved? The way out that we seek is to be found in a well-proportioned organisation of the whole economic life of the country, in complete elimination of all departmental jealousies, for example, friction in government departments, and above all in complete fusion of efforts on behalf of the army and efforts on behalf of the rear, since now it is not only the army, but the whole nation as well that is carrying on the war. In particular, it is above all necessary that there should be rational management of the nation's man power, that must be regarded not simply as a reservoir from which any amount of soldiers can be drawn without any particular attention having to be paid to economy, but as one single reserve, that has to be used with the utmost possible care in order to avoid disorganisation of the whole economic life of the nation. But it is evident that a well-ordered organisation of the whole economic life of the country, an organisation that would combine economy of resources with a maximum of effort, is possible only under certain politico-psychological conditions. An economic organisation of the nation, demanding, as it does, complete subordination of personal and class interests to the national task of carrying on the war, is possible only if a Government is created that enjoys the confidence of the nation and is in a position to appeal with the greatest possible internal authority to all persons and groups. Thus, the food question, on which the whole conduct of a war of unexampled dimensions in one way or another depends, inevitably raises in Russia the political

question. Unless this latter question is solved, the sacrifices that are demanded from the whole population for the further prosecution of the war in its third and fourth years, will be less and less willingly borne. It is, therefore, not surprising that the obstinacy of the Crown and those persons, partly dishonourable, partly mad and, in any case, more than narrow in outlook, who influence the Crown, should be explained by many as a consciously designed policy directed towards creating insuperable internal difficulties, and bringing about a state of feeling in the country that will make further prosecution of the war an impossibility. It is far more probable that the circles in question are guided by no such conscious Machiavellian calculation, but their obstinacy inevitably leads to this deplorable and shameful result, to which Russian patriots cannot and must not reconcile themselves."

Such were the two memoranda that Struve handed to Milner. From beginning to end they gave an accurate account of the state of affairs. Though I did my best to underline their importance, no one else paid any attention to them. The Mission drifted back in its Noah's Ark of allied representatives to the west, and Struve and his Committee were left to carry on, with the feeling that the delegates had returned to the west believing all that they should not have believed about Russia, and disbelieving all that they should have believed.

For some months more the work of the Committee

continued. After several unsuccessful attempts with the Conservatives, the Allies were at last able to make a satisfactory blockade agreement with the new liberal Government in Sweden. Struve and Nordmann, acting for the Committee, took a prominent part in the negotiations. Thanks mainly to their efforts, a comprehensive understanding was at last reached about the many questions that had so continuously irritated the Swedes and impeded the Allies. It was indeed a tragedy that Russia went out of the war within a few months of the ratification of an agreement that finally shut the eastern door upon Germany, and for the first time guaranteed to Russian industries the importation of the machinery, rubber and other raw materials that they so urgently needed.

About this time also the Committee was playing an important hand in the herring deal with Norway. The Allies, having failed to keep the Roumanian wheat harvest out of Austria, were rightly anxious to keep the Norwegian herring harvest out of Germany. If they were to succeed, they had to avoid the many traps that the Roumanian farmers had successfully set for them the previous year. It was decided, accordingly, not to attempt to bid against the Germans for the herrings, but rather to threaten a restriction of the export to Norway of the hemp, mineral oil and benzine without which the Norwegian fishing fleet could not operate. Faced with the dearth of fuel, nets and tackle, unless they sold their herrings at a fair price to the Allies, the Norwegian fishermen, it was rightly argued, would

sooner or later be forced to keep their herrings out of Germany. Russian hemp, being one of the chief raw materials at issue, was a very important card in the game, and it was left to Struve's Committee to hold it up until the right moment. The transaction was finally completed, and the Allies found themselves in possession of several millions worth of second-class herrings. So far, they had succeeded, for at the moment the Germans would have given the eyes of their heads for even inferior fish. The next phase though it does not concern the Restriction of Enemy Supplies Committee, or come within the scope of this book, was more difficult. What was to happen to the herrings now they had been bought? For the next four or five years the British Government played a game of Old Maid with the fish that, now that Russia was out of the war, nobody wanted. Never very good, the herrings had not unexpectedly deteriorated in the course of time.

As long after as 1922, when I was acting as Deputy Commissioner of the League of Nations for the relief of Russian Refugees, I was offered by the Coalition Government a consignment of these same herrings for the thirty thousand destitute Russians in Constantinople. It was unlucky for the British Ministers that they made the offer to the one Englishman who knew the history of the Norwegian herrings from the very beginning. I refused the offer and, after many delays, succeeded in obtaining £10,000 instead of the fish.

Like every other war organisation in Russia the Committee came to an end during 1917. Struve went to the White Armies in the South, and did what he could to help their commanders with advice upon economic questions, and Nordmann escaped to western Europe. German troops overran the corn districts of Southern Russia, and made the restriction of supplies a futility that needed no supervision.

The Committee and its work were submerged in the general collapse. Their record, however, must not be forgotten by the historians of the blockade. If it had not been for the small group of Russian intellectuals, that composed it, the chain of the blockade would have been destroyed by a dangerous breach in its links, and the Central Empires left free to supply themselves from the north and east, when the doors of the south and west had been effectively bolted and barred.

# X

## THE ALLIED NOAH'S ARK

"It was now March, and the days grown considerably longer, and the weather, at least tolerable, so the other travellers began to prepare sleds to carry them over the snow."

Defoe. *The Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe.*

# CHAPTER X

## THE ALLIED NOAH'S ARK

In the middle of May, 1916, Sir George Buchanan disclosed to me a highly confidential message. Lord Kitchener was to make a visit to Russia, and confer with the Emperor as to the conduct of the war. Outside a very small circle of Embassy personnel and high Russian officials no one was to know of this projected journey. Naturally, I said not a word about what he had told me to a single soul. No less naturally, I was greatly astonished when at a cosmopolitan dinner party in a few days' time, I heard the visit discussed as a subject of general Petrograd interest. If it was so freely debated in the Russian capital, it was, I felt sure, no secret in Berlin.

The origin of the visit was equally well known. The Emperor knew that all was not well on the Russian front, but as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army he resented the constant suggestions for conducting the war that were made to him by allied diplomats acting on the instructions of their Governments. Was he not the Commander-in-Chief of the greatest allied army? What right or, indeed, what knowledge had these foreign officials to tell him

how to manage his military affairs? To one who was very sensitive about his military position the advice of politicians and diplomats seemed both unprofitable and impertinent. The advice of a great soldier like Kitchener was in a different category. The name of Kitchener still represented to the Emperor all that was best in military leadership, and most efficient in military organisation. Whilst, therefore, as Emperor he was delighted to welcome a great Englishman, as Commander-in-chief of the Russian Army he was equally ready to accept as one soldier the advice of another. With the Emperor in this mood conspicuous results might have been effected by the visit.

I can picture Kitchener inspecting the Russian front. He would have talked incessantly, but all the while he would have been absorbing every detail of the command and administration of the Russian army. He would have instantly realised the harm that divided counsels and political discontent were inflicting on the national effort. And in his cunning and confidential way he would have told the Emperor how this or that change would lessen the strain, and improve the chance of victory. I am certain from what the Emperor himself said to me that Kitchener's advice would have been taken, and that as a result the great catastrophe of 1917 might at least have been postponed. The tragedy of the dark night off the Scottish coast dealt one of the heaviest blows that the Russian people suffered during the whole course of the war. Thenceforth, Russian affairs jolted from bad to worse, and day by day became embedded in a deep rut

from which the hope of escape steadily diminished.

It was in these circumstances that the Allies decided that some effort must be made to check the spread of defeatism in Russia. They were right. It was essential that their eastern Ally should be able to take a full share in the final offensive that was being planned to end the war. If Russia dropped out, the transport of German troops to the west would inevitably create a formidable crisis for the western armies. So far, indeed, these contingencies were correctly envisaged in London and Paris. But here, again, was another instance of a good idea ruined by faulty execution. By a line of reasoning that was altogether too simple for the subtlety of the Russian mind, the British and French Governments assumed that because the Emperor had been ready to welcome advice through the mouth of Lord Kitchener, he was equally ready to welcome it through the medium of an allied Mission. Neither the Emperor, nor the Russian Government, nor the Russian people wanted an allied Mission. Munitions they needed, the military advice of a great soldier like Kitchener or Foch they needed, but a large company of British, French, and Italian politicians, soldiers and experts was nothing more than an irritating embarrassment to them in the hour of their trial.

The Russians were, however, too polite to refuse the Allies' proposal. Let the Mission come by all means, and they would at least prevent it from doing any harm. The simplest way of achieving this object was to prevent it doing anything at all, and the politest way of arresting

its activities was to drown it in a series of banquets and ceremonial visits.

It was in these unpropitious circumstances that the Mission arrived one morning in Petrograd after a long and adventurous journey over the Arctic Ocean to Alexandrovsk and the newly opened Murman Railway.

The station was full of Ambassadors, Generals and officials in uniform, and a line of carriages waited outside for the transport of the distinguished guests to their hotels. The official who had made the arrangements told me with a satisfaction that was justified by a careful study of the protocol, that "the first carriage was to take the Lords." He was obviously shocked and disappointed, when I suggested to him that whilst, no doubt, it was suitable that Lord Milner should go in the first carriage, the chiefs of the French and Italian Missions might object to the precedence that he had assigned to Sir Henry Wilson's two junior assistants, Duncannon and Brooke.

It was evident that the assembled company expected a dramatic exit from the train of great men clad in gold lace and full dress. Instead, the first traveller to emerge was a jovial friend and constituent of mine, a member of the Chelsea Conservative Club whose profession was that of a Foreign Office messenger. The rest of the party were not feeling their best; the arrangements for the visit, so impressive in Petrograd, had broken down in the unsympathetic atmosphere of the polar regions; the journey had been protracted and

uncertain, the carriages unbearably cold.

When once they were arrived, there began the usual *chassé-croisé* of official visits, long talks about the agenda of the Conference and an interminable series of official luncheons and dinners. As none of the many visitors except Lord Revelstoke talked or understood Russian, my staff was busily engaged in translating reports and in helping with the arrangements.

From the very first, Lord Milner abandoned all hope. Stoically and despairingly he set his teeth, and went through the luncheons and dinners that had been arranged for him. Only at Moscow did he look like going on strike, for there, the mayoral luncheon developed without break into a *thé d'honneur*, the *thé d'honneur* into dinner, and the dinner into a midnight supper.

Alone of the party Henry Wilson seemed to enjoy himself. In any great capital he would have been in the best of spirits, but in Petrograd, he had the added pleasure of the company of one of his best friends, Général de Castelnau, whilst Russia, though a disconcerting ally, was certainly a very interesting country. Anxious to make the most of his visit, he rightly determined to see as much as possible of Russian life. When, therefore, the talk and the banquets ended, he would go to the ballet or the opera. Having one evening been presented to the various stars, he determined to give a supper party in their honour. Here, however, he found himself up against a tiresome regulation under which all the restaurants were closed at eleven

o'clock. What could be done, and how could the supper party be arranged? Not for the first time recourse was had to my office as the one organisation that was likely to be able to make an arrangement that was outside the regular protocol. Accordingly, upon a document that I made to look as official as possible, I presented an application to the Governor of Petrograd for permission to keep the Bear Restaurant open all night on the ground that "General Sir Henry Wilson, being so fully occupied with the affairs of the Conference during the day, had no other opportunity of meeting the friends with whom he wished to hold important discussions." The Governor could not refuse so reasonable a request. The restaurant was kept open all night, and a most successful supper party gave the General some idea of Petrograd night life.

If there was no reason why the Conference should ever have begun, there was certainly no reason why it should ever have ended. The Russians were prepared to keep up their hospitality as long as vodka and caviar lasted, and everyone liked Sir Henry Wilson and Général de Castlenau. Lord Milner, on the other hand, became more and more anxious for the termination of this strange adventure. I had seen him many times and discussed with him at length the state of the country. I had given him reports that had reached me from completely reliable sources proving conclusively the gravity of the internal crisis through which Russia was passing. I had introduced him to Russian intellectuals who, as I thought, would tell him in language

that would appeal to him, the real state of affairs. Try as I would, however, I could not induce him to realise the difference between the well-ordered system of the west and the broken-down machinery of the east. The world of Russia was so different from the world of Whitehall that there seemed to be no common basis of thought or action upon which he could take his stand. What in any case could he do in this turmoil of endless hospitality, and in a country that he did not pretend to understand? Tired and depressed, he resigned himself to conversations and reports that he must have known were not worth the time and trouble that he was compelled to give to them.

At last, however, the day of departure was fixed and the preparations begun for the homeward journey. By this time, the Germans knew all about the Conference in general, and in particular about its voyage across the North Sea and the Arctic Ocean. The return journey, therefore, being deprived of the safeguards of secrecy and suddenness, presented both difficulty and danger. After protracted discussion, it was decided in the interests of safety to make a public announcement that the delegates would return by Scandinavia and Bergen, but that before their departure they would visit the chief provincial cities of Russia. In reality, the Mission was to return direct to Murmansk by train, and thence to England by the Arctic route. I had, unfortunately, been ill again for several months, and it was decided that Lady Maud and I should both return with the delegates.

The night before our departure a farewell banquet was given to the military representatives of the Conference by the Minister of War. I do not know whether it was because the Russians were glad to be rid of the Allies, or the Allies glad to be returning to the west, but it was certainly one of the most unconventional dinners that I have ever attended. I shall always remember the sight of a senior Russian officer valsing by himself in and out of the tables to the strains of a regimental band.

Late the next night, we all met together at the station to start upon the return journey. My wife was the only lady of the company, and readers of Sir Henry Wilson's *Memoirs* will remember his reference to her in his account of the journey. The train, thanks to our representations, was much more comfortable than the train that had brought the mission, and the restaurant was in the hands of the Imperial Household.

In theory, the Murman Railway had been working regularly for some months. In practice, an opening ceremony had been held at which the Ministers of Communications and of Marine had quarrelled as to who should perform it, and a few selected trains had passed over it at rare intervals. The permanent way was constantly subsiding into the White Sea, and at one point, according to rumour, ran over an embankment made out of Oliver Locker-Lampson's armoured cars. Few travellers had made the journey over it, and as ours was one of the rare journeys completed before the end of the war, the details may perhaps be

worth recording. I will accordingly describe it in the words of a letter that I wrote on my return to one of my Intelligence chiefs.

*The Journey from Petrograd to London.*

March, 1917.

" The great difficulty in getting the Allied Conference away from Petrograd was to keep the date secret. As the Conference was composed of from thirty to forty delegates and an army of Russian A.D.C.'s, and English, French and Italian servants, to say nothing of perfect mountains of luggage, it was impossible to keep Petrograd in the dark as to when they left the Hotel Europe, in which they were all housed. Moreover, there were several different departments all dealing with the Conference and all anxious to take part in the arrangements for their stay and journey. Eventually, my suggestion was taken that the final arrangements should be made exclusively by the Military General Staff. After several meetings, therefore, with the Chief of Staff, we evolved the following plan. Three days before the date of departure paragraphs were to appear in the Petrograd press stating that as delegates had come to certain decisions to which it was necessary to obtain the approval of their respective Governments, they had agreed to adjourn for some days. Pending the answers to their enquiries they would utilise the adjournment for visiting the various fronts and the centres of industry in the interior of Russia.

In the meantime, certain officers, *e.g.*, Lt.-General Sir John Hanbury-Williams, Colonel Thomson, Brigadier-General Poole, and others who were remaining permanently in Russia, would continue to stay in the Hotel Europe, as if they were awaiting the return of the other members of the Conference.

"Another arrangement that I had to make was to persuade the Russian Government to increase the train accommodation. When the Conference arrived at Romanov, they found that the Grand Duke Cyril had gone off in one of the trains, and that there was not room for the delegates, except at great inconvenience, in the only remaining train. I was successful in getting the Chief of the General Staff to provide two trains, one for the English delegates, the other for the French and Italian. The arrangement was that our train should leave the Nicholas station at eleven, whilst the other left the Tsarskoe station about an hour earlier, and that both trains, after going off in opposite directions, should eventually be brought round by cross lines on to the Murman Railway. Lady Maud and I purposely arrived at the Nicholas station about an hour before the train started, as, being contraband, she did not wish to be too conspicuous.

"Gradually, the members of the Mission arrived, and with them a few Russian officers to see them off. Lord Milner, worn out with the work of the Conference and the worries of its details, arrived very late—indeed, after the time for which the train was fixed to start. The train was exceedingly comfortable, with plenty of



The Station Taxis



Lady Maud Hoare and Général de Castelnau

THE RETURN OF THE ALLIED MISSION

room for everyone. The restaurant was in the hands of a Tartar chef who had always been attached to important official journeys. Except for the engineer, and the chief of the train, the only other Russians on board were Lieut. Abaza, the Assistant Naval Attaché in London, and Colonel Ivas Oglu, the chief of the contre-espionage section of the General Staff.

"Everyone had a coupé to himself and, as in my carriage there were Sidney Clive, Brooke, Layton of the Ministry of Munitions, Admiral Jerram and George Clerk of the Foreign Office, it was both comfortable and agreeable. Lady Maud had a coupé in the coach that Milner, Revelstoke and Henry Wilson were using.

"The journey was peaceful and pleasant. Although the country is altogether monotonous, nothing in fact but snow and fir trees, the weather was beautifully bright, and the train, considering the newness of the line, went very smoothly. Once or twice during the day we stopped for an hour or two at some important point. At one such place, Soroka, a port on the White Sea, it was arranged that we should stop half an hour. However, Milner and a party went off for a walk at the rate of five miles an hour to see the port, and to the dismay of the engine driver and the engineer of the train, were not seen again for two hours, when they reappeared panting with the pace that Milner had set. We afterwards learnt that the Chiefs of the French and Italian Mission had the same indifference to time, for at Kola, a few miles from Romanov, they

also stopped for two hours as they wished to go for a reindeer drive in the country to collect reindeer antlers. These delays, however, made no difference, for the trains did the journey more quickly and smoothly than had been expected, with the result that we arrived at Romanov at nine o'clock on Sunday morning after leaving Petrograd on Wednesday evening. This, so far as I know, is much the quickest journey that has ever been made, or is likely to be made on the railway. Although we were some way within the Polar Circle, it did not seem so cold as one might expect. When we reached Romanov, it was dark and windy, and the whole place looked very desolate. I walked about for a short time with Admiral Jerram and had a look at the primitive sheds, that will no doubt eventually become a wharf.

"We then travelled down to the port in sledges where we found Ilchester and Custance, two stranded King's Messengers, who had left Petrograd many days before, had found their ship already departed, and had been compelled to stay on board the *Glory*, one of our war ships, for more than a week. We next boarded a tender and after passing through the ships of many nations in the harbour, one of them a Roumanian, we arrived at the *Kildonan Castle*. As the *Kildonan Castle* had been in the Kola Inlet for a month, it was practically frozen solid and, in spite of many fires and attempts to warm it, it was as cold as ice. About three hours after our arrival the French and Italians turned up. This made it possible for us to start that evening. Accord-

ingly at about 4.30, with the *Vindictive* as our escort, we started off. When we got out of the inlet, the course was N.E., so far North in fact that for a time we were in latitude 74°. After a time we proceeded W., and eventually S., passing at some distance off the East coast of Iceland, and finally arriving *via* the Faroes and Shetlands at the Orkneys.

"The first two days were rough, and the *Vindictive* was tossing about a good deal, so much so that during the first night one of her men was washed overboard. It had been arranged that the *Shannon* should meet us when the *Vindictive* left us. Not willing to disclose position by any wireless messages, she failed to find us, however, for about twelve hours after she was expected. This made the Italians and French very nervous. They were the more delighted when they went on deck one morning and saw the *Shannon*—'*Enfin, le Shannon,*' as they gladly cried to each other.

"Our party was very pleasant, and everyone was on the best of terms. The most delightful member of it was Général de Castelnau. His entourage was typical of him: it consisted of an *officier d'ordonnance*, a Major Dubarry, a Protestant who for the last twenty years had done his month's annual training on the Général's Staff, and who usually alluded to his chief as 'Papa,' Castelnau's only surviving soldier son who is his A.D.C., and a magnificent person with a black beard and a fur coat, who was put down in the list as *Castelnau, soldat*, but who was actually the Marquis de Castelnau, the head of the family, and in civil life a Jesuit priest

in Egypt, whom Castelnau took with him ostensibly as his secretary, but really as his confessor. Henry Wilson had seen a great deal of the General for several years, as he had usually been with him at the French manœuvres. Wilson told us that during the manœuvres before the war he dined with him one night when the party consisted of eighteen people, namely, Castelnau himself, his family of thirteen, and four sons and daughters-in-law.

"The Italian of whom I saw most was Professor Gallante, the *Chef de Cabinet* of the Minister, Scialoja. I found to my surprise that he was the greatest Italian authority on Canon Law, and was at present engaged in writing a book upon English Church Law. At the beginning of the war he was Professor at the University of Innsbruck. His library was seized by the Austrians, and he then moved to Bologna where he became professor of Canon Law. He is greatly interested in Church questions, and in peace time is in the habit of coming to England for two or three months every year to study them.

"As our first day on board was the anniversary of Castelnau's arrival at Verdun, which resulted in the saving of the fortress, Henry Wilson proposed his health at dinner. This gave rise to an amusing incident, as Doumergue, the French Minister, was equally anxious to make a speech. The two rose simultaneously and began together. The soldier, however, defeated the civilian, and after two or three ineffectual beginnings of 'Il y a un an' Doumergue gave up.

Castelnau made a delightful answer, and came across to our table where we all drank his health.

"Our journey became more dangerous as we approached the beaten track. Our escort was accordingly strengthened by the arrival of the *Constant*, the latest vintage of light cruiser, and of two of the newest type of destroyer, the *Moon* and the *Munster*. We afterwards learned that there were other destroyers in the distance, one of which was unfortunately sunk by striking a mine.

"The only discomfort that we had on the ship was the periodical bursting of pipes as a result of their having been frozen at Romanov. Several people's cabins were flooded. Berkeley Sheffield and Gallante were twice flooded out. Gallante on one occasion had to be carried out by a sailor. Fortunately our cabins were all right. The stewards were all excellent, as they had been carefully selected from the pick of the Union Castle stewards for the voyage. Most evenings, the crew gave entertainments. These were rather a trial as there appeared to be no great talent on board. The Chaplain and the Paymaster got them up. The Chaplain greeted me with the remark that he had not seen me since my wedding, when he was a curate at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge.

"We were due to arrive at Scapa about eight on Friday morning. As, however, it became rougher the nearer we approached the Orkneys, and our escort was getting very much tossed about, we were some two hours late. We first sighted the Orkneys about seven. It was then very stormy and rainy. When

we reached the booms across the bay in which the fleet lies, the weather greatly improved, and, after being misty, became bright and sunny. It was most thrilling coming in through the booms and seeing the lines and lines of great ships looming up in the mist.

"We finally anchored in the middle of the newest battleships, and had close around us all the ships whose names are now household words. As we had to leave for Thurso at twelve, there was no time to go on board any of the ships. Admiral Beatty arrived about half-past ten in a smart motor launch with a polished brass funnel. He had with him the Captain of the Fleet, Captain Brand, and his Flag Lieutenant, Seymour. He came on board with his cap over one side of his face, and a great deal of theatrical manner that very much delighted the French and Italians.

"The arrangement was that the Chiefs of the Mission were to be taken by him on a destroyer to Scrabster, whilst the rest of us were to go upon the ferry boat that plies between the fleet and Thurso. We left the *Kildonan Castle* at about twelve, after saying good-bye to the very delightful Captain Wharton, and after mutual cheers from the two steamers. Our journey to Thurso took us through another bay in which were lying innumerable auxiliary ships of strange and various types. Though the passage was very rough, particularly as we passed some of the islands, nobody was any the worse; in fact, we played bridge most of the way with the R.N.R. Lieutenant who was in command, and who was convinced the whole time that Berkeley Sheffield,

being the only Englishman in mufti, was our chaplain.

"Our passage took about two hours and we finally arrived at a small landing stage about a mile and a half out of Thurso. There, we found the Captain of the port, Captain Meredith, and several motors that took us to the station. After finding out about the train, everybody began to walk up and down the streets of the town, to the amusement and surprise of the inhabitants, who were completely bewildered by the mixture of English, Russian, French, and Italian uniforms, to say nothing of the arrival of a woman in the leave boat. When I went into the Post Office to send a telegram, the languages of the four Allies were all to be heard. Lady Maud, in the meanwhile, had gone off with Brooke to call upon Mrs. Meredith. I joined her later and found an enormous tea waiting for all the principal members of the Mission. The chiefs of the Mission soon arrived from their destroyer. They were all delighted to be upon mainland. Castelnau, in fact, had refused to telegraph his safe arrival from Scapa, and said that he would wait until he was really settled upon dry land. He was more delightful than ever at tea, and looked most pleasant in the very Scotch surroundings, in his blue uniform and two large stars on his tunic.

"Our train left about four. The poor station-master had completely lost his head from the invasion of so many distinguished people. I had left my despatch bag with him earlier in the afternoon, and, when I went to get it, I found him

locked in his room after giving up all attempts to cope with the special train and the many people on the platform. I heard afterwards that he had made one last attempt to maintain his authority by demanding that Duncannon should give him the full names and regiments of the whole party, since he had instructions to fill up forms for all officers travelling in uniform. Duncannon's answer was, I imagine, the cause of his taking refuge in the station-master's room.

"Considering that it was the Highland Railway, our train was quite comfortable. A restaurant was put on at Lairg, and a splendid array of sleeping cars at Inverness. We were first told that we should arrive at Euston at 3 on Saturday afternoon. The various engine drivers, however, who joined the train at different points, hurried up so much that we looked like getting there at twelve. George Clerk had, therefore, to persuade them to moderate their zeal, and to allow us to have luncheon before alighting. When we finally arrived at Euston at about two, we found various people on the platform, the French and Italian Ambassadors, Lady Brooke, Amery and others. We then had a most tender farewell with all the French and Italians. Castelnau in particular made a beautiful speech to Lady Maud, in which he expressed the hope that her 'star might always shine brightly and watch over any future journeys she might make as safely as it had brought them across the Arctic Ocean.'"

So ended a curious episode in the history of the war.

The Allies were mistaken in sending such a Mission at all; the members of the Mission were equally mistaken in almost all the conclusions that they reached about the Russian front and the state of Russia. The ink on the optimistic reports that they wrote on the *Kildonan Castle* was scarcely dry when the news reached us in England of the outbreak of the Revolution.

# XI

## TWO HONOURABLE STATESMEN

"Diplomacy: The management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist's skill or address in the conduct of international intercourse and negotiations."

Dr. James A. H. Murray. *A New English Dictionary.*

# CHAPTER XI

## TWO HONOURABLE STATESMEN

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance of personality in public affairs. History, geography and economics can each be assigned its full influence upon human events, but the factor that gives the bias to great movements is in nine cases out of ten personal. It was the personal friendship of Lord Grey, Paul Cambon and Bertie that transformed an official agreement into a close friendship between England and France. It was two diplomats whose personal associations removed from Anglo-Russian relations the mutual suspicion that no amount of paper agreements could have eradicated.

Throughout the critical six years from 1909 to 1915, Sazonov and Buchanan never ceased to work with each other as closely and unreservedly as if they had been citizens of the same country and members of the same diplomatic corps. Neither forgot the outlook of his own country; indeed, neither even threw off the prejudices of his own service. If either had lost his national individuality, their relations could never have been as sincere as they were, nor could their work have been so useful. It is easy for an Ambassador, or even

a Foreign Minister to become so deeply immersed in the affairs of the country to which he is accredited, or in questions of world politics, as to lose touch with his own country. It is, therefore, all the more remarkable to find at one and the same time in Petrograd a typical Russian as Foreign Minister and a typical Englishman as British Ambassador who could worthily represent their country's interests and none the less work together for a common purpose.

Of all the Russian public men I knew Sazonov the best. For many years he had been a close personal friend of Birkbeck and the introduction that I took with me to Russia at once put me into close relations with him.

Before I had been twenty-four hours in Petrograd, I found an invitation from Madame Sazonov asking me to lunch with them quietly at the Ministry of Foreign affairs. It was my first entry into Russian society, and I even now recall my shyness at walking through a long suite of reception rooms and coming in, unannounced, at the luncheon party. Once arrived, however, I found myself in the presence of as attractive a host and hostess as any guest could desire.

Sazonov was a small man with a little beard, a prominent nose and oriental looking eyes. He came of good Russian stock and numbered amongst his ancestors one of the heroes of the Moscow campaign. Having entered the diplomatic service he had passed successfully from post to post, and since 1910 had held the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. From the very be-

ginning of our friendship he struck me as a man of quick tongue, alert mind and very sensitive temperament. Even in ordinary conversation he would not content himself with colourless talk, but freely, and sometimes almost irritably, said what he thought of men and events. I remember, for instance, asking his opinion of a well-known allied diplomat and being answered, "Ce n'est pas un diplomate, c'est un désastre." A minister who did not hesitate to give such pointed expression to what he was thinking at the time, could not fail to make both friends and enemies. In Sazonov's case this freedom from diplomatic reserve was the very quality that helped him most in his conduct of Anglo-Russian relations.

My first luncheon party was to develop into a friendship that lasted until his death, and I had ample opportunity of studying not only his policy but also his character. The early impression that I formed of his transparent sincerity was steadily strengthened at every subsequent meeting that I had with him.

Madame Sazonov was the ideal wife for a Foreign Minister. For many years she had been connected with great affairs. Her brother-in-law was Stolypin, her brother a Minister, and both in Rome and in London she had helped her husband in a career that eventually brought him to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When I came to know her, she was deeply engaged in war work of every kind. More than once I went with her to see her hospitals, and to assist in the welcomes that she and her friends were organising for the hopelessly

wounded prisoners who were from time to time repatriated from the enemy countries.

In 1916 there was still a serious dearth of surgical appliances for war cripples, and I accordingly obtained many particulars from Roehampton that enabled her to introduce improvements into the Russian hospitals.

Like her husband, she not only spoke English perfectly, but sympathetically understood the English point of view. She was glad, she told me, to live in the one house in Petrograd, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that had open English fires. She evidently liked the English, and was most anxious to hear what I could tell her about war conditions in England, and particularly about Red Cross and hospital work. Altogether, a notable lady, sociable, sympathetic and very competent. Sazonov was fortunate to have her as his wife, and she as fortunate to have him as her husband.

Now that the stage upon which Sazonov and Buchanan were acting has been destroyed, it is easy to underrate, and even to forget the part that they played. Since the revolution I have heard many criticisms of Sazonov and his policy. Even a Conservative statesman like Lord Curzon failed to appreciate the real value of his work. It is, therefore, worth remembering that, unlike several of his contemporaries, he was right upon each of the big issues that were raised during his tenure of office, and that he did not shirk the risk of taking decisions upon them.

As soon as he became Foreign Minister, in 1910, he realised the drift of European politics, and devoted

his energies to the vitally urgent task of strengthening the Triple Entente against the threatening aggression of the Triple Alliance. Knowing England, he was aware of the deep-rooted suspicion that the British public felt of Russian policy in Asia and of Russian methods of government in Europe and Siberia. If the Entente was to remain solid, the pretext for this suspicion must be removed. It was with this object in view that he was constantly attempting to settle the question that at that time chiefly embroiled Anglo-Russian relations, the question of our respective zones of influence in Persia. His judgment was sound in gauging at once the factors in a European situation of great danger and in realising that the very foundation of Russian security was the Triple Entente, and that any question that embittered Anglo-Russian relations must be amicably settled.

It was from the same point of view that he approached the formidable problem of the Straits. Here, again, was a question that had stirred up wars and rumours of wars, and might at any moment break the Entente between the two countries. Although by upbringing a Slavophil and a nationalist, he himself had never wished for a Russian Constantinople. On the other hand, he intensely desired a Russian control of the Straits. But even this object he did not think worth obtaining at the risk of a breach in the Triple Entente. Seeing, however, that sooner or later the question was certain to be raised, he was wise enough to face it at the very beginning of the war, and to start at once conversations

on the subject with Buchanan and M. Paléologue. A Minister with less courage or faultier judgment would have seized upon the excuse of the war for the purpose of postponing a decision upon so embarrassing a problem. It was to Sazonov's credit that he did not hesitate to take the nettle in his hand, and that, chiefly as a result of his frank relations with Buchanan, he was able to obtain a working agreement that satisfied all three Governments, Russian, British and French.

In this fundamental conception of the Entente as the sole defence against German aggression, Sazonov proved himself to be a Foreign Minister of clear judgment. But it was in his general attitude towards the war that his record showed at its best. Essentially a man of peace, he did not want war. He knew that the events of 1905 had shaken Russia to its foundation and that even in 1914 the country was not prepared for a great struggle. Although, therefore, Austrian policy in the Balkans gave constant provocation to Russia from 1909 to 1914, Sazonov, often in the teeth of Russian criticism, threw his influence into the scale of peace. Even up to the eleventh hour he did not abandon his efforts to avert war. It was only when the Austrian and German mobilisations were threatening the very existence of Russia that he admitted that war was inevitable. It was then the moment for no half measures, and, just as he had striven for peace, so when war was once inevitable, he insisted upon the need for efficient measures to carry it through.

There is no more dramatic page in the history of 1914

than that which tells of his interview, first with Sukhomlinov, the Minister for War, and next with the Emperor, who was still reluctant to order general mobilisation. Sazonov himself described these interviews to me, and he has since recounted them in his volume of *mémoires*. I believe myself that, if he had not insisted upon general mobilisation on July 30th, the Emperor would have continued to hesitate, and Russian mobilisation, an undertaking of very formidable difficulty, would never have been possible. All Sazonov's best qualities came into play that day at Peterhof, his sensitive temperament, his quick judgment and his unshakable obstinacy when once his mind was made up. A smaller man would have avoided a decision and an opportunist would have contented himself with half measures. Although a Foreign Minister might well have shut himself up in his own Department with his despatches and telegrams, Sazonov took his courage in his two hands, and came boldly out into the valley of decision. It may confidently be said that the order that he forced the Emperor to give, was one of the decisive events not only of Russian but also of European history.

When it gradually became known that Sazonov was leading the opposition in the Russian Cabinet to Goremykin and Stürmer, British public opinion erroneously assumed that he was a liberal in politics. No one could, in point of fact, have been a stronger conservative. He could not bear liberal ideologues, and I recall his contempt for a British liberal member of Parliament

who came to Petrograd in 1915 to make rhetorical speeches, and incidentally to do some private business in his own interest. When he strove for Polish autonomy, he was thinking not so much of self-determination as of the expediency of freeing Holy Russia from an alien and non-Orthodox encumbrance. If he opposed religious propaganda in non-Orthodox countries it was not because he was a latitudinarian, but because, being a devout son of the Orthodox Church, he was convinced that Russia and Orthodoxy excluded the idea of non-Russian members of the Russian Church. Perhaps it was because he was so thoroughly a Russian conservative that he hesitated to demand Constantinople and Santa Sofia for his country. As a Russian statesman he realised that Russia must have her outlet to the warm waters, but as a Russian Conservative he was nervous of including in the Empire a non-Russian Church that might hold an even higher place in the hearts of the faithful than the caves of Kiev or the cathedrals of Moscow.

In the summer of 1916 he might well have thought that he had achieved the big objectives that he had set before himself. It was still regrettably true that Rasputin and his clique were keeping their influence at Court, but, in spite of intrigue and opposition, he had succeeded in settling the Persian question with England, and in obtaining British and French agreement to the ultimate control of the Straits by Russia. True, he had been forced to yield to nationalist propaganda, and to insist upon the inclusion of the city

of Constantinople in the allied pledge. But it was none the less a triumph of both persistence and personality that he had won for his country the satisfaction of a demand that she had made since the days of Peter the Great. Even Polish autonomy seemed within his reach, for the Emperor had authorised him to prepare a Bill that would have given the Poles dominion status in their own country.

At the very moment when he seemed to be gathering the fruits of his six years work at the Foreign Office, he fell a victim to the "Dark Forces" and saw his policy reversed and finally frustrated. Stürmer, an intriguer of doubtful reputation, German by origin, for his grandfather had been Napoleon's Austrian gaoler at St. Helena, and a foreigner by instinct in his indifference to Russian tradition and Russian aspirations, supplanted him, and the swift sequence of events had already begun that was to force Russia back into the frontiers of mediæval Muscovy. If there had been anything dramatic in the make up of this nervous, sensitive and alert Foreign Minister, this sudden change of fortune both for himself and for his country would rank amongst the tragic events of contemporary history.

As I left Russia within a few days of the outbreak of the revolution, I had no chance of seeing Sazonov during the obscure and futile period of the Provisional Government. Whether from remorse or from a desire to have him out of Russia, the Emperor had appointed him Ambassador in London in succession to Count Benckendorff. Almost at the moment when he was

leaving Petrograd for his new post, the Provisional Government cancelled the appointment, and it was as a refugee that he eventually found his way to western Europe.

Like many of his compatriots he retired to Paris, where for more than a year he was still regarded by the Allies as the spokesman of anti-Bolshevik Russia. As I was back in London, I was able to renew my friendship with him, and for the next two years I saw him at fairly regular intervals. He was playing a very difficult hand. The Russia that he represented had broken in pieces, the agreements that he had made with the Allies had vanished in smoke. The big three of the Peace Conference, Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau, were instinctively prejudiced against the old Russia, and in their heart of hearts regarded the elimination of the Russian Empire as an act of providence that freed them from embarrassing obligations. What could a *ci-devant* Foreign Minister, however high his former reputation, hope to achieve in this unpropitious atmosphere? Perhaps, a more subtle and versatile politician would have more readily adapted himself to his changed circumstances. Perhaps, a more cunning schemer might have insinuated himself into the counsels of the peace makers. Perhaps, a less sensitive man could have bluffed the Allies, and ended the game with nothing in his hand, but something on the score sheet. With Sazonov—such was his rigid sincerity—there could be neither change nor transaction. In Paris and London he was the same man

with the same ideas and the same method of expressing them as he had been at Petrograd or Tsarskoe Selo. When the Allies asked him to accept things as they were, Sazonov refused. When they spoke of new Russian frontiers, his only reply was that Russia had of set purpose acquired her existing frontiers, and that, even if she temporarily lost them, she would be forced to acquire them again.

Thinking that I might help to reconcile these divergent points of view, I induced him to spend some time at my London house during the summer of 1919. It was the moment when the three anti-Bolshevik armies seemed within reach of Petrograd and Moscow. From the east, Kolchak had advanced within striking distance of European Russia, from the south, Denikin was moving towards Moscow at a startling speed, and in the north Yudenich and his ragged army were threatening Petrograd. So conspicuous, indeed, had been the anti-Bolshevik successes that the British Government had given *de facto* recognition to Kolchak's Government, and was showing itself more ready to help Denikin in the south.

It seemed to many of us that no more favourable moment was likely to arrive for consolidating the anti-Bolshevik forces. If, however, the Allies, and particularly the British Government, were to adopt a more definitely anti-Bolshevik policy, two undertakings seemed to be inevitable. In the first place, Kolchak and the other anti-Bolshevik leaders must agree to the summoning of a Constituent Assembly that would settle

the future government of Russia, and secondly, they must accept the independence of Poland, Finland and the Baltic states.

As to the Constituent Assembly, there was some delay but no insurmountable difficulty. With Poland, the step from dominion status to sovereign independence was not so long as to make the anti-Bolshevik leaders hesitate, but when it came to Finland and the Baltic States, I found Sazonov adamant. What right, he asked, had a patriotic Russian to bargain over a single inch of Russian soil? What justification could he have for recognising the minute Baltic States that could not in his view exist for even a few years? How could he agree to Finnish independence, and as a result leave Petrograd defenceless from the sea against foreign invasion? I put it to him that events had already moved too quickly, and that, what he refused to admit, was already an accepted fact. When Poland had become independent and the Finnish Government was already in the hands of the Finns, and England and France were applauding the change, was it not quixotic to lose the chance of allied support for Kolchak and Denikin by insisting upon sovereign rights that had been altogether destroyed in the Bolshevik conflagration? In spite of my efforts Sazonov would not withdraw an inch from his ground. When he went to Lord Curzon at the Foreign Office, he might have been Pozzo di Borgo at the Congress of Vienna, or Gorchakov at the Congress of Berlin. Curzon, totally failing to understand Sazonov's personality, tried to deal with him as with a poor

relation who had come down in the world. Sazonov, equally indifferent both to Curzon's position and to his personality, retaliated as if he had been an experienced Nesselrode speaking to an ignorant Aberdeen. If I had hoped that some kind of agreement was possible between these two men, I was obviously doomed to disappointment. Sazonov was not prepared to compromise his opinion. The greatness of Russia was to him an article of faith, and nothing would induce him to take the remotest responsibility for diminishing it even on paper.

People will judge him according to their individual tastes. Many will say that he was wooden and narrow-minded, and that he lost a chance of enlisting the support of the Allies in the anti-Bolshevik cause. Let them at least before they register their judgment recall the wise acts of foreign policy for which he was responsible between 1909 and 1916. Should they not remember also his steady support of Polish autonomy in the early years of the war, and his immovable loyalty to Great Britain during the whole of his official career? If, in spite of this evidence, they are inclined to confirm their verdict against him, let them respect a loyal and upright man who even in the days of adversity refused to take any action that might discredit or diminish his country's greatness.

The last time that I saw him was at dinner in Paris. He had invited me to dine quietly at the Hotel Meurice, and I found myself, the only Englishman, with him and no less than five former Russian Ambassadors, each

of whose name had at one time been in the mouth of every diplomat. I had just been reading Pirandello's *Six Personnages en quête d'un Auteur*, and I could not help thinking of its application to the party before me. The Government that they represented had ceased to exist, the orders that they once wore are now chiefly seen in pawnbrokers' windows, the Russia that they served had been dashed into fragments. Let us, however, not forget the help that they gave us in a great crisis, and let us above all remember the man who stood in Russia for friendship with Britain, and represented all that was most honest and patriotic in the official life of his country.

# TWO STATESMEN

## Buchanan

The British Embassy was, as it should have been, on the English Quay. For more than a century the British Government had been the tenant of half the Soltykov palace. In 1916 a very old Princess Soltykova lived in the back of the palace. When the Revolution broke out, this remarkable old lady started off on foot to the Finnish frontier, and no one ever heard of her again.

The Embassy, that we knew, was a square, eighteenth century building, coloured, like so many Russian palaces, *sang de bœuf*. A chasseur named Yuri, from the Baltic Provinces, watched over the rather mean entrance, and from the ground floor to the roof the building was overcrowded by a staff that had necessarily increased tenfold during the war.

If I had been asked to draw a picture of a British Ambassador, I should have drawn Sir George Buchanan. Distinguished, detached, rather shy in manner, and good-looking in the style that was most admired twenty years before, he appeared in every particular to represent the ambassadorial type. When I came to know him better, his mentality seemed no less typical than his appearance. He was essentially a man of his profession, cautious almost to the point of nervousness, unexpansive, sometimes narrow-minded, but very conscientious,

very sincere, and most determined when once he had made up his mind. In ordinary times such a man would have left no mark upon contemporary history. In Petrograd he would have been remembered as one of many popular British Ambassadors, who had maintained pleasant relations between England and Russia and had played an agreeable part in Russian society. In London he would have joined the deserving and depressing company of public officials who, having served their country abroad in high posts, return to a life of quiet and obscure retirement at home. Both by instinct and training he had the obvious prejudices of his class. Politicians he detested, demagogues he mistrusted, new ideas and new movements he frankly disliked. Yet it was this man who was suddenly thrown into a troubled sea of intrigue and revolution, and who came through it with a reputation for sound judgment, honesty of purpose and unfaltering courage that abler men might well envy.

It must always be tempting for an Ambassador to swim with the tide of his own world. If he seeks a happy and dignified life, let him only accept as perfect everything that he finds in the country of his adoption, and let him tell the Foreign Office in London neither more nor less than Whitehall wishes to be told. Let him pull down the blinds upon the streets, and let him never depart from the routine that takes him from the Embassy to the Foreign Office and from the Foreign Office to the teas, the dinners and the balls of the capital. Such an one will leave a name against which no criticism

will be ventured, and an obituary notice that will be filled from start to finish with the details of his many decorations and successful career. Buchanan must have felt the temptation to this mode of life, for his inclinations were all against initiative, originality and adventure. It is to his credit that he forced himself from a sense of duty out of the rarefied atmosphere of an Embassy into the rough and tumble of the world outside.

The man who chiefly influenced him to look beyond the conventional path of routine diplomacy was Harold Williams, the most brilliant foreign correspondent that our generation has known. Of all British intellectuals, Williams most intimately understood the mentality of Russia. Indeed, his knowledge of Russia penetrated further, for he had entered into the very soul of the country. A linguist, who could talk more than thirty languages, and was possessed of an encyclopædic knowledge of the scores of Russian nationalities, he had for years past lived in the main stream of European politics and kept the closest contact with the various currents of Russian life. He had studied the Russian language and Russian literature from his boyhood, he had been Russian correspondent to three of the greatest English papers, he had lived with Struve and the Russian refugees at Stüttgart at the period of the 1905 revolution, and, best of all, he had married one of the most remarkable of Russian women of whom it was said that "there was only one man in the Cadet Party and she a woman."

Everyone in Petrograd knew Williams. When some detail about the local life or language of a remote tribe was required, Williams was the one man who could instantly give it. When two Papuans were being ill-treated in a Petrograd music hall, it was to Williams that the Government referred as an interpreter in the case. Mrs. Williams has herself described to me how she and her husband were summoned during dinner to the telephone to speak with Stolypin's *Chef de Cabinet.* As they were both conspicuously identified with the movement of the left, they feared lest the message might mean some police process against them. The message turned out to be an urgent request from the President of the Council.

"You are the only man in St. Petersburg," it was now Stolypin himself speaking, "who can talk to two Papuans. They complain that they have been badly treated by their employer. Will you go to their lodging and inquire into the case."

Williams at once agreed and went off to a remote street where he talked fluently to the two tattooed aborigines, who were cowering, completely naked, over a roasting fire.

I could add many other such stories to illustrate the cosmopolitan variety of his friendships and the omniscience of his linguistic knowledge.

After the outbreak of war, he joined the South-Western Army and, being able to talk Magyar, went as an interpreter with the only Russian division that crossed the Carpathians.

With 1915 came the dark days that forced every serious student of Russian affairs to think of the internal front, and it was then that Buchanan turned instinctively to him for political advice.

At first, their relations were reserved and somewhat suspicious. But, as time went on, scarcely an evening passed without a telephone conversation between the Ambassador and the correspondent.

When an Anglo-Russian Society was formed by Hugh Walpole, the sympathetic representative in Russia of the British Ministry of Information, it was Williams whom Buchanan constantly consulted about the details of its activities. When a closer contact was essential between the Embassy and the non-official classes, it was Williams who provided the bridge between them. Buchanan was instinctively nervous of any movements that had not been tabulated in the charts of his own personal experience. He disliked leaving his own entourage, and was ill at ease in the presence of strangers. It was Williams who pushed him into a wider circle.

I remember in particular one occasion that illustrated both Buchanan's shyness and Williams' political tact. When it was clear, in the autumn of 1916, that the forces of the left, even though they were temporarily suppressed by the reactionaries, were becoming more formidable, Williams asked Buchanan to make the acquaintance of some of the more moderate liberal leaders. The Ambassador was at first horrified at the idea of meeting men whom he regarded as revolu-

tionaries. Even when he was told that the only leaders, whom he would see, would be the Cadets, who were in many respects more reactionary than the ordinary English Conservatives, he only agreed with great reluctance. The occasion of the meeting was to be a luncheon of the newly formed Anglo-Russian Society, to which men like Milyukov and Maklakov were to be invited. 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. Moreover, the fact that Buchanan had forced himself into accepting Williams' advice showed both his sense of public duty, and his determination to obtain a better understanding of Russian affairs.

Step by step Buchanan came to realise more clearly the value of the forces that were working against reaction. Inadequate and disappointing as they often proved, the Cadet leaders and the moderate liberals stood for loyalty to the Allies and for war to the end. Buchanan

showed sound judgment in entering into relations with them.

Ignorant and prejudiced critics have charged him with fomenting revolution by his cautious approach towards a few moderate liberals. In actual fact, Buchanan was as rigid a Conservative as Sazonov and almost childishly suspicious of liberal movements. And it was solely and only with the object of preventing revolution that he entered into relations with the men, who were intent upon removing the scandals that were filling the country with discontent. His only aim was to keep the Russian Army in the field until the end of the war, and to enable it to give the greatest possible help to the allied effort. Apart from his personal dislike of almost all change, he was convinced of the utter impossibility of carrying on a war and a revolution at the same time. Any influence that he exercised, he consequently threw into the scales of law and order. So far from encouraging revolution, he did everything in his power to stop it.

Being very shy and sensitive, he must have intensely disliked the part that events often forced him to play. No public man could have been more reluctant than he to come to the front of the stage. Yet by a curious irony he was compelled time after time to leave the cloistered life of diplomacy, and to take his part in public controversy.

At the very beginning of the war a dangerous propaganda, organised, it was said, by Witte, was weakening the allied cause in influential Russian circles. Buchanan, breaking through the tradition of his silent service, came

out into the open, and made a public speech that resounded from one end of Russia to the other, against the instigators of this treacherous movement.

I can add another instance of his courage from my own experience. In the summer of 1916 I called his attention to a gross and libellous attack upon the British nation, and particularly upon the British army, in a well known organ of the Black Hundred. As soon as I made it clear to him that the article was important not so much for what it actually said as for the dark and disloyal forces that it represented, he agreed to act. His first protest to the Foreign Office made little effect upon Stürmer, who was one of the editor's friends. But Buchanan was not to be pushed aside, and within a day or two he had the editor on his knees at the British Embassy making a personal apology and an abject withdrawal. The incident, coming in the late summer of 1916, made a considerable impression on public opinion, and served to strengthen Buchanan's position as the principal defender of the allied cause in Russia.

If he hated controversy, and particularly public controversy, he equally hated interference with things that did not concern him. By instinct, therefore, he would never have embroiled himself in the internal affairs of the country to which he was accredited. Particularly would he have shunned all intervention in the affairs of an autocracy that he believed suited Russia and in the policy of an Emperor whose power was supreme. Each time, therefore, that he was forced in the interests of the Allies to make a request or a complaint that

touched upon Russian internal affairs, he went through many searchings of heart. This kind of intervention was always repugnant to him, and it was especially repugnant to him when it involved protest or complaint to the Emperor himself. It is a testimony to his character that time after time he braced himself to this unpleasant task. Now, it would be a request to the Emperor to allow a patriotic refugee like Burtsev to return to Russia, now, it would be a plea for greater sympathy with the discontents of the Russian nation, now, it would be a brave and unequivocal demand for Ministers whom the country could trust. Each complaint became more difficult and irksome than the last, as Stürmer and his associates became more suspicious and the Court circle more resentful. Yet Buchanan did not shirk his duty. In January, 1917, with only the most grudging support of the British Foreign Office and in the teeth of Russian opposition, he insisted upon an audience at which he spared the Emperor none of the unpleasant and disquieting facts that the reactionaries were hiding from him.

When the revolution came, he was equally honest and candid with the new Ministers. Being still accredited to the Russian Government, he refused to be drawn into plots against them, but realising their many weaknesses, did not hesitate to speak his mind to them. The malicious story, spread by the reactionaries whom he had displeased, that but for his inaction the Imperial family would have escaped from Russia, obviously improbable from his personal affection for the Emperor,

has now proved to be groundless. Even when Whitehall and Downing Street were withholding from him the support to which he was entitled, he still went doggedly on with his task of keeping Russia in the Alliance.

At length Mr. Arthur Henderson, despatched as the result of an almost incredibly foolish line of reasoning, arrived in Petrograd to supplant him. Out of this curious episode no one except Mr. Henderson emerges with credit. For the ministerial Balaam who had come to curse, stayed to bless. Finding Buchanan indispensable he kept his letters of credence in his pocket and immediately returned to London.

Looking back at this sequence of events, I have often wondered whether or not Buchanan should have resigned when the authorities in London ignored his advice and doubted his competence. As a theoretical question, it is arguable that an Ambassador carries out the policy of his Government in the same way that any other civil servant carries it out, and that in the event of his disagreeing with it, makes his protest, but none the less fulfils his instructions. It is, on the other hand, arguable that upon great and high occasions the division may be so deep and wide between them that no honest man can continue in his post. Fortunately, this dilemma did not arise in Buchanan's case. Being the man that he was, he would never have resigned at a moment of national crisis. When Sazonov failed to carry his views in the Council of Ministers and wished to retire, Buchanan told him that the war was not a time for resignations.

Moreover, he was always diffident of his own opinion and, even when he felt that he was right, was prone to submit to the contrary views of others. Although therefore, the British Government continually failed to realise the value of his advice, a strong sense of public duty and an almost too modest respect for other people's opinions kept him at his post.

No British Ambassador played a more important part in Petrograd, and none could have been less self-conscious of his own influence. It came as a great surprise to him when the City Council of Moscow presented him with the Freedom of the City and gave him a public reception of unprecedented enthusiasm. It was a still greater surprise to him when he became the popular embodiment of the Anglo-Russian Alliance. The quiet, well-dressed diplomat, who went for his morning walks upon the English Quay, could not believe his eyes when he found himself the centre of cheering crowds. It was indeed curious that such a man had been driven into the midst of a world revolution. That his judgment stood the strain, that his character emerged scathless from the contamination of every kind of intrigue, that his reputation stands highest with those who knew him best, is testimony not only to the fine qualities of an English gentleman, but also to the best traditions of a service that he regarded almost as a religion.

# XII

## THE BELLS OF MOSCOW

"A fine old city, truly, is that, view it from whatever side you will. . . . Yes, there it spreads from north to south with its venerable houses, its numerous gardens, it thrice twelve churches. . . .
Now who can wonder that the children of that fine old city are proud of her, and offer up prayers for her prosperity?"

George Borrow. *Lavengro.*



THE BELLS OF MOSCOW

# CHAPTER XII

## THE BELLS OF MOSCOW

Moscow is a town of strident contrasts. Crowding upon the Chinese City and the golden bulbs of the Kremlin Cathedrals are great blocks of German-inspired offices, their dull grey and dismal *art nouveau* almost deadening by their drabness the bright colours and pleasant baroque of the palaces and churches.

In 1916 the life of the city was no less variegated than the architecture of the buildings. On the one hand, the throbbing activities of an industrial centre, stimulated by the war, gave it the restlessness and hustle of a city of the Middle West. On the other hand, the political and religious conservatism of an ancient capital, the conservatism of the cloister and the Court, traditional, loyal and picturesque still retained for its older quarters the peace and romance of Chartres or Ely. Between the two worlds there seemed to be little contact. The Moscow of the past looked with suspicion at the Moscow of the future, and the progressives, thinking only of the rush and excitement of a modern city, ignored the old men in Government uniforms and ecclesiastical vestments. For me, however, both worlds were of compelling interest. My task was to under-

stand the conditions of Russia. The Kremlin and the Bourse, the services of Holy Week and the patriotic work of the progressives, each had something to teach me about the forces that were at work behind the lines, each represented a very distinct phase of Russian life.

Petrograd on the other hand, was like every capital, a cosmopolitan and official city. Its atmosphere, therefore, was often unrepresentative of national feeling, and sometimes even at variance with the spirit of the country. By visiting Moscow I was able to not only enjoy an occasional change of air, for whilst Petrograd was dark, foggy and windy, Moscow was clear, dry and still, but also to check the impressions that I had formed in the overwhelmingly bureaucratic surroundings of the capital. Whenever, therefore, I had the chance, I made a habit of going to Moscow, and of seeing there a life and society very different from anything that I knew in Petrograd.

These visits were made the more useful and agreeable through the help of our acting Consul-General, Bruce Lockhart. Of all the officials of our Consular Service whom I have ever met, Bruce Lockhart was the most active and intelligent. He talked Russian fluently, he knew everyone in Moscow, and was intensely interested in Russian society and Russian politics. The Russians liked him, particularly the business men and the progressive politicians. If I wanted a talk with Chelnokov, the energetic Mayor of Moscow, or with Prince Lvov, the President of the Town and Country Unions, I had only to tell Lockhart, and he would at once arrange a

meeting between us. If I wished to know the details of the efforts that were being made for improving the provision of supplies to the army, Lockhart would immediately put me in touch with the voluntary workers in the depots, hospitals and Red Cross offices. His reports upon the state of public opinion were filled with the details that only a man who knew Russian life, could have collected. His flat, although a small one, was the meeting place of the men and women who really counted in the life of progressive Moscow.

The course of events was to push him into a post of great responsibility and of equally great danger. When the British Ambassador and his staff left Petrograd, Lockhart became the official representative of Great Britain, and at one time exchanged his quarters in the British Embassy for a Bolshevik prison. When I knew him, he was *de jure* only a *locum tenens* of the Consulate. *De facto* he was the British Ambassador in Moscow, to whom every Russian, having business with Great Britain or the British, naturally referred. The office that the British Government had given him for his ever increasing work was dark and mean, situated in a back street and only enlivened by the messenger, Alexander, a man who, having influence with Rasputin, could always obtain me a sleeper when the train was full, as easily indeed as he could arrange divorces for his Moscow friends, when the ecclesiastical authorities seemed to be unsympathetic.

In the third year of the war Moscow had become the centre of a movement known as the Zem-Gor. Zem-

Gor, one of those dreadful code words so dear to modern Russians, was an abbreviation for Zemsky Gorodskoi Soyuz, that is to say, the Association of the Unions of the Country and the Towns. This organisation represented the main voluntary effort of the civilian world during the war. Around the movement grew up clearing stations, hospitals, clinics, depots for bandages, centres for the repair of boots, factories for sanitary appliances, in a word, almost everything that could be brought within the Q side of an army, or the supply services of the rear. So widely, indeed, had the organisation expanded that the last time that I was in Moscow, a serious offer was being made by the officials of the Unions to take over the whole Q work of the Army.

Voluntary workers are always convinced, and often rightly, that their activities are better conducted than the operations of government departments. The workers of the Town and Country Unions held this view all the more strongly from the fact that they largely represented the liberal elements in Russian life and regarded the Government as reactionary and inefficient. With the Duma seldom sitting, a rigid censorship and a strict police control of anything that appeared subversive of the existing order, the Unions became the principal outlet for the opposition. The President, Prince Lvov, a member of the first Duma, who spent almost all his time at the Union's head office, was typical of many liberal politicians who, disgusted with the bureaucracy of Petrograd, threw themselves into the war work of Moscow.

As the Unions progressed, so the Ministers became more suspicious of their activities. I do not altogether blame the Government, for it cannot be denied that the motive force of the Unions was inspired by the men and women who were constantly attacking the whole system of administration. With a little goodwill on both sides, the work would have gone on more peacefully and at the same time more successfully. As it was, there was a constant battle of pin-pricks between rival forces that ought to have been allies.

I was in Moscow when the Government refused to allow the general meeting of the Unions. A ridiculous series of incidents took place in which the Governor tried to stop the meeting, and the members of the Unions played a diverting game of hide-and-seek in their efforts to hold it. I was told how at last the police tracked down the Union officials to a restaurant, how the Governor wrangled with them on the telephone, and how they triumphantly told him that they had held their meeting, and had already passed the resolutions that he was determined to prevent. Both sides seemed to me to be behaving like small boys at a private school.

Behind this incessant bickering, there none the less went on work so excellent that without it the war could scarcely have continued. Knowing its importance, I determined to see what I could of it, and on one of my early visits to Moscow went at once to interview Prince Lvov. I found him in a bare little office that reminded me of the operations room of an army headquarters. On the table before him and on the walls of the room

were large maps, on each of which was set out an order of battle, not of fighting units, but of hospitals, depots and Red Cross stores.

As I talked to him of the work, his clear grey eyes lit up with the fire of keen enthusiasm. Even in those early days it was obvious to me that he and his fellow workers were determined to absorb the Quartermaster-General's entire department. Indeed, as events afterwards proved, they were ready to become what almost amounted to an alternative Government for the country. How far they would have succeeded with the job, if they had gained their way, I cannot tell. But I was sure that their President was fitted neither for the control of the whole administrative machine nor for a political dictatorship. When eventually he himself became the head of the Provisional Government, I wrote to Lord Milner to say that an admirable war worker had come to the fore, but a man better qualified to be Chairman of the London County Council than to be the chief of an unstable Government in the midst of a great revolution.

Thanks to the Prince and his active colleagues, I was shown in great detail the Zem-Gor organisations in the neighbourhood of Moscow. In the company of a very Americanised Russian, I visited hospitals and depots of every kind. One hospital in particular I remember, for it was the biggest nerve hospital in Russia. According to the commandant, nerve cases had previously been rare owing to the fact that Russia was a country of unsensitive peasants. When a hospital was needed for

war cases, it was only after a considerable time that the necessary staff and experience were collected. At another centre, I was surprised to find that all the dentists were women. Here again there had been great difficulty in providing the trained personnel.

Of the institutions other than hospitals to which I was taken a depot for the repair of army boots interested me most. In a climate like that of Russia, boots were as important to the army as food. Among Russian soldiers there was an almost religious reverence for good boots. When I visited a Russian unit or entered a Russian hospital, everyone looked not at me, but at the Yeomanry boots that my family bootmaker had so successfully made for me. Boots, being more necessary to the Russians than to any of the Allies, a good pair was almost a relic to venerate. Certainly, one of the biggest Zem-Gor activities in Moscow was the repair of the almost innumerable pairs of worn boots that were sent back from the front.

When I had spent several days inspecting these various activities, I had some idea of the extent of the Zem-Gor work and of the zeal that the progressive elements in Moscow were putting behind it.

What greater contrast could I have experienced than when I moved from these busy hives of war workers to the quiet of the great monasteries that encompass Moscow like a ring of Vauban forts, and followed in detail the traditional solemnities of the Kremlin Cathedrals. Leaving a world of progressive politicians and industrial hustlers, I passed within a few hundred yards

into a life that had changed little since the days of the Patriarch Nikon.

Whilst the live and intelligent Bruce Lockhart introduced me to the former, in the latter my guides were my cousin Birkbeck and M. Georgevsky, keeper of the Rumyantsev Library. Of Birkbeck I have already spoken, and I need only say here that I was indeed fortunate in having a few days' leave that enabled me to spend Holy Week with him in Moscow.

Georgevsky was one of those devout and learned liturgiologists who inhabit the precincts of great cathedrals. Huysmans has described them at Chartres, Ibañez at Toledo. Deeply instructed in every detail of ecclesiastical and liturgical history and practice, intimate with the lives and habits of the bishops and clergy, knowing all the gossip of the close, these lay brothers of cathedral life never miss a service, just as they never fail to notice any change, even the most minute, in the rites and ceremonies of their chosen church. Georgevsky had lived his whole life in this world of ritual and observance. There was not a point in the Orthodox services that he did not understand, there was no prescribed practice, fast or feast, that he did not observe. The bishops and clergy smiled at him when they saw him enter the church; the choir, amongst whom he usually took his place, greeted him as a friend. When he took us to the great Lavra of St. Serge, true to the Orthodox practice, he bowed and crossed himself at the first sight of its pink towers. When we entered the churches of the Old Believers, he told us to cross ourselves with two

fingers instead of three. Whether we were at the Cathedral of the Assumption, or in the midst of the dissenters, he followed and knew every shade of the ritual. Time after time, he would push a Slavonic service book under my eyes and whisper to me the explanation of this or that practice of liturgical observance.

With him to guide us through the mysterious labyrinth of devotion, Birkbeck and I attended almost without a break for several days and nights the services of the Orthodox Holy Week.

No one, who did not see the Kremlin Cathedrals before the revolution, can realise the intimacy, the mystery and the splendour of these ceremonies. The small churches, their walls covered with frescoes of Byzantine figures on a background of gold, their screens, a blaze of precious stones and metals, the only lights, the candles before the Ikons and in the hands of the faithful, the only music, the bass of the deacon, the baritone of the bishop, and the concerted harmonies of the Imperial choir, produced as complete a picture of Holy Russia as could well be imagined. Amidst these impressive surroundings it was impossible not to be deeply moved by the fervour of the standing people, and the haunting sighing of the Slavonic language. Sometimes, the services would last far into the night. Yet, such was their dramatic hold, such their wealth of picturesque detail, that we cheerfully stood, hour after hour, and returned to them again after a hurried rest. Day by day, we followed the ordered sequence that commemorated the tragedy of Holy Week. Day

by day, we came to feel something of the suppressed excitement that brought Moscow, and indeed the whole of Russia, into a veritable paroxysm of joy on Easter Day.

We began the week by visiting the long refectory in which the Holy Chrysm is boiled for the use of the Orthodox Church. There, in a dimly lit hall, we saw the great silver cauldron stirred by the monks in their black Basilian habits, we heard the reading of the psalms that continued day and night without intermission, and we smelt the curious scents of the many herbs and spices of which the Chrysm is composed. On Maundy Thursday, when the mixing and boiling were complete, the Chrysm was taken from the College of the Holy Synod and blessed by a Bishop in the Cathedral of the Assumption. I had better describe the service in the words of a letter that I wrote to my wife:

"To-day we went off at 11 to the Blessing of the Chrysm in the Cathedral of the Assumption. We had seen the oil being stirred yesterday in great cauldrons. This goes on night and day for all Holy Week and is carried out alternately at Moscow and Kiev. On Maundy Thursday the final ingredients are put in it by the Metropolitan. It is brought in in silver urns, about thirty in number, to the Cathedral to be blessed, is taken back to the Metropolitan's Palace and is finally distributed all over the Orthodox world. We had an excellent place. I am, of course, wearing uniform and am, therefore, treated with respect. First, arrived the Metropoli-

tan, a very old man, and four Archimandrites in black. In the middle of the Cathedral he was met by the chapter and choir. Then followed polite speeches to His High Holiness, intoned in a prodigious voice by the Deacon. Then the Metropolitan was vested, still in the nave. Then after some lengthy Vespers they all processed off to the next building to get the thirty or forty very big silver urns of the Holy Oil. These, they brought back into the Sanctuary: but at the 'great entry' all the oil was carried round the Cathedral. The Archbishop of Grodno, a refugee, was with the Metropolitan. The choir were in cassocks of a sort of brown holland colour with pale blue collars. All the clergy were in white and silver. In the processions there were two most beautiful and very ancient crystal processional crosses. The priest carried above his head a mother-of-pearl phial containing the remains of the last year's Chrysm.

"The service took about three hours. The chief differences to be noted are, firstly, the creed comes very late in the service. In the Church of the Assumption the Great Bell, Ivan Veliki, rings during it. Secondly, there is the invocation to the catechumens to leave the church. Thirdly, there are lengthy Vespers, addresses to the Bishop, prayers for the Imperial Family and descriptions of what is happening in the Sanctuary by the Deacon. Of the two entries, the first is before the Gospel, the second, 'the great entry,' before the Consecration. The bishop wears his mitre when he is speaking in the name of Our Lord. The Epistles and

Gospels are very long and are made up of extracts from many books. The choir sing a number of litanies and Troparia. At the end of the service they again processed out of the Cathedral with the silver urns, and the Great Bell rang—the biggest in the world."

Of all the ceremonies that I attended in Moscow, I think that the Mirovarenya, as the boiling and the blessing of the Chrysm is called, was the most impressive. Every service, however, had its clearly marked characteristics. Here are a few extracts from other letters that will show the variety of the detail and the magnificence of the general effect of the other services:

"Last night, about 9, we went for our Maundy Thursday Vespers to the Cathedral of the Saviour. We arrived towards the end, as Johnny thought it began at 8 p.m., whereas it had begun at 6. I was not sorry for this, as I was rather tired. The service consisted of twelve longish Gospels and many interludes of Psalms, Troparia, litanies and such. The Metropolitan was there and the Cathedral—about the size of St. Paul's—absolutely packed with a standing crowd, everyone holding a lit candle. The singing was very good but not as good as in the Cathedral of the Assumption.

"This morning we went off at 8.45 to see the Kremlin clergy carry all the relics from the Cathedral of the Apostles to the Cathedral of the Assumption to be washed. It was a pleasant procession, marred some-

what by the rain, with two Bishops and a host of black and silver clergy each holding above his head a golden casket of relics. We then went into the Cathedral of the Assumption, where we heard Prime, Sext and Nones wonderfully sung, and at the end saw Bishop Arsenios, a Suffragan of Moscow, wash all the relic cases set out on a table in the nave. Afterwards, he and all the clergy kissed them. When we got out, about 12, we visited the churches of the Chudov Monastery. The churches everywhere to-day have been most interesting, as there were to be seen many soldiers in khaki and pilgrims with their packs tied over their shoulders. Unfortunately it has been rather a wet day.

"After luncheon we again went at 2 to hear Vespers at the Cathedral of the Saviour and to see the entombment, that takes place in it—namely, the procession from the Sanctuary with a catafalque. The Metropolitan and a host of clergy took part. We were in the choir. In this way we avoided the great crowd, but for seeing, it is, of course, better to be in the nave, whence it is possible to have a view of the Sanctuary and more of the actual service. To-night, we go at one to the Kremlin to hear Holy Saturday Matins and to see the procession with the catafalque round the courtyard. I will, therefore, stop. I am learning quite a lot about Orthodox services and I shall be a very useful guide when we spend Easter here together. I can follow the Slavonic all right if I have a book."

"April 22nd. Saturday. Last night's service at the

Cathedral of the Assumption was very impressive, but very long. It did not begin until 1 and was not over until 4.45. Again, we stood in the choir. The Cathedral, as usual, was packed and, except for the lamps on the shrines, at first, completely dark. Then, as the service went on, everyone lit candles. No one except Johnny and I had books, and how the people packed as close as can be imagined are able to stand for four or five hours on end I cannot imagine. The service took the form of a funeral service round the catafalque—in this case, a pall. There were any number of clergy in black and silver and two fanning the pall with the big golden fans called *Ripidi*. There were innumerable Psalms, Troparia, litanies, and, amongst other things, the whole of the 119th Psalm, interleaved with a Troparion for each verse said in a kind of dramatic duet by two priests. Towards the end of the service the clergy with the pall and lighted candles processed round the Cathedral. It was impossible for us to get through the crowd, otherwise we should have joined in the procession. The service was very dramatic, culminating in a bishop reading the Gospel about guarding the tomb fast.

" By this time it was quite light and as we came away all the bells of Moscow were ringing—as they all do during the processions round the churches. You should have heard the voices of the readers—they are amazing, and the way they keep it up for hours on end!

" To-day I was surprisingly little tired. However, I stopped in bed until 11. Then after luncheon we went off to the Cathedral of the Assumption for the end of

the Liturgy. This was splendid, as we came in for the Nebuchadnezzar and the Image lesson, the *Benedicite* sung to a wonderful chant, and the sudden changing of all the vestments from black to white.

"After this, we had a motor waiting to take us about six miles to see the Old Believers' church and settlement. As a matter of fact, there are two churches, of great size and filled with very curious ikons and any number of treasures, as they are very rich. A peasant at the door came and talked to me and asked if I was an English Old Believer. On the way back, we looked into a convent garden to see a number of church bells that had been brought there for safety from the Baltic Provinces. We got home from a pleasant drive, for it was sunny and hot, about five."

"Easter Day. April 23rd. The Easter Matins at the Cathedral of the Assumption were most curious, but the music was not so attractive as at some of the other services. We arrived at about 11.45 p.m., to find an enormous crush of people. However, an official pushed a way through for us, and we found ourselves in the middle of the nave surrounded by Generals and officials in uniform. There were also a certain number of their wives, dressed entirely in white. Everyone was holding candles. At midnight punctually the old Metropolitan appeared at the Royal Doors and bowed to the congregation. A short time later, he again appeared and was escorted to the west end where there was a dais, on which he, the Archbishop of Grodno and

another bishop were robed. They and all the clergy were in vermilion and gold vestments of the same pattern, all new and very bright. Then, followed a greeting to the Metropolitan, and the service proper began. This consisted almost entirely of the Canon, namely, a series of verses founded on certain passages of the Old and New Testaments. During and after their recitation the bishops and priests in turn censed every part of the Church, saying frequently, 'Christ is risen,' to which the congregation replied. These verses went on for about two hours. Oh! I forgot to say that there was a procession round the courtyard at 12 with the big bell ringing, but it was too crowded for us to get out. Every church in Moscow processes in the same way. At the end of the Canon there was a Gospel. At the end of this, the Metropolitan again appeared from the Sanctuary and said, 'Christ is risen,' after which he came into the nave and everyone went up in turn, and kissed his cross and hand, and said to him—he was very particular that you must say it first —'Christ is risen,'"

When we had any time to spare from the Cathedral services, we went to the Churches of the Old Believers. For of all the phases of Russian religious life Russian dissent is the most distinctive, and the chance of studying it was too good to be missed.

In almost every respect, the nonconformists of Russia, the Old Believers or Raskolniks as they are called, differ from the English dissenters. Conserva-

tive die-hards, they have little in common with the liberal adherents of our free churches. Except that they both suffered persecution at the hands of the state, their history diverges at every important point. With the Russians, conservatism continued as an infallible doctrine, with the English, liberalism began as a political dissolvent.

When within the last generation the days of persecution were ended, the Raskolniks were still living a life apart from their neighbours. Very conservative, and some of them, like the English Quakers, very rich, they meticulously observed the practice and ceremonial of their communities and supported the many good works that had grown up around them. First and foremost, they were traditionalists, dissenting from the state church, not because it was too conservative but because it was too liberal, clinging to every detail of the old ritual, refusing to alter a comma or correct a misprint in the old service books, crossing themselves with two and not three fingers, repudiating the third Alleluia in the Eucharist.

Certain of them, being convinced that the reign of anti-Christ had begun with the reforms of Peter the Great, believed that the chain of apostolical succession had been broken, and that the priesthood had ceased to exist. This "No Priest" sect had its centre in Moscow, known as Preobrazhensky. When we visited the church, we found a few old men with long beards praying fervently, and a woman elder reading the service in a piping voice.

At Rogozhky, the centre of the *Popovtsy*, that is to say the Old Believers who still accept the ordination of the priesthood, there were signs of much greater activity.

Both Rogozhky and Preobrazhensky had started as cemeteries and hospitals for the sects in the reign of Catherine the Great, when plague was devastating the city. Since then, they had passed through many vicissitudes, at one time persecuted in the reign of Nicholas I, their churches actually closed during the course of the Liturgy, at another subjected to a suspicious kind of control, and finally freed at the end of the Japanese war.

Around them, particularly around Rogozhky, were concentrated a variety of good works, almshouses, hospitals and the like. There, we were shown two great churches; the one unwarmed, for the summer, and the other warmed, for the winter, each of them filled with many ancient and curious ikons. All the men about the place had long beards, and all seemed very old.

These patriarchal adherents impressed me with their quiet piety. Of their burning interest in the practices of their Church I had a striking instance when I visited their curious bookshop near the Kremlin. Birkbeck and I were looking at a pile of service books. True to the tastes and traditions of dissent, several of them were filled with apocalyptic blessings and curses, and were illustrated with many strange pictures of angels and devils. The volumes were beautifully produced, well bound in traditional leather

covers, closed by silver clasps, printed in Slavonic type, the plates arranged and coloured in a way that would have done credit to the presses of Oxford and Cambridge. I could not resist buying several. The prices were high, and I was amazed when I saw a peasant in a sheepskin coat with straw in his boots enter the shop and produce fifty roubles for two Apocalypses. When we entered into conversation with him, he told us that he had been saving up his money for a long time in order to buy two of the best illustrated editions. When he had chosen the volumes, he started off with them under his arm to walk back to his village many *versts* distant from Moscow. I could not forget the sight of the old man, with an Apocalypse under each arm, trudging off to the country, and I followed him in my imagination as he reached his cottage and settled down in the evening to study the blessings and cursings of the Revelations. Believers such as he represented the simple faith and rigid conservatism of millions of men and women scattered from one end of Russia to the other.

Of the other sects, the Khlysty, the Stranniki, the rationalist Stundists and the pietist Dukhobors, I saw nothing. They had not for me the interest of the Old Believers, for they seemed to be the offshoot of individual eccentricity or of German evangelicalism. The Old Believers, on the contrary, represented a deeply rooted feature of Russian life.

When I left Moscow on Easter afternoon to return to my office in Petrograd, I felt that I had passed

through a very moving experience. Here, for once, I had entered Holy Russia. The irritations of daily life, the plots of politicians, the futilities of the Government, the scandals in high places had been purged from my mind by the solemnities of Holy Week, and by the religious fervour of the men and women, soldiers and civilians, whom I had seen standing and kneeling before the sacred places of Russia.

One scene in particular remained vividly in my mind's eye. We had been to the ceremony of Easter Matins in the Cathedral of the Assumption. Of all the services that I had attended, it alone had depressed me by its atmosphere of ceremonial conformity. The congregation had been overwhelmingly official, Generals and bureaucrats in uniforms and decorations with their wives in stiff and ugly dresses. They had come to conform with the practice that puts Easter Matins into the same category as a levée or a parade. It was with a feeling of relief that Birkbeck and I, remembering the congregations of the simple and devout that had filled the church throughout Holy Week, pushed our way through the crowd and entered the Palace of the Kremlin. The Governor and his wife, Prince and Princess Odoevsky-Maslov, had bidden us attend the Matins and Liturgy in their private chapel, and stay with them for the supper that celebrated the coming of Easter.

A very old footman in the Imperial livery guided us through a labyrinth of little rooms into a small and ancient chapel. The old Prince and Princess were

kneeling, he, in the white uniform of the Gardes à Cheval with the cross of St. Vladimir round his neck, and the Star of the White Eagle on his tunic, she, in a white dress, such as might have been fashionable thirty years before, whilst four priests in gold vestments were finishing Easter Matins and beginning the Liturgy. In another corner was a group of servants, footmen and maids, most of them as old as the man who had guided us, acting as choir and singing the difficult chants with evident devotion and a traditional skill. The chapel was the most ancient in the Kremlin; the service, the culmination of the Russian winter and the Orthodox fast; the men and women taking part, the truest and most loyal representatives of the Russia that was passing away. Here, at least, was single-hearted devotion in a moment of doubt; here, at least, was unquestioning loyalty to the Orthodox Church and to the Tsar as God's vicegerent.

The supper that followed the Liturgy gave me a scarcely less striking scene from the Russia of the past, the Prince and Princess, the four priests, Birkbeck and myself, bidding each other Easter wishes, eating the Easter sweet cheese, all of us tired by the strain of Holy Week, the priests with the bright eyes and drawn faces that come after protracted fasting, all of us rejoicing at the great festival like children at Christmas or a birthday.

The acquaintance that I made that night was to ripen into a moving friendship. The old Prince, pink faced and white bearded, with his splendid manners and his

equally splendid figure, the old lady, kind and delightful but with the well-bred reserve of a former generation, seemed to represent to us the very beau ideal of a true nobility.

The name that the Prince bore was the first in the Russian aristocracy. A direct descendant of St. Michael of Chernigov, who was himself twelfth in descent from Rurik and eighth from St. Vladimir, his ancestors had played a foremost part in many of the dramatic events of Russian history. Of the two Saints from whom he claimed descent, one was buried within a stone's throw of his rooms in the Kremlin, and the other was patron of the great Order whose crimson and black ribbon he always wore round his neck. He himself had been born Maslov, but the Emperor Alexander II had granted a special remainder to his uncle, whose name he added to his own. For many years he had commanded the Gardes à Cheval, and since his retirement from the army had filled high posts at Court.

When the Emperor Nicholas visited India before his accession, the Prince went with him. Of this journey he told me several details, and I was much struck by his characteristic observation, that what worried him most, was the wish of the army officials in Russia that he should send them reports about the British army in India. "How," he asked, "could a gentleman send reports about friends whose hospitality he was actually receiving?"

The Princess could not have been a fitter match for

this fine old man. For she shared with him the same outlook on the world, the same splendid manners, the same simplicity. Together, they worthily represented the Imperial Court at Moscow. Together, they occupied themselves with their good works and many friendships. Together, also, they grieved at the spirit of doubt and defeatism that was abroad in Moscow. At a time when everyone, high and low, was attacking the Government, the Princess refused to hear a word of criticism in her own *salon*. When war profiteers were flaunting their pearls and sables, she let it be known that she would buy no new clothes during the war. Once, we went with her to the Imperial box at the Opera, and we noticed that she had on a pair of short and shabby gloves that must have been worn out when the war began.

Never have I met a finer gentleman or a more distinguished lady. Loyal, dignified, simple, their whole lives devoted to serving the Church, the Emperor, and the people amongst whom they were living.

The revolution came, and the representatives of the Provisional Government asked the old Prince to make his submission to the new régime. Unhesitatingly he refused. But he was so universally beloved and respected that even the liberal doctrinaires allowed him to live on in the Kremlin.

According to my last news he was finally seen in a long queue of hungry men and women waiting for his ration of bread. The last that I heard of her was that she retired after his death to the Martha and Mary

sisterhood, and died in 1924 at peace with God and man.

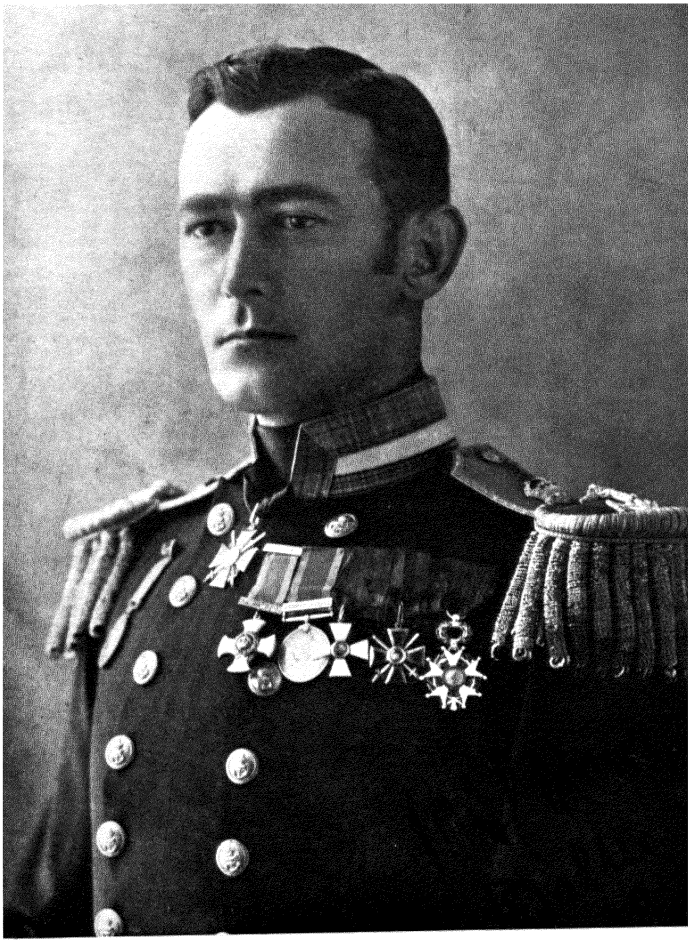
Thus ended the most ancient of the noble families of Russia. Thus died a loving pair whose lives and loyalties refuted the charges that were scattered promiscuously against birth and breeding.

# XIII

## A BRITISH AND A RUSSIAN HERO

"On n'est jamais battu. S'il ne reste plus de moyens d'action, il reste le miracle, l'épidémie chez l'ennemi, le tremblement de terre, la Providence. Josué arrêtait le soleil: c'était un vrai militaire."

Maurois. *Dialogues sur le Commandement.*



CAPTAIN CROMIE

# CHAPTER XIII

## A BRITISH AND A RUSSIAN HERO

### CROMIE

TOWARDS the end of August I received an invitation to visit the British submarines in the Baltic. Captain Cromie, the commanding officer, had several times been to my office in Petrograd, and I had been able to do him and his men a few small services.

From the first moment that I met him, I felt that I was in the presence of a very remarkable man. A leader of arresting personality, as good-looking as the finest Regency beau with his black side-whiskers and his slender figure, he already stood in the eyes of Russia for all that was dashing in the British Navy. No officer could have been better fitted to command the adventurous expedition that drove the British submarines through the German nets to the Russian Fleet in the Baltic.

By birth an Irishman, by heredity an officer, for his father had been a Captain in the Hampshire Regiment before he became Consul-General at Dakar, he had won success after success in his professional career. When he was promoted Lieutenant, he could boast of a record number of first classes in the examination. In China

he had shown that he was as efficient on active service as he had been successful in the examination room. In England, after his return from the east, he had thrown into his record as some kind of by-play the Humane Society's medal for an attempted rescue at Spithead.

Such was the remarkable officer who, in October 1915, brought the *E19* through the Sound to join the *E1* and the *E9* at Reval. When I came to know him, he had made a name not only for skill and daring such as has seldom been equalled, but also for social talent and a rare gift for organisation that most of us would envy.

It was significant of his determination to enter into every phase of the work, upon which he was engaged, that within a few days of his arrival in Russian waters, he was writing to his mother to ask for a Russian grammar to be sent him from England. For he was a man not content with the routine of a job. His quick mind and sensitive nature impelled him to learn the habits and language of the people amongst whom he was living.

Amongst all the Englishmen whom I saw in Russia in 1916, there was none who had more quickly absorbed the country's atmosphere than this young officer who knew little of either Russian history or Russian politics. Wherever he went, men and women were at his feet. When he spent his leave in Moscow, he enjoyed a triumphal progress through its critical society. As ready in speech as in action, he told the members of the Arts Theatre that they were greater than he, for whilst he destroyed, they created.

Here, was one whose friendship we greatly valued

and whose invitation to Reval we could not refuse. Moreover, we were to stay with hosts whose record of achievement was already a by-word amongst Allies and enemies alike.

Cromie had himself given me an outline of the submarines' work since they had been sent to the Baltic in the first autumn of the war. True to his nature, he had omitted any mention of his own achievements, and had described to me in vivid words the successes of his brother officers.

The operations of the Flotilla could be roughly divided into three periods. First, there had been the phase of 1914, when the main objective was to attack the German fleet, and to co-operate in Lord Fisher's general scheme for putting it out of action simultaneously in the North Sea and the Baltic. This was the chapter in which Commanders Max Horton and Martin Nasmyth, in the face of almost insuperable dangers, forced their way across the Baltic. It was no fault of theirs that Fisher's main objective was unattainable. The course of the war could not be narrowly confined to the channel that the First Sea Lord had marked out for it. The British submarines had to content themselves with providing an invaluable reinforcement to an allied fleet that could not boast a single efficient submarine of its own.

From the autumn of 1914 to the summer of 1915 this state of affairs continued. Then, came the collapse of the Russian North-Western front, the advance of the Germans and the threat upon Petrograd itself. In this

crisis, a successful turning movement, carried out by the German fleet in the Gulf of Riga, might have endangered the existence of the retreating armies. Faced with this imminent danger, the Russians implored us to send them reinforcements. The result was the dispatch of two more submarines, the one under Commander Goodhart winning through to Reval, and the other, under Commander Leighton, running aground upon a Danish sandbank and being destroyed, contrary to the laws alike of war and humanity, by two German destroyers.

Fortunately for the allies, the great effort of the German armies in the east spent itself, and the combined military and naval operations, that had been planned, never took place. A new need for submarines was, however, growing almost daily in intensity. More and more, the naval war was becoming a war of blockade, and of the elements in this new kind of conflict not the least important was the iron ore that was passing between Sweden and Germany. When, therefore, in the autumn of 1915, Commander Cromie and Commander Halahan were ordered to the Baltic with *E19* and *E18*, their main instructions were to hold up the large number of ships that were engaged upon this traffic.

Thenceforth, Cromie came into the centre of the picture. As he refused to tell me of his own exploits, I must refer to the Naval History of the War, and quote an extract from the description of the campaign. Only the actual words of the official account can ade-

quately record the scope of the operations, and the light-hearted dash with which he carried them through.

Here, then, is a page from the history. It reads like the story taken from some old game book telling of a wonderful day's sport:

"They," that is to say the submarines, "achieved a remarkable measure of success. At 8.0 a.m. on Monday, October 11, Lieutenant-Commander Cromie started to chase merchant shipping. At 9.40 a.m. he stopped the *Walter Leonhardt*, from Lulea to Hamburg, with iron ore. The crew abandoned the ship and were picked up by a Swedish steamer stopped by *E19* for the purpose. The empty vessel was then sunk by a charge of gun cotton. By noon Lieutenant-Commander Cromie was chasing the *Germania*, of Hamburg, signalling her to stop immediately. As she continued to run and soon went ashore, he came cautiously alongside to save her crew, but found that they had already abandoned ship. He tried to tow her off, but failed to move her, for her cargo consisted of nearly 3,000 tons of the finest concentrated iron ore, from Stockholm to Stettin. He left her filling with water, and at 2 o'clock gave chase to the *Gutrune*. By 3 o'clock he had sent her to the bottom with her 4,400 tons of iron ore from Lulea to Hamburg, after placing her crew on board the Swedish steamer. At 4.25 he began to chase two more large steamers going south. In twenty minutes he had stopped one—the Swedish boat *Nyland*, with ore for Rotterdam and papers all correct—he told her to proceed, and ten minutes later caught the *Direktor*

*Rippenhagen*, with magnetic ore from Stockholm to Nadenheim. While she was sinking he stopped another Swede bound for Newcastle and gave her *Direktor's* crew to take care of. An hour later he was chasing a large steamer, the *Nicomedia*, who tried to make off towards the Swedish coast, but a shot across her bows brought her to. She proved to be a large and extremely well-fitted vessel, carrying 6,000 to 7,000 tons of magnetic ore from Lulea to Hamburg. The crew were sent ashore in boats, and *E19* proceeded up the west of Gotland."

Not so bad for a single day; and month after month operations such as these continued, often carried out in the teeth of weather so terrible that the submarines would from time to time be put out of action by the snow and frost, yet always undertaken in the spirit of high adventure.

Once Cromie's submarine seemed hopelessly caught in the German nets. When effort after effort had failed to free the propeller, he assembled the crew and took upon himself the blame for having brought them into the trap. The only hope of escape, so he told them, was to rise to the surface, and to swim for it, while he would stop on board and blow up the ship. It must have been a speech very true to type. But fortunately there proved to be no need for this act of self-sacrifice. Somehow or other the propeller got clear, and Cromie and his ship escaped from the toils.

With such men as this on the flank of the German Fleet, it is not surprising that Prince Henry of Prussia

issued an instruction to the German submarines in these words: "I consider the destruction of a Russian submarine will be a great success; I regard the destruction of a British submarine as valuable as that of a Russian armoured cruiser."

The blockade phase of the submarine campaign continued until the final Russian collapse. But through no fault of the British flotilla its next chapter was disappointing. Admiral Essen's death had deprived the Baltic fleet of a resourceful and enterprising commander. His successor, Admiral Kanin, whether through over anxiety for the safety of Petrograd, or a settled determination to run no risks with the invaluable submarines, carried caution to excess. The result was that for the greater part of 1916, the Russian fleet and the British flotilla remained inactive.

When we arrived in Reval we found all the submarines in harbour, and officers and men chafing under the check that had been placed upon their activities.

Their depot was the old battleship then called the *Dvina*, but known until the 1905 mutiny as the *Pamyat Azova*.

When we were not on board the *Dvina* or the submarines, we were visiting the principal officials, military and civil, and the very interesting buildings of Reval.

The city is no more Russian than Lübeck, Dantzig or Stettin. Its history and monuments are those of a Hanseatic settlement, its religion Lutheran, and at the time we stayed in it, its upper classes were German.

Our actual host, M. Girard, was French by extraction, British by adoption and Russian by profession. This multiplicity of ties showed itself in the polyglot life of his family. His two daughters, neither of them ten years of age, spoke fluently and intermittently English, French, German, Russian and Esthonian. Of all his national connections he preferred the British, and now that a British Member of Parliament was staying with him he determined to make the most of the occasion. Together, therefore, we visited the Governor, Gerasimov, the Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet, Kanin, and his remarkable Chief-of-Staff, Nepenin.

With the latter I had long and interesting conversations upon questions connected with Naval Intelligence. The Admiral, evidently a highly trained Intelligence officer, showed me the detailed charts that he had prepared of every German airship flight, and of as many submarine voyages as had come to his knowledge. He told me, also, of his sources of information about the German fleet. Cromie stood beside us, following closely the thrilling story that the Admiral was recounting. As I looked from one to the other, I felt that I was in the presence of two naval officers who would reach the highest posts in their respective services. Within six months, Nepenin was shot in the back by a German agent, and within a year of his friend's murder Cromie died at the hand of a Bolshevik assassin on the stairs of the British Embassy.

These crimes were perpetrated after my departure

from Russia. I feel, however, that I must carry Cromie's career to the final tragedy that brought it to a close, and give some description of the third and last phase in the history of the submarines.

Although I had returned to England, I was still able to follow his fortunes. His thrillingly human letters to the Admiralty were circulated to my office, and I was also given the chance of seeing his more intimate correspondence with his mother.

Even before the outbreak of the revolution, the position of the small British contingent was by no means easy. Thanks to the popularity of the British, personal relations with the Russians were excellent. But there was an underlying feeling that no effective use was being made of the submarines by the new Russian Commander-in-Chief.

Daily life was growing more difficult. With prices rising, officers and men alike found it impossible to live on their pay, and personal comforts, no less than spare parts for the submarines, came through from England rarely and uncertainly.

If the comparative inaction of 1916 was irritating to our men, it was devastating to the Russian Fleet. Kanin, the Commander-in-Chief in the Baltic, did not realise as Kolchak, the Commander-in-Chief in the Black Sea, realised that an inert fleet in harbour is at the mercy of enemy propagandists and seditious agitators. If the Baltic Fleet under Kanin had been as active as the Black Sea Fleet under Kolchak, it would have met the impact of the revolution with some measure of

resistance. As it was, its discipline and organisation collapsed at the first breath of revolution, and its officers fell victims to some of the worst atrocities that were committed in the grim months that followed the Emperor's abdication.

All this time, Cromie was facing a situation as delicate as it was critical. The depot ship, *Dvina,* was under Russian command and it soon became a centre of revolutionary propaganda. The Russian officers, with whom he had been working, were often shamefully treated under the eyes of our officers and men. Constant efforts were made by Russian agitators to undermine the discipline of the British contingent, and provocation of many kinds was almost hourly offered to our men. His letters give a sad and detailed picture of the general confusion that surrounded this handful of British sailors. But it is a picture in which the two outstanding features are the tact and steadiness of the commanding officer and his men.

Here is a typical scene taken from one of the letters. It shows the kind of difficulties with which Cromie was confronted during this final phase of the submarine operations.

" Thursday 15th, two members of the Duma arrived to proclaim the Government and pacify the sailors and soldiers who were becoming unruly. They sent two of the reddest of the red, horrible looking people. One made a soft-soap speech to the ' Englesh Gentlemany,' which nearly collapsed our men. They made sops to the Russian sailors which encouraged them against their

officers. Of course, no work was done this day, and after dinner the red flag crowds came down the pier, preaching rank anarchy, and demanding a Republic. Our Russians were fallen in to go ashore, and the crowd said, 'Come ashore, don't report to your officers, you are not to call them "Vinsokoprevosko (High Born)" —sic—"but Lieutenant or Captain." Off they went amidst much cheering. . . . Discipline does not exist, smoke everywhere, never salute off duty or on, dress as they please, start cleaning ship at 8 a.m. knock off all work at 3, and then go ashore until 8 next day. They remove any officer they dislike, but no man can be moved without the Committee's decision. There was one agitator amongst our Russian sailors in the boats whom I found actually preventing the men going into the boats. He said I could not punish him, and he was not going to obey, etc. However, as he was entirely under our discipline, I dismissed him with disgrace, forfeiting his D.S.M. prize and bounty as a member of *E 1* crew. This had a great effect, and all the others volunteered to remain with us, and I have ten new volunteers for the C boats."

A few days afterwards he writes again: "I have become a sort of Scarlet Pimpernel, what with salving furniture, posting sentries to prevent our friends being looted, persuading crowds to break wine instead of drinking it, getting places in the trains for people to get away, storing jewels and money, etc. We have passed one crisis in the *Dvina*, which was a very near thing. They had arrested the old boatswain—a great favourite

with our men—because two years ago he had been rude to the men over some food question, and if he could be rude two years ago what did he do in 1905? The Fleet Committee acquitted him and appointed him to another ship, but the *Dvina's* would not let him go; but the *Oleg's* persuaded them to ignore the Central Committee, so they degraded the old man, tearing off his uniform, spitting in his face and dressing him as a sailor; then sent him to Kronstadt dressed as a sailor. This treatment so angered our men that they gathered round and threatened to kick them out if they did not behave reasonably. It was just touch and go.

"Previous to this, the man I had dismissed with disgrace returned on board and started to threaten and agitate on our mess deck. I ordered him off, and he promised to be even with me. I then asked the ship's committee to kick this agitator out as he no longer belonged to the ship. This they refused—the first—as they found him necessary on account of his English and to keep W/T communication with Kronstadt. The situation became so impossible that I reported to the Central Committee and Commodore that unless the man was removed within forty-eight hours I should not be responsible for what happened, and would proceed to Petrograd to report to the Ambassador and make such communication to my Admiralty as I thought fit. Their reply was curious; they understood the situation and the impossibility of permitting attempts to be made on our discipline, and they would persuade the man to drop his plan. However, I now have a promise that he

shall not return to the *Dvina*, he having gone off agitating to various ports . . . Last week one of our officers, walking with a lady, was insulted by a Russian sailor, who took the lady's free arm. Fortunately the officer kept his temper and asked two Russian sailors to take the man away, which they did, but shortly released him. He then returned and struck both the officer and the lady. The officer took him by the scruff of his neck and held him out at arm's length till the crowd took him. Next day this man was brought on board by the guard from the *Bogatir* and made to apologise on his knees, in spite of our protest, and was sentenced to twelve years in Siberia. I considered it advisable to try to get this reduced, to avoid the anti-English party making use of it, and I interviewed the crew of the *Bogatir*, who were extremely angry about the affair. It took a long time to persuade them to reconsider their decision."

Incidents such as this happened almost every day. Cromie and his men were completely isolated in a sea of anarchy and disorder. On the one hand, the discipline of the Baltic fleet had been completely destroyed. On the other, the ice was melting and the position of the submarines almost defenceless, if the German fleet attacked. The Russians could not go to sea, as through murders and dismissals they were short of 1,200 officers and of an indefinite number of men, who went off on leave whenever they felt inclined.

A British officer has seldom been faced with such overwhelming difficulties. Yet, in spite of them all,

Cromie succeeded for some months in carrying on active operations against the enemy. Indeed, the record of 1917 compared favourably with the enforced inactivity of 1916. Almost alone amongst the vessels of the Russian fleet, the British submarines continued to carry out reconnaissance work of the first importance, and were ready, had they been given the chance, to undertake comprehensive operations against enemy trade.

But even Cromie, with all his good spirits and indomitable courage, saw that the end was near. "My private opinion expressed in March," he writes in October 1917, "was that it were better for us to give the Russians the boats and stores and clear out. However, things have gone better than I expected and we have done far more this year than all last year. I don't see how this country can go on, and personally I am convinced they must make peace next year—I hope they won't forget us when terms are discussed—unless the Allies take charge as the Huns do in Austria and Turkey."

By November the situation had further deteriorated. "Things are in a dreadful state here, quite beyond belief. The extremists and committees are in charge and C.-in-C. is not obeyed; three T.B.D.'s went to Petrograd to help against the Government against C.-in-C.'s orders last night, and officers are not permitted ashore. At the present my concern is to look out for our skins first and think of the enemy second. . . . For a time I ran affairs submarine, as the Admiral faded away at the critical moment. We are the only thing left, but with the regular service going to pot, it is impossible

to do anything. Besides, we remain watching something nearer our base these trying days, but we get the respect all right, as we put the fear of God in them whenever we appear. Our old home is abandoned this winter for the opposite side of the Gulf."

By December the outlook had become hopeless, and it was decided to destroy the submarines and to withdraw the officers and men.

"Everything seems to have ended," he writes, "and I am very downhearted to see all our work go for nothing."

Worse was still to come, for the post that Cromie especially wished to avoid, that of Naval Attaché in Petrograd, was thrust upon him against his will. His love, as he told his friends, was in submarines, and he was horrified at the thought of being marooned in the backwaters of diplomacy.

There followed the last events of the chapter, the destruction of the submarines. "The end came finally," I quote again his own words, "when, after sweeping the fairway into Hangö on Easter Day, the Germans landed 8,000 there on the next Tuesday, together with 700 White Guards as an excuse. We weighed in with our destruction without more ado except to ask officially for tugs, to which we had the usual reply of '*Zavtra*,' but by telling the tug-master we should have to blow up the boats where they were—close to his house—if we did not get a tug, we soon had two. Seven boats, all stores, and some 150 torps. in three days is good work for twenty-two men when there

was an hour's ice breaking to get into deep water; it was a sad end to two and a half years' work, but it created a very deep impression in the Press and the fleet, and I got several signals from big ships assuring us of their readiness to follow our example. It gave me the hump to see the last remnants of the little force I was so proud of (and not without reason) steam cheering and laughing out of the station whilst I remained alone.

"Now began the trouble with our three transports, all partly loaded with Russian cargo, which I had asked them to remove four weeks earlier. Liquidation, evacuation, transport Committees, Sailors' Unions, and God knows what, all had to be argued with. The Germans circulated a pamphlet threatening punishment for sabotage and rewards for those who handed their ships over in good condition, with the result that I could only get five Army officers from the Officers' Employment Bureau to act as crew. I eventually received papers, and then the crews cut up rough; after squaring them I found armed men waiting for me on board the *Obsidian*, who informed me that I was not to take the ship. However, I walked on board, hauled down the Russian flag, and hoisted a Union Jack pocket handkerchief I had for the occasion, and then pointed out that as we were under the British flag in a neutral port I could not permit armed foreigners aboard, and if they wished to guard the ship they must do so from the jetty."

The submarines were as efficiently destroyed as they had been operated: with their destruction there ended

one of the most brilliant episodes of the whole war. "If you ask any officer of the Baltic Fleet," writes Cromie, "what the English flotilla did, I am not afraid of his answer. The moral effect we had both on the enemy and the Russian Fleet was out of all proportion to our numbers."

It was in these dismal conditions that Cromie, disconsolate and disappointed, went off to his thankless post at the British Embassy. The Ambassador and his staff had already left Russia, and Cromie found a small and heterogeneous company of British officers and officials working under the general guidance of Bruce Lockhart, and chiefly engaged in winding up the missions with which they had been connected. The capital was in the hands of the Bolsheviks, and life even for British subjects had become unsafe. In this atmosphere of confusion and intrigue Cromie's personality stood out in vivid relief. Around him centred the many and various activities of the whole Embassy. The young officer who had arrived as a Lieutenant-Commander, thinking of little besides his crew, his equipment and his operations, had become the *de facto* Ambassador of Great Britain in Petrograd, who for six months maintained the British front in the face of difficulties and dangers as formidable as any that he had met in the Baltic. By August 1918 the blackest clouds had closed in. The members of the British Mission in Moscow were imprisoned, and it seemed only a matter of days before a similar fate befell Cromie and his companions in Petrograd.

The end came very quickly, and I will describe it in his own words or those of eyewitnesses.

"Directly we heard of the arrest of our officers in Moscow," he writes in his last letter, "we held an Allied meeting and decided to lie up for a few days and watch events. Some of the French and one or two of us cleared out of town. My own crowd carried on, only taking care not to sleep at home, a precaution which proved most necessary. Andrews nearly got nabbed, but got away by a smart bit of bluff, marching past his own sentry disguised as a chauffeur. My flat was visited and two nights later the house I had moved to, but I was away over the roofs before they got upstairs. . . . I believe that they may walk into the Embassy any day, but I am prepared and intend clearing if the Bolshi gets too objectionable. I have had to destroy all papers and records and do not keep a diary as the Embassy is no longer safe."

The long series of letters finishes, and the final tragedy must be recounted by those who were in the Embassy at the time of the murder.

The British chaplain, Mr. Lombard, had been having tea with Cromie in the Embassy. Cromie left the room saying that he would be back in a minute. "When he did not return," I quote Mr. Lombard's own words, "I went along to the room used by the Military Mission and was talking to McAlpine when I heard a shot, and on going to the head of the marble staircase which leads to the front door, I was met by a crowd of very excited Bolsheviks from Moscow, with revolvers. Several

other shots rang out, but I could see nothing of Cromie. I was immediately arrested and with the others, members of the Consulate and the clerks, was herded into the Chancery, while the Embassy was searched. We had to empty our pockets and were then marched off to the Police headquarters, at Gorokhovaya 2. On the way out of the Embassy I found the poor fellow's body at the foot of the steps."

Another witness, one of the lady clerks of the Passport Office, declares that she saw Cromie "shot in the back from the first-floor landing as he was going downstairs to the street door and that he fell at the bottom."

Whilst no single witness can fully vouch for all the details of the crime, I feel sure, knowing him as I knew him, that he was engaged in defending the British Embassy from the Bolshevik ruffians who had entered it.

His body was first taken to the Smolny Institute, and was afterwards restored to the British Chaplaincy. There, it was covered with a Union Jack by Mr. Lombard's secretary. It was finally buried in the Russian Smolensky Cemetery by Dr. Kean, the Scottish Minister.

Such was the tragic end of this born leader of men. The Royal Navy should hold his name in grateful remembrance, for he blazed abroad its most splendid traditions.

As for ourselves, we were indeed fortunate to have claimed him amongst our friends.

## KOLCHAK

Just as his friends will never forget Cromie, so amidst an even wider circle of admirers, the achievements of Kolchak will always be remembered. Each had the same quality of leadership, each had a brilliant career in his service, each faced insurmountable difficulties, and each died by the hand of a Bolshevik assassin.

Kolchak I met at the Stavka, where as the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea fleet he had gone to consult with General Alexeiev. We did not have more than a few words conversation, but I am at least glad to have been presented to a very striking man. As we sat at dinner in the hotel at Mogilev, though I was some distance from him, I could mark his clear-cut and clean-shaven face and his very bright and expressive eyes, and I could clearly hear his resonant voice. Evidently a man of hard physique and strong character, and so British in type that his Bolshevik murderer declared that on the day of his death "he looked just like an English officer."

Like Cromie, he was one of those outstanding sailors who combine a thorough knowledge of their profession with a quick power of action. In other walks of life, this type is rare. Theory is too often divorced from action, and action from theory. When a combination of the two is found in the fighting Services, it produces officers who are not only original thinkers and expert



ADMIRAL KOLCHAK

technicians but also men of action and leaders of their fellows.

From his earliest days Kolchak had lived in the naval tradition. His father was an officer in the Marine Artillery, and he himself destined from childhood for the Navy.

Both at school and at the Naval College he showed himself to be a boy who possessed moral and intellectual qualities far above the average. To his fellow cadets he was the hero whom everyone admired and followed.

In 1899 he joined his first ship, and began his career in the Far East. An unexpected invitation, however, brought him back to Russia. His friend, Baron Toll, the explorer, invited him to take part as hydrographer in an Arctic expedition that was being organised by the Imperial Academy of Science. The invitation appealed to his scientific tastes, and he at once began to equip himself with a full knowledge of his new duties.

Whilst he was able to study the scientific objectives of the expedition in St. Petersburg, his realist mind took him to Norway for advice from Nansen on many practical details.

The preparations were ready in July, 1900, and the expedition started. Its destination was the tract of unknown islands off the coast of Northern Siberia. For two years he and Toll continued their explorations together. In the spring of 1902 they divided forces, Toll going off on foot across the frozen sea, and Kolchak returning to the mouth of the Lena *en route* for St. Petersburg, with the first scientific specimens that had been collected.

When Toll did not return and no news was heard of him, Kolchak immediately organised a rescue expedition. Although he only returned to St. Petersburg in December, by January he was off to Archangel in search of a crew and the necessary guides and dogs. Within a few weeks he was in the Siberian islands with provisions for three months. As the sea was free of ice, he was able to reach a point where Toll should have arrived. Here, he found many evidences of the explorer's journey and a diary showing clearly that the provisions had given out, and that men and dogs must all have died shortly after it was written.

As there was now no further hope of rescue, Kolchak started back across Siberia to St. Petersburg. When he arrived at Yakutsk, he heard that war had broken out with Japan. Being a man of very quick decision he at once telegraphed to St. Petersburg for permission to resign his work at the Academy of Science, and to proceed to Port Arthur on active service.

The Academy reluctantly agreed, and until the fall of Port Arthur, he held with great distinction a series of war commands both afloat and ashore. When the fortress fell, he had received the coveted Order of St. George and a sword of honour tied with its yellow and black ribbon. But he was a sick man, worn out by exposure in the Arctic and wounded in the course of the operations. With the other prisoners he was taken to Japan and eventually allowed to return to Russia.

Now began a new and interesting chapter in his career. He had shown himself an intrepid explorer and an officer

who could fight as well as think. In the years between the two wars he was to prove himself an organiser of great capacity and an officer of rare political ability.

The Russian navy had been smashed, and its morale sunk with its battleships at Tsu-Shima. The great task that Kolchak now set himself was to revive its fighting spirit and to rebuild it upon a new and stable foundation. Working with a small band of young staff officers, he threw himself heart and soul into this formidable undertaking.

Politics, tactics, strategy, *matériel*—any question in fact that bore upon his project he faced with the sincerity and zeal that he had shown in the Polar regions and the fortress of Port Arthur.

He had hitherto taken no interest in politics, but his quick mind soon grasped the fact that, if he was to succeed with his plans, he must have the politicians on his side. He accordingly made many friends amongst the abler members of the Duma. By keeping them fully informed of his ideas, and by constantly discussing naval questions with the various political groups, he was able not only to interest public opinion in the urgent needs of the fleet, but also to obtain the required funds from the Exchequer.

Towards the end of 1908, however, he was again tempted by his first love, and another Polar expedition took him off to Dalny-Vostok. But he could not long be spared from St. Petersburg. Admiral Grigorovich, the new Minister of Marine, remembering his record, not only recalled him to the Naval Staff, but began at

once to carry into effect the programme of reforms that he and his circle had produced.

A year in the Naval Staff led on to commands in the Baltic fleet, where Admiral Essen recognised a kindred spirit in this active young Captain.

When the war broke out, Kolchak was Flag-Captain and the Admiral's right-hand man. For the next two years he was the central figure of the fleet. If operations were to be planned, it was he who planned them. If they were to be carried out, it was he also who carried them out. When mines were to be laid in the approaches to Kiel, and the Admiral commanding the expedition ordered a retirement on the ground that the German fleet had taken to sea, Kolchak insisted upon going on.

When the old cruiser, *Rurik*, broke down and Kolchak's four mine-layers were left without an escort, he yet forced his way forward, and laid his mines under the very guns of Dantzig. When the German advance of 1915 was carrying all before it on the Eastern front, Kolchak was constantly on its flank, laying mines and attacking whenever he had a chance.

So great, indeed, was the reputation that he had made for himself that, when in June, 1916, the Emperor at last consented to Admiral Engelhardt's retirement, Kolchak was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea fleet.

His qualities were exactly those required for the post. The *Goeben* and the *Breslau* had dominated the situation, coal had been transported unchecked from Asia Minor to Constantinople, and the Russian navy

had resigned itself to almost complete inactivity. For two years the fleet had been asleep in the Black Sea.

In a whirlwind, Kolchak descended upon this placid backwater. It was typical of the man that he arrived in an aeroplane to take up his command, and that within twenty-four hours of his arrival he was demanding the reason why no preparations had been made for organising an attack upon the *Breslau,* which was then at sea. Within a few weeks, an extensive programme of mine laying had been completed, the transport of Turkish coal to Constantinople practically stopped, and many enemy ships captured or sunk. The Roumanian and South-Western fronts of the Russian Army immediately benefited from this active policy. Their flanks were better defended and their supplies were greatly improved.

When the revolution broke out, Kolchak was planning an ambitious descent upon the Asiatic coast of Turkey and a combined movement upon Constantinople. Another six months of command and he might have revolutionised the allied position in Eastern Europe. As it was, his work was destroyed at the critical moment. Just when his preparations were complete, the Emperor abdicated and the Russian effort collapsed.

For a time he struggled against the growing flood, and by sheer courage and character sustained the spirit of the fleet. More than once, he faced his officers and men and carried them away by the fire and power of the appeals that he made to them. He even insisted upon the fleet going to sea and holding up enemy

shipping. Indeed, so great an impression did his efforts make that five hundred officers and men of his command obtained leave for the purpose of carrying on patriotic propaganda with the Russian army.

If he had been left to himself, he would not only have maintained his fleet in being, but would have upheld the allied cause against almost any attack. But he was not left to himself. He was stabbed in the back by the Provisional Government. His requests were ignored, his officers were dismissed against his orders, his position with his men was undermined, and Kerensky himself, the demagogue, descended upon Sevastopol with a flood of disruptive rhetoric. Worse was to follow. A mob of murderers arrived, calling themselves the delegates from the Baltic Fleet, to stir up strife and mutiny in the Black Sea.

No wonder that under this poisonous corrosion discipline was dissolved and the fleet immobilised.

The day came when a crowd of sailors appeared, demanding the Commander-in-Chief's sword. Kolchak paraded them on deck and gave them a speech that made them wish they had never come. "You have the audacity" he ended "to ask for my sword. I won it at Port Arthur, fighting for my country. You shall never have it." And he ended by throwing the sword with its St. George's ribbon into the sea. The sailors slunk away, and spent the next morning diving for it, as they were determined to restore it to its owner.

In spite of this personal triumph, Kolchak realised that the position was hopeless. Moreover, the Pro-

visional Government, whose members had done their best to destroy his authority, demanded his presence in St. Petersburg. His command had ceased to exist, and he left Sevastopol to see what could be done in the capital. There again, Kerensky and his colleagues did everything in their power to impede the efforts that he was making in the allied cause. So greatly did they fear him that they eventually asked him to leave Russia. Looking for opportunities of service, he went to England, then to America, then to Japan. At last, in the spring of 1918, the directors of the Chinese Eastern Railway asked him to organise the defence of the line. It was this invitation that took him to Siberia, and that opened the last and tragic chapter of his career.

Siberia was then in a state of utter confusion. The Bolsheviks were threatening the railways, rival adventurers were plundering the country, and paper governments were intriguing against each other. In these conditions, a man such as Kolchak was needed for a greater post than the Far Eastern Railway could offer him. It was not surprising therefore that he was soon persuaded much against his will to undertake the duties of Defence Minister in what was called the Siberian Government. As the summer of 1918 wore on, he inevitably came to be recognised by Europe and America as the leader of the anti-Bolshevik movement. For the next six months his efforts, made amidst the divided counsels of his colleagues, and the general chaos of his surroundings, won a considerable measure of success.

There was, indeed, a moment in the spring of 1919 when it looked as if his forces would effect a junction with those of General Denikin. Sazonov was staying with me in London at the time and I was able to obtain through him declarations from Kolchak that fully satisfied the Allies as to his intention to hold a Constituent Assembly in the event of his being victorious.

Once again, however, in his career, at the very moment when success looked to be within his reach, treachery and corruption destroyed his plans. Apart from the difficulty of his position, he was badly served by those around him. In a civil war of the kind that was being waged, there were few dependable friends and many enemies on all sides. By October, 1919, the front, that had looked so firm a few weeks before, was crumbling. One of the armies had gone over to the Bolsheviks, while the Czech Legion had been so permeated with extremist propaganda that officers and men alike declared that they would fight no more and were only interested in returning through Vladivostok to their newly liberated fatherland.

Eventually, Kolchak found himself marooned at a small station 250 *versts* from Irkutsk, with 15,000 men, a treasure of four hundred million roubles, and a hostile country round him. His position was critical, and the weakness or folly of others made it desperate. The events that followed had better not be too closely investigated (for an allied, though not a British, officer handed him and his treasure over to the Czechs, and

the Czechs delivered him to the Bolsheviks. The end was now inevitable.

The final scene took place at Irkutsk, where the Bolsheviks went through the form of a trial. I give the account of it in the words of witnesses whose evidence is on record:

"How did he hold himself at the examination?" the Judge was asked at a subsequent inquiry.

"He held himself like a prisoner of war, the commander of an army which had lost the campaign, and from this point of view he held himself with complete dignity. He would not compromise his friends."

When he was condemned to death he faced the Court with the question, "Is it a judicial sentence or a military act?"

When the firing party arrived, he traced with his foot "Good-bye" in the snow, lit a cigarette and prepared himself for death.

"For all these he was a hero," the judge admitted.

"Even for his executioner?"

"Why, certainly."

In due course the news of his death reached Moscow, and a man in the street insulted his memory.

"You should not speak against Kolchak," shouted another, "he fought against us, he had to be exterminated, but he was a fine fellow."

When groundless charges were made against him for the cruelties that had been committed in the civil war, Lenin brushed them aside with the answer, "It is stupid to blame Kolchak. This is the vulgar defence

of democracy. Kolchak worked with the means that he found."

To this testimony I need add nothing. In the words of the Moscow workman, "he was a fine fellow." In the words of the Siberian executioner, "he held himself with complete dignity." By the admission of Lenin he was a leader of men who only failed through the flaws in the instrument that he was given to use.

# XIV

## A LADY OF SORROWS

*De Morte Mundique Vanitate*

Media vita in morte sumus
Quem quærimus adjutorem nisi te, domine
Qui pro peccatis nostris iuste irasceris?
Sancte Deus, sancte fortis, sancte et misericors salvator:
Amaræ morti ne tradas nos.

*Hymnarium Latinum.*



THE GRAND DUCHESS ELIZABETH

## CHAPTER XIV

### A LADY OF SORROWS

THE most poignant tragedies are those that break up the lives of quiet and devoted homes. When misfortune comes in the grand manner, and men and women are struck down by the relentless purpose of a dramatic destiny, it is awe and wonder rather than sympathy and pity that are excited in our hearts. Blow after blow falls upon the House of Atreus, and they are accepted as the decrees of ineluctable fate. The career of a Napoleon founders in a terrific storm, and we regard as inevitable a tragic end to a dæmonic career. The world expects these visitations of destiny, and when they arrive, almost welcomes them, so certain were they to fall upon their victims. It is when tragedy enters into the life of a happy family, living much as we live, thinking much as we think, loving much as we love, that it leaves a lump in our throats and a tear upon our cheeks.

Such a tragedy was the life of Princess Elizabeth of Hesse-Darmstadt, wife of the Grand Duke Serge of Russia.

This beautiful lady was the second daughter of the Grand Duke Louis IV of Hesse-Darmstadt and of Princess Alice of England. Her early life had been spent in the peace of an affectionate family, and the culture

and quiet of a German principality. Her father was the best type of German ruler, conscientious, well-read, intimate with the thoughts and lives of his contented subjects. Though her mother died young, she had lived long enough not only to endear herself to all around her, but to leave her mark upon the life of the Principality by the hospitals that she founded, the charitable institutions that she supported, and the social work that she encouraged. Model rulers and model parents, these two brought into their home the best that could be found in German and English family life. Nursery games, early bedtime, schoolroom tea, the thrilling excitements of Christmas and birthdays, colds and falls, nurses and governesses, all the early scenes, the childish excitements, the old friends that mean so much to children who come of big families and quiet homes, were never absent from the domestic life of Hesse-Darmstadt. No wonder that Queen Victoria looked with peculiar pleasure and affection at a household that was modelled on rules and habits so dear to her own heart, and that after her daughter's death she followed every detail of her grandchildren's fortunes.

Peacefully and normally the family grew up and, if the life differed at all from the life of other well-managed families of the time, it was because it was simpler, stricter and more domestic. For twenty years, little to record but the birthdays, the illnesses and the apart from the sad death of Princess Alice, there was lessons of a happy family.

Then came, in the ordinary course, a series of marriages, not of convenience but of love. As if to prove the good manners that they had learnt in the schoolroom and the nursery, the Princesses married in order of age. In 1884 the eldest, Princess Victoria, became the wife of Prince Louis of Battenberg. A few months later, Princess Elizabeth married the Grand Duke Serge of Russia, and in 1888 Princess Irene married Prince Henry of Prussia. The last to marry was the youngest surviving sister, Alexandra Victoria Helena Louise Beatrice, and her husband, as all the world remembers, was the Tsarevich, who within a few weeks of the marriage was to become the Emperor Nicholas II of Russia.

Though the Russian marriage must have made a stir in the small German court, there was nothing amazing in the fact of a Princess of Hesse marrying a Russian Grand Duke, or even a Russian Emperor. Three Russian Empresses had been Hessian Princesses, and from the beginning of the nineteenth century there had been the closest personal ties between the Houses of Romanov and Hesse-Darmstadt. The last marriage marked the peak of these imposing alliances. Though the Russian throne had a troubled history, Hessian Princesses had been happy at St. Petersburg, and the last two Alexanders had greatly strengthened the forces of stability and social order in the Russian Empire.

Here, then, was a happy family with all that a happy family needs—loving parents, wise and religious upbringing, good looks and love marriages. Did ever

Princesses deserve to live happily for ever afterwards? Had any home deserved less the buffets of misfortune? Was there ever a less likely setting for the battle, murder and sudden death that were to overwhelm it?

Yet the fairy Princess who had arrived in St. Petersburg in a glass coach, and her sister, the Empress, who had made the great love match, were soon to be bound in an almost endless chain of suffering and disaster.

To Birkbeck and me, the Grand Duchess was the Queen of Moscow, and our first act, when we arrived for the Holy Week services, was to write our names in her book in the Kremlin.

Our second was to make a visit to the Martha and Mary Convent, of which she was the Foundress and Mother Superior.

How different was the convent from every other monastery and nunnery in Russia. We found it in a road that might have belonged to the residential quarter of a London suburb. No encircling wall, no imposing gateway, no brightly coloured towers and cupolas, as at the Troitsa or the Novo-Devichi. An entrance that might have belonged to a British cottage hospital and, inside, the atmosphere of an Anglican sisterhood.

We passed across a neat garden to an equally neat church, built like the new cathedral at Tsarskoe in the traditional style of Russian churches, but with a strong German influence upon its structure and decoration.

As we were leaving, we met the Grand Duchess herself in the garden. She was in the grey habit of her Order and looked to me like one of those holy women

whom Philippe de Champagne had three hundred years ago painted with such clear-cut accuracy. Regular features, thoughtful eyes, and that look of quiet, self-possessed determination that I have often noticed in men and women who devote their lives to a holy purpose—how could one fail to be carried away by this alliance of rank, beauty and piety?

In the small room where she received her guests, we told her of the course of the war in the west, and she told us of her own war work in Moscow. As we listened to the story of the convent's activities, we might have been talking to the Mother Superior of Wantage or Clewer. If the Grand Duchess had lived two centuries earlier, she would have fitly taken her place with Mère Angélique of Port Royal.

Indeed, the similarity between Port Royal and the Martha and Mary Convent impressed me so vividly that, as soon as I returned to the Moscow shops, I bought a copy of the *Lettres provinciales* and read again Pascal's account of a visit to the Community.

In his Nineteenth Letter he might have been writing of the Grand Duchess and the Martha and Mary Convent, and, if I am to give a true idea of its quiet piety and steady faith, I must quote the words of his description:

"Je les ai vu (et je vous avoue que j'en ai eu une satisfaction extrême), je les ai vus, non pas dans une générosité philosophique, ou dans cette fermeté irrespectueuse qui fait suivre impérieusement ce qu'on

croit être de son devoir; non aussi dans cette lâcheté molle et timide qui empêche, ou de voir la verité, ou de la suivre, mais dans une piété douce et solide, pleins de défiance d'eux-mêmes, de respect pour les puissances de l'Eglise, d'amour pour la paix, de tendresse et de zèle pour la vérité, de désir de la connaître et de la défendre, de crainte pour leur infirmité, de regret d'être mis dans ces épreuves, et d'espérance, néanmoins que Dieu daignera les y soutenir par sa lumière et par sa force, et que la grâce de Jésus Christ qu'ils soutiennent, et pour laquelle ils souffrent, sera elle-même leur lumière et leur force. J'ai vu enfin en eux le caractère de la piété chrétienne . . ."

When I left the Grand Duchess, I felt that we had met not only a saint but one of the great benefactresses of Christendom. Dispensaries, hospitals, rescue homes, schools, centres for the training of nurses and the treatment of tuberculosis, even a service of messenger boys for the employment of orphans, all had grown up under the inspiration of this noble lady.

How in the space of less than ten years had the beautiful Princess of Hesse joined the company of the holy women who have founded religious communities? From her childhood she had been given to good works, but her charitable fervour could never have developed on the model of St. Scholastica or St. Clare if her life had run unchecked along the lines that her family intended. Without some arresting break she would have lived and died a beautiful Princess, admired at

Court, popular amongst the people, beloved by her family. The break came, and the whole course of her life was changed. Although the world knows the story, I must give some account of it, for I can add to it new details and bring it down to the final chapter.

Let me begin by contradicting the report that her marriage was not a happy one, and that Serge was an unworthy husband. The two were devoted to each other, and the Grand Duke was a man of culture and considerable talent. When his new niece and sister-in-law, the Empress Alexandra, first settled in Russia, it was he who explained to her the ritual of the coronation, and showed her with all the knowledge of a connoisseur the antiquities and art treasures of St. Petersburg and Moscow. In politics, he represented a past generation, for his conservatism was the conservatism of de Maistre, rigid, traditional and almost religious. As a boy, he had known from his own bitter experience the danger and tragedy of revolutionary Russia. For his father was Alexander II, the Liberator of the Serfs, who had been killed by a Nihilist in St. Petersburg upon the eve of the day on which he intended to give a liberal constitution to the Russian Empire.

A Prince in high position, for he was Governor of Moscow, who held absolutist views in the twentieth century, was bound to make many enemies. The Jews in particular detested him, and many groundless and malicious rumours were spread against his private life. Those, however, who are best qualified to speak with authority tell me that he and the Grand Duchess deeply

loved each other, and that in politics he played the part of a convinced and honest die-hard. When the Japanese war ended in revolution, and the Emperor was forced to make concessions to the left, the Grand Duke played a resolute and honourable part. His advice to his nephew was to make no constitutional change, on the ground that Russia was not ready for Parliamentary government, but that, if reforms were really to be tried, the Emperor should himself take the lead, and make the new Duma appear as a free and generous gift from a sympathetic autocrat rather than as a grudging concession forced upon the Government under the threat of revolution. This was sound advice, and it would have been well if the Emperor had taken it. In any case, the Grand Duke was too honest a man to continue in a high post of responsibility under a Government that he distrusted. With the Emperor's permission, therefore, he resigned the post of Governor of Moscow, leaving it, as he said, for a successor who was in sympathy with the policy that the Emperor had accepted.

At the beginning of 1905 the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess were already packing up for their move from Moscow. By the second week in February their good-byes had been said, and their last packing cases addressed, when Serge was killed by a terrorist bomb in one of the squares of the Kremlin and within a few yards of his wife's room. When the Grand Duchess heard the explosion, she was on the point of leaving the palace for the depot that she had made the centre of relief work on behalf of the armies in Manchuria. The

windows were still rattling as she rushed into the square to find within a few yards of the door the splinters of the carriage, the wounded coachman and the remains of her dead husband.

The outrage was the culmination of a terrorist campaign against accredited authority, and if I am to complete the picture of the Grand Duchess' life, I must turn aside for a moment to the sinister forces that had burst into the Kremlin household.

By a sudden and overwhelming blow the Grand Duchess had become the victim of a revolutionary outrage, and if the tragedy of her life is to be understood, some reference is necessary to the movement behind the crime and to the men who played the principal part in its perpetration.

The terrorism of the 'seventies and the 'eighties had broken out with renewed force after the chaotic demobilisation of the Russian army at the end of the Japanese war. Indeed, it had become the more formidable from the spirit of defeatism that had overwhelmed the country and from the fanatical conviction of the men and women who were planning the outrages. To the world at large the Grand Duke stood out as the champion of reaction, and his death would mean a staggering blow to the forces of the old order. Detailed and methodical plans, therefore, were laid for his murder. The best terrorist brains were engaged upon the work, and the most notorious *agents provocateurs* actually superintended the plot.

Three men, each of them in striking contrast to the

other, perpetrated the crime; Azev, the *agent provocateur*, Kalaev, the romantic idealist, and Savinkov, the very embodiment of the psychology of the conspirator.

First, there was Azev, the *agent provocateur*. Were there really such infamous wretches as *agents provocateurs?* Were they not merely the invention of guilty or disordered brains? Their work seemed so diabolically complicated, the risk so staggering, the reward so improbable, that I could with difficulty bring myself to believe in their existence. Why should police agents instigate terrorist outrages? The wish to win importance in police circles did not seem to me a reasonable explanation of the career of these double-crossed traitors. Sooner or later, they were certain to be exposed and, even supposing that they escaped execution or assassination, what permanent reward could they expect that would not embroil them with one side or the other? To these questions I have never obtained satisfactory answers. But I satisfied myself on dependable evidence that these men actually existed, and that the most notorious of them was Azev, the sinister traitor who instigated the Grand Duke's murder.

Azev's name has since become notorious. The memoirs of revolutionaries and the publication of Government papers, have connected it with several terrible crimes. Who was the dark figure behind the conspirators when Pleve was blown to pieces? Azev. Who was it lurking in the shadows when Bogrov murdered Stolypin in the theatre at Kiev? Azev. Who

was it whispering treason into the ears of the simple folk whom Father Gapon had gathered before the Winter Palace? Azev. And it was Azev who, as chairman of the central terrorist committee, sent with tears in his eyes, the girl whom he loved, to kill the Commandant of Gendarmes at Odessa, and then betrayed her to the police within a few minutes of the projected outrage.

The coincidence of this arrest did not stand by itself and, in course of time, suspicions, that were already fluid, became crystallised as a result of a chance meeting between the well-known revolutionary, Burtsev, and a high police authority. The two found themselves opposite each other in a French *wagon restaurant*. Burtsev started the conversation and, being a man of nerve and humour, brought it round to the subject of police agents. With a sudden flair he threw Azev's name into the talk. Lopuchin, the Police Commandant, showed at once by his manner that the truth had been discovered.

The facts soon became known in terrorist circles in Russia. Azev was called upon for an explanation. He could not give it. For the whole of one night the committee, before whose examination he had completely broken down, debated whether or not to kill him. Athough death meant nothing to them, for they had killed many men and women, innocent as well as guilty, they were so shocked by the enormity of his crimes that they postponed their final decision until the following afternoon. Within a few hours he was on his way to Germany,

where he died during the time that I was in Petrograd. By a coincidence that seems equally incredible with that of his discovery, he was last seen by Burtsev himself, the very man who had exposed him. There was a stray collision in the streets of Berlin in which two cabs were involved. Out of one came Burtsev, the Social Revolutionary, out of the other Azev, the *agent provocateur*. I am told that the two men, whose ways had crossed again in so curious a fashion, greeted each other with a word of recognition.

It was this Azev who gave the driving force to the plot against the Grand Duke.

But there were with him two very notable accomplices.

There was Kalaev. It was Kalaev who actually threw the bomb. A young enthusiast, a visionary, a poet, how came this boy with big, sad eyes and a dreamer's smile into the company of the terrible Azev? His family were poor and law-abiding, his father, a Warsaw policeman, and one of the few who would never take a bribe, his brothers, hard working labourers. He himself, being passionately determined to improve his mind, left Poland for St. Petersburg and such chances as he might find for himself at the University. As his mind developed, so his opinions advanced. There was the usual sequence of events—suspicion, expulsion, police supervision, banishment to Ekaterinburg and furtive journeys to western Europe. The University course upon which he had set his heart was blighted. The iron had entered his soul and step by step he drifted into the

ranks of the Social Revolutionaries, until eventually he became one of the most active members of their Council of Action. Yet, though in the terrorists' circle, he was never really one of them. He was a believer, and disapproved of his comrades' atheism. Though the world had treated him hardly, he bore no personal hatred against anyone. Though his fellows were engaged in a programme of ruthless destruction, he spurned the name of anarchist, and refused to throw the bomb when the Grand Duchess was in the carriage with her husband. Serge was to him not a tyrant whom he hated, but an obstruction in the path that was leading to the world of his dreams.

"We are the knights of the spirit," he told his friends. "We are fighting for a new world. We are creating the future." Serge meant the past, and the page of the past had to be destroyed.

After the outrage the Grand Duchess visited him in prison. Her husband, a strict observer of Orthodox practice, had often enjoined upon her the obligation of a holy death. A practising Christian should so order his affairs as to die at peace with God and man. Remembering these convictions, she felt it her duty to bring Kalaev to repentance before he died. She went, therefore, to his prison and pleaded with him soul to soul.

Was there ever a more moving encounter? On the one hand, the beautiful widow, praying the murderer to repent, leaving her Bible with him, exhorting him in the name of Christian charity. On the other, the revo-

lutionary dreamer, convinced that he had carried out a mission from Heaven, certain that he was leaving the world better for the blood that he had shed and the sacrifice that he was prepared to offer.

The door of the cell was unlocked and the Grand Duchess entered alone. With a look of astonishment Kalaev asked his visitor who she was and why she had come.

"I am his widow," she replied. "Why did you kill him?"

"I did not want to kill you," he said. "Several times I saw him when I had the bomb in my hands, but you were with him, and I spared him."

"Did you not think that you were killing me together with him? Did you not realise the horror of the crime that you were committing?"

When she pressed her Bible into his hands, he offered her in return a copy of his own journal. "If I read the Bible that you have left me, you must read the journal in which I say that I am determined to destroy everyone who stands in the way of our ideal."

They parted, and the young man went unflinchingly to his death. Between the two was the outward gulf that separates the murderer from the victim. Perhaps, however, in the inner heart of the man, for he was not an atheist, there was a closer bond of sympathy with the Christian woman who had called him to repentance, than he would ever admit to the guards who surrounded his cell.

"The Grand Duchess," so he told his judges, "can

testify how heart to heart I laid bare my soul to her, in spite of my confusion when I found myself talking with her."

Of a very different temper was the third plotter, Boris Savinkov. Of all the Russians whom I have met, none has left upon me a more definite impression than this mysterious man. A thinker whose logic made havoc of conventions, a penetrating writer with an uncannily sensitive touch, a resolute adventurer whose hand was in every plot—few could resist the spell of this untiring conspirator.

Just as an inscrutable providence had caught the beautiful Princess on the wheel of calamity, so little more than the haphazard turn of chance took Boris Savinkov into the haunts of revolution. He and his brother were at the University of St. Petersburg when, with many others, they were arrested by the police at a demonstration in the Kazan Square. The young men were probably doing nothing more than the London medical students who from time to time go shouting down the Strand. But in St. Petersburg this insignificant comedy soon developed into unrelieved tragedy. The father, who had been a judge, lost his post, and died insane, the elder brother was sent to Siberia, where he committed suicide, and Boris only avoided execution by escaping from prison. A big crowd, a little noise, and the wild spirits of two university students had thrown a happy family into a relentless machine that smashed their home and turned the surviving son on to the streets with hatred in his

heart and a bomb in his pocket.

For more than ten years Savinkov played one of the most important parts in the inner circle of the terrorists. Pleve was his best known victim, but his hand was in many other terrible affairs.

As the years passed, however, his quick and sensitive mind grew discontented with the conventional catchwords of his fellow conspirators. What, he asked himself, was to be gained by all this bloodshed? Was it right to kill, or was it not right to kill? If it was right to kill, was there any difference between murder and killing in war? If it was not right to kill, war, ordinary murder and the killing of Grand Dukes were equally wrong. These doubts and searchings of heart he has himself vividly described in two very remarkable books, *The Pale Horse* and *The Tale of What was Not.*

At the time of the murder of the Grand Duke he was evidently passing through this crisis of mind. He seems to have reached a point at which he realised the futility of terrorist outrages but, having no fixed principles to take the place of Nihilist fanaticism, did not yet care whether this or that man or woman was killed, or whether this or that Grand Duke was attacked.

But like many other Russian revolutionaries, he was moving to the right, and until his death he was never to turn back. When the Bolsheviks seized power in November, 1917, they had no more formidable enemy than this former terrorist. There was no anti-Bolshevik movement with which he was not connected, there was no plot of which he was not the central figure. I knew

him well. The last time that I met him was on the train between Belgrade and Constantinople. For some time past he had wished to discuss with me the future of Kolchak, and on hearing that I was going to Constantinople as the League of Nations Commissioner for Russian Refugees, he had taken a sleeper in my carriage. When I left my compartment for the restaurant, there he was in the passage, the same quick, sensitive intellectual, almost catlike in his versatility, undeterred by the suspicions of many of his colleagues, undefeated by Bolshevik successes.

His death was as mysterious as his life. When he was not working out plans of campaign in Paris, he was fighting with the Green Bands in the Ukraine, or plotting on the frontiers of Russia. From time to time he would even enter Bolshevik Russia in disguise. Was it his nerve of steel or some dark intrigue that made him finally accept a woman's invitation, and return to Russia under his own name? All that can be said is that he was immediately arrested by the Cheka and put upon his trial. According to the Bolshevik communiqués he thereupon confessed his past activities, betrayed his colleagues and recanted his anti-Soviet opinions. To complete the picture the Bolsheviks added to this announcement the further news that he had thrown himself from his prison window, and committed suicide. Those who knew him best, though they will never understand the working of his subtle and mobile mind, will not believe this improbable story. But whatever may have been his end, of one thing I

am certain, he died as he had lived, working and thinking against his enemies, always intent upon his tortuous and mysterious purposes.

Such were the three men who brought tragedy into the life of the happy Princess.

Have I done enough to sketch the outline of the drama in the Kremlin Square? The rigid, traditional, conservative Grand Duke, a not unworthy type of his class, the beautiful Grand Duchess, brought up amidst good works and family affection, a husband and wife devoted to each other, Azev the *agent provocateur*, Kalaev the fanatical idealist, and Savinkov the relentless plotter. A fearful tragedy had ended one chapter of the Grand Duchess' life, but there were to be more acts than one before the drama was completed.

After the murder the Grand Duchess gave herself heart and soul to good works. She sold her jewellery, dividing it into three parts, returning one third to the Russian Crown, giving the other thirds to her nearest relations and her own charities, and keeping nothing for herself, not even her wedding ring. She made over her palaces, one of which was the English war hospital when I was in Petrograd, to her adopted children, the son and daughter of the Grand Duke Paul, and she devoted all her energies to the foundation of the sisterhood at Moscow.

Whilst there had been several cases of Grand Duchesses taking the veil, and at least one case of a Grand Duchess founding a convent, no Russian Princess, nor, indeed, anyone else in Russia, had ever founded

an institution such as the Martha and Mary community. Unlike other Russian convents it was neither enclosed nor contemplative. Whilst prayer and meditation were given their full place in the day's routine, and the hours, fasts and festivals were rigorously observed, the spirit of the community was the spirit of activity and of general usefulness. Although there were eventually several hundred sisters, very few of them were under perpetual vows. The Grand Duchess herself, who had joined the Orthodox Church some time after her marriage, actually took the vows, and received the veil from episcopal hands, but amongst the sisters and novices who made up the Order there never seem to have been more than about a score who were under any perpetual obligation.

The community was recruited from every walk of life. At one end of the scale, there were three Princesses bearing names famous in Russian history; at the other, there were sisters from the professional and even peasant classes. One young peasant who entered the sisterhood, had enlisted as a soldier in the Japanese war, and had obtained the Cross of St. George for rescuing her colonel in the face of enemy fire. Having herself been wounded, she told the secret of her sex to the Red Cross, and returned to Russia just in time to attend the anniversary festival in St. Petersburg of the Knights of St. George. But much to her annoyance she was refused admission to the People's Palace, where the festival was taking place, and told that her discharge papers might equally well belong to

a brother or a friend. Not content with this rebuff, she journeyed back to Siberia, chiefly on foot, found the Sergeant of her former battalion, obtained verification papers, and returned after many months in triumph to St. Petersburg. As she had now had her fill of the army, she determined to enter religion and to devote her life to good works. Thus, she became a sister in the Martha and Mary community, where she hung on the wall of her cell, for Russian sisters are not allowed to wear decorations, her Cross of St. George with its black and yellow ribbon. But her former life still held an attraction for her, and when war with Austria seemed inevitable in 1914, she told the Grand Duchess that she would like to go back to the army. However, she was dissuaded from her idea, and had to content herself with showing her St. George's Cross to the Emperor when he visited the community and with telling him the story of her very remarkable life.

Details such as these show the variety and catholicity of the company that the Grand Duchess had gathered around her.

The work of the community steadily increased in usefulness. In contrast to the nuns of St. Basil, the sisters worked to a great extent outside the community's walls. Wherever the need was greatest, there was the Grand Duchess, ready to start an organisation, and to throw all her energy into the work. The doctors came to regard the Sisters' Hospital for desperate cases as the best in the city, and the Grand Duchess herself as one of their most skilful and sympathetic nurses.

The charitable knew her Rescue Home to be one of the most efficient in Europe. Thanks to her example, the social conscience of Moscow was awakened, when it became known that she had founded a home for incurable consumptives of the poorest class, and was herself regularly visiting the dying patients. When there was need for a nun to read the psalms for the dead, she would take her turn and for hour after hour recite them through the night, kneeling alone in the community chapel.

Striking, however, as were her works of active Christian charity, her beautiful character, so her closest friends told me, glowed even more brightly in her meditations and in the ascetic life that she unceasingly observed. After a long day of incessant work, she would spend the night in contemplation, or in the exacting services of the Orthodox Church. If she slept at all, it was on a wooden bed without a mattress; and as to food, she had long since renounced everything but milk, eggs, vegetables and bread. In short, she combined in her own character the two main aspects of life in a religious community, on the one hand, the constant service of her fellow men and women, and particularly the weakest and poorest, and on the other, an equally constant meditation on the verities of the Christian Faith. If she needed a justification for the name of her sisterhood, it was to be found in the union of the duties of Martha and Mary that she herself exemplified.

At the time of the war there was a growing demand

for the extension of the activities of the sisterhood to cities other than Moscow and to branches of work that had not hitherto been attempted. Whenever I went to Moscow, I heard the praises of the institution. Even the conservative hierarchs, who at first had been suspicious of its westernising tendencies, were admitting its value. The Grand Duchess herself was working and praying night and day. Unlike many holy women, she had a methodical mind and a remarkable grasp of detail. Even as long ago as the Japanese war, she had been one of the first to discover the misappropriation of Red Cross supplies, and had insisted upon accurate receipts being sent to the contributors of money or stores. This practical experience served her in good stead in 1914. For the next three years she never ceased to direct with great efficiency the expanding branches of her good works, and to inspire her sisters not only with her unselfish zeal but also with her care for minute details.

How grim and blind then was the outburst of popular prejudice in 1915 when the crowds of anti-German rioters wished to attack the convent as a centre of enemy activities! Mobs are incredibly stupid, but no mob was ever more stupid than the Moscow mob in believing such a wildly untrue charge. All the Grand Duchess' sympathies were with the Allies, and particularly with the English as I myself knew from my own conversations with her, whilst it was notorious that since the outbreak of war she had been devoting every moment of her time

and energy to war work of every description. Fortunately Chelnokov, the Mayor of Moscow, went himself to the convent and, although the police proved useless, he succeeded in dispersing the crowd that had come to burn the institution.

So enthralled was the Grand Duchess with her work that she seldom left Moscow. Once only did she visit Tsarskoe Selo during the war, when she is reputed to have warned her sister against Rasputin's influence. Now and then, but very seldom, the Emperor and Empress would go to Moscow, where their first visit would always be to the Grand Duchess. Although the shadow of Rasputin threw itself across the intimate ties that united the two sisters, their affection for each other never diminished. But, unfortunately, each was so fully engaged upon war work that there was little opportunity for more than occasional meetings. If only the Empress Alexandra could have had more constantly at her side her wise and saintly sister, many mistakes that led to serious consequences might have been avoided. As it was, they lived and worked apart, seeing each other only intermittently, and being finally separated when the Bolsheviks refused to allow any communication between them.

When the revolution began in March, 1917, the Moscow mob had another fit of ignorant ferocity. The prisons had been opened and a rabble, mostly of convicts, gathered around the community building, shouting that they had come to seize the Grand Duchess as a German spy. What followed I can best describe in the words

of one of her most devoted friends, who was herself an eye witness.

"The Grand Duchess sent all the frightened women into the back of the house, and went out alone to talk to the men. 'What do you want with me?' she asked.

"'We have come to take you to be tried; you are concealing weapons; German Princes are hiding in your house.'

"'Come in,' she answered. 'Look round, search everywhere; but let only five of you come in.'

"'Dress yourself to come with us,' they shouted.

"'I am the Superior of the convent,' she quietly replied. 'I must make final arrangements and say goodbye to my sisters.'

"She had given the order for the sisters to assemble in the church and for a Te Deum to be sung. Turning to the revolutionaries she said, 'Come into the church, but put down your arms in the entrance.' They followed her. After the Te Deum she went up to the cross, signing to the men to come after her. Under the spell of her calm they followed her and kissed the cross too. 'Now go and search for whatever you think you will find.'

"The priest Mitrofan accompanied them, and they soon came back to the howling mob outside saying, 'It is a convent and nothing more.' The Grand Duchess' personality had for a second time quelled the ravening mob."

But the tragedy was only at its beginning. Within a few hours the representatives of the Provisional

Government were at the sisterhood, asking the Grand Duchess to retire to the Kremlin and telling her that they could not otherwise be responsible for her safety. With set purpose she had given her life to the community, and her answer was that on no account would she leave it. "I did not come out of the Kremlin to be driven back into it by a revolutionary force. If it is difficult for you to protect me, please do not attempt it."

In spite of repeated warnings, resolute and serene she continued the work of the community, nursing soldiers, comforting dying old women, relieving the poor and praying fervently. At the very time when the Bolsheviks were engaged in expelling the Provisional Government, she was writing these words of faith and resignation to a friend:

"One must fix one's thoughts on the heavenly country in order to see things in their true light, and to be able to say, 'Thy will be done,' when one sees the complete destruction of our beloved Russia. Remember that Holy Russia, the Orthodox Church, 'against whom the Gates of Hell shall not prevail,' still exists, and will always exist. Those who can believe this without a doubt will see the inner light shining through the darkness in the midst of the storm. I am not *exaltée*, dear friend, I am only certain that the God, who chastises, is the same God who loves. I have been reading the Bible a good deal lately, and if we believe in the sublime sacrifice of God the Father in sending His Son to die and rise again for us, we

shall feel the Holy Spirit lighting our way, and our joy will become eternal, even if our poor human hearts and earthly minds pass through moments which seem terrible. Think of a storm; there are some things sublime in it, some things terrifying; some are afraid to take shelter, some are killed by it, and some have their eyes opened to the greatness of God; is not this a true picture of the present times? We work, we pray, we hope, and each day we feel more and more the Divine Compassion. It is a constant miracle that we are alive. Others are beginning to feel the same, and they come to our church to seek rest for their souls. Pray for us, dear heart."

At the end of the long series of Holy Week services the Orthodox Easter arrived with its clash of bells and a rejoicing that not even Bolshevik threats could destroy in the hearts of the Martha and Mary sisters. On the third day of Easter week the community was celebrating the feast of the Iberian Mother of God, the patron saint of Moscow, and the Patriarch Tichon, a holy man destined to play a noble part in the defence of religion, celebrated the Liturgy in the chapel. After the service the Grand Duchess and the Patriarch prayed together.

Within half an hour of the Patriarch's departure a detachment of the Red Army had surrounded the convent, entered the guest room and demanded that the Grand Duchess should immediately leave the community and go with them.

Fearing the anger of the thousands of men and women in Moscow, who loved her, the Bolsheviks made a pretence of her joining the Imperial family at Ekaterinburg. As she felt that she was leaving her sisterhood for ever and that she was going to her death, she asked for a few hours in which to prepare herself for a distant journey and to say good-bye to her sisters. The Bolsheviks refused, and insisted upon her and a devoted nun, Sister Barbara, departing at once under a guard of Lithuanians and Magyars. She was taken to the station and put into a train for an unknown destination. After some hours the train arrived at the station of the Monastery of St. Serge. There, she obtained some paper and ink, and wrote a last letter of farewell to the community.

The train eventually reached Ekaterinburg, where she was imprisoned for several days. From Ekaterinburg she was removed to Perm, and was there joined in her captivity by the Grand Duke Serge Michaelovich, the Princes John Constantinovich, Constantin Constantinovich, Igor Constantinovich, Count Paley and the Controller of the Princes Constantinovich. Thenceforth, she and her cousins lived in conditions that week by week became more terrible. The captives, who at first enjoyed some measure of liberty, were more and more closely confined, their food was restricted almost to the point of starvation, and the sister, Barbara, who had accompanied the Grand Duchess, was sent back to Ekaterinburg. The captives had long ago resigned themselves to death, but they did not know

that stage by stage the crime was being prepared that was to end their lives within a few hours of the murder of the Imperial Family at Ekaterinburg. The same criminals were planning the two crimes, the same brutal methods were to be employed, the same object, the total extermination of the Romanov family, was animating the minds of the plotters.

On July 17th, the Imperial Family were murdered at Ekaterinburg in circumstances that all the world knows. On the same day, the guard was strengthened about the prison at Perm. On the night of the 18th, a peasant heard strange sounds in the neighbourhood of certain disused iron ore shafts at the mining centre of Alapaevsk, a few miles from the city. Approaching the place from which the sounds came, he saw the Grand Duchess Elizabeth and the Imperial Princes in the midst of a mob of Bolshevik ruffians. According to his account, the Bolsheviks then bound the eyes of the Grand Duchess, and threw her still living into one of the shafts. He distinctly heard her last words. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The Princes were thrown in after her, and with them Sister Barbara, who, at her own request, had obtained leave to return from Ekaterinburg to be at the side of her Mother Superior. At the end of this ghastly crime someone threw in a handful of grenades, and a deafening explosion followed.

So ended the life of this royal saint. It had been consummated by a holy death.

But this story of drama and tragedy was not yet con-

cluded. Another scene was still to be enacted. Within three months Kolchak and the White Army were in possession of Alapaevsk. The details of the crime were confirmed before an official inquiry, and the bodies identified, for the letters and small possessions found in the shaft left no possibility of doubt. The mortal remains had been secretly rescued from the shaft by a devoted monk, the Hegumen Serafim, and put into coffins. When, therefore, Kolchak arrived, it was possible to hold over them fitting services in the presence of many priests and crowds of peasants from the surrounding country. It seemed, indeed, as if the solemn burial amidst the impressive rites of the Orthodox Church had ended the troubled history of the Princess. But within a few weeks, the White Armies were retreating, and the Bolsheviks again in possession of Alapaevsk. The bodies, therefore, had for a second time to be removed. Once again, they were rescued by Serafim and taken by train, first to Harbin and thence to Pekin. At Harbin the coffins were left at a Russian convent of Basilian nuns; the coffin of the Grand Duchess was opened, and the black habit of the Basilian order put upon her. From Harbin to Pekin the journey was difficult and dangerous. The Japanese, who were then in occupation of much of the intervening territory, gave Serafim what help they could, and the Chinese, true to their veneration of ancestors, accepted the monk's explanation that he was taking the coffins of his own family to a holy place. When the bodies reached Pekin they were placed in the Russian Mission

Church outside the city walls.

By this time, the Grand Duchess' sister, Lady Milford Haven, had heard of this strange journey. Feeling instinctively what her sister would have wished, she determined to have the coffin brought from Pekin to Jerusalem. In course of time, therefore, it was transported upon a British cruiser from Shanghai to Port Said, and thence to the Holy City. There, it now rests, in the Russian Church on the Mount of Olives, almost on the site of Gethsemane.

When in 1923 I was making an air tour of Palestine and Iraq, I did not fail to make a pilgrimage to this holy place, and to pay my homage to the beautiful Princess who had lived the life of a saint, and had died the death of a martyr.

"Where is the earthly glory that shall remain and pass not away? All things are but ashes, phantom, shadow, and smoke. Everything shall vanish as the dust of a whirlwind; and face to face with death we are unarmed and without defence; the right hand of the mighty is feeble and the commands of kings are as nothing. Receive, O Lord, Thy departed servant into Thy happy dwelling-place!

"And Thou who dost intercede on behalf of us all, Thou the defender of the oppressed; to Thee, most blessed among women, we cry on behalf of our sister who lies here. Pray to Thy Divine Son, pray, O most Immaculate, for her: that having lived out her life upon earth, she may leave her sorrow behind her."*

* Alexis Tolstoy, Tropar (translated by the Hon. Maurice Baring).

# XV

# THE TRIUMPH OF NIHILISM

"It was not a revolution. It was simply a collapse. The doors were burst asunder, the warders ran away and the captive people stood in the courtyard, dazed and helpless."

*Walther Rathenau.*

# CHAPTER XV

## THE TRIUMPH OF NIHILISM

I HAVE tried in these memoirs to give the impressions that I formed during my actual stay in Russia. Where I have added details with which I was not actually in contact, my purpose has been to complete a picture, or to end a story that would otherwise have been left unfinished.

Fourteen years have passed since I wrote the notes upon which most of this book is founded. It would have been better, if I could have edited them within a few months of my return to England. But I had not the chance. An active political life fully occupied my time. It is only now, in 1930, that I have had the leisure to bring them together. In the interval many tides have run under the Russian bridge, chapters of which I only saw the beginning have been ended, books have been written that fill in the picture of which I only saw a rough outline. Try as I might, I should not be human if I were not influenced by this subsequent history. My impressions of 1916 must inevitably be coloured by my fuller knowledge of 1930. Particularly is this the case when I come in this final chapter to the point at which I must summarise the disjointed details

of my year's work. The most that I can attempt is to cling firmly to my own experience as my guide, and to expel from my mind, so far as it is possible, the mass of material that has been accumulated since the revolution. It is so easy to say after the event, particularly when every kind of book has been written about it, that this or that course of action would have saved the situation, or that this or that fault brought about the catastrophe. It was much more difficult to take a broad view of a great international crisis when one could only see a corner of the scene through the obscure windows of a heavily worked office. I can only say that from the earliest days of my life in Petrograd I was conscious of an impending collapse. The details, with which I justified my fears, may not always have been accurate, and I more than once exaggerated the importance or misjudged the effect of some startling event. My first reports, for instance, on the death of Rasputin, may have given the impression that after the murder Russia would breathe more freely. If, however, such reports are still preserved, the War Office and the Foreign Office must have in their archives scores of memoranda that I sent home for the purpose of warning Whitehall and Downing Street of the dangers ahead.

From the very first I was deeply impressed by the sinister features that made the prospect look so grim. Perhaps the most conspicuous was the scrap heap of the Government machine. Like the Merovingian chariot of which Foch speaks in his *Mémoires*, the Russian wagon, built to jolt slowly over a roadless

country, had collapsed under the unprecedented strain that was placed upon it by the demands of a modern war. Alone of European countries, we English did not fully realise the severity of the pressure that was straining antiquated machinery. Being a highly developed and industrial community, we were able, though not without grave difficulty, to adjust our machinery of government to the needs of the crisis. Not even Germany, with all its specialised knowledge and organised activity, fully succeeded with this effort of readjustment. The French machine almost collapsed during the Nivelle offensive. I was in France at the time, and I knew at first hand of the mutinies in the army, and the utter confusion into which the civil government had drifted.

At the time of Caporetto I was on the Italian front. There, within the space of a few hours, I saw the transformation of an army into an undisciplined mob, and two or three hundred thousand troops throw aside their arms and crowd back along every road to the rear. When I returned to Rome, I found an utter wreck where even a few days before there had been a seemingly tolerable machine of government. Here again, was evidence of the strains and stresses that everywhere laid bare the weak places in the old machines.

In Russia the machine was particularly unsuited to withstand the pressure. Neither new men nor new Departments had been produced by the emergency. The first President of the Council during the period of the

war was Goremykin, an octogenarian whose memory went back to the days of serfdom. "Poor old Goremykin," as the Empress Alexandra called him, a furtive, fox-like, old man with long side-whiskers, obstinate with all the obstinacy of old age, totally insensitive to new ideas. The next President of the Council was Stürmer. I never myself believed many of the charges that were made against Stürmer. There was no evidence, so far as I could discover, of his being a German spy, though he was undoubtedly half-hearted about the war. When I met him, he seemed to me to be a dull, bloodless old man who, having climbed up the ladder of departmental promotion, had reached a level far above his capacity. Those who have closely followed his career confirm my view. In a long distant past he had entered the public service, and had filled with tolerable efficiency various posts. Ambition had pushed him on and, being a man of weak character and selfish outlook, he had drifted to the circle of Rasputin for influence and support. But there is no need to believe the thousand and one charges that were subsequently made against this second-rate man. He was too old, too selfish and too stupid for a great post. His self-centred ambition brought upon him a terrible death, and added a further element of confusion in the cauldron that was already bubbling over.

Of the other Ministers with whom I came into contact, certain of them, like Sazonov, Samarin, and General Polivanov were men of honest purpose and real ability. But if I made a criticism of them, I should say that they had lost the will to govern. Justi-

fiably discontented, constantly provoked, they were searching for opportunities to get out of the Government rather than to get control of it. More than once, Sazonov told me after his dismissal how delighted he was to be free of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the wrangles in the Council of Ministers. Of these later Ministers, only Trepov, the son of a foundling, seemed to possess the will to power that every statesman should possess. It was Trepov who pushed through the Murman Railway and who, in spite of a complete deficiency of the talents that politicians admire, forced an unwilling Duma to listen to his hard, grating and unconciliatory speeches. There was a moment in January 1917, when it seemed certain that this vigorous and resolute bureaucrat would succeed Stürmer. All the arrangements appeared to have been made for purging the Government of the unsuitable Ministers. The Emperor had agreed to the changes, and Trepov was already in communication with his friends upon the details of the new administration. At the last minute the Emperor suddenly changed his mind and appointed as Stürmer's successor Prince Galitsin, a dignified old man whose Red Cross work had brought him into personal contact with the Court. When I asked the reason for this change of policy, I was given the answer that was made to explain every unfortunate event. It was the influence of the "Dark Forces." Rasputin, indeed, was dead, but his evil influence was still believed to persist.

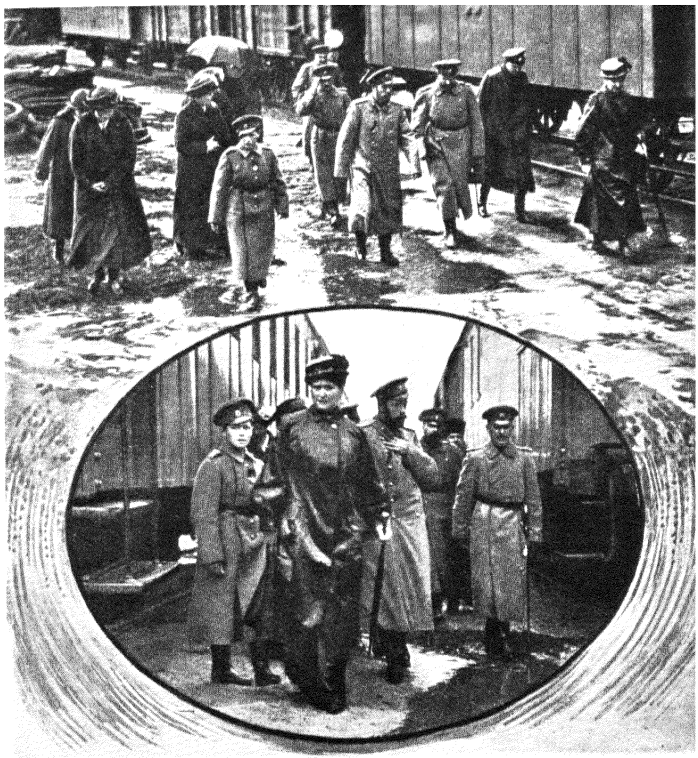
Yet, even at the time, though I expected the

answer, I was not satisfied that it was complete. I knew the Emperor to be an intelligent and conscientious man, determined to do his duty to Russia and to the Allies. I knew the Empress to be a devoted wife and mother, deeply religious, hating evil, despising dishonesty. Why should these two be always in the hands of unscrupulous intriguers? Why should they surrender every time to the forces that they ought instinctively to have opposed? I believe myself that the true answer is ignorance. They were altogether isolated. They did not know what people were thinking and doing. They did not even know what was happening in their capital of Petrograd. When the Emperor had to choose a Minister, he had not the knowledge for making a wise choice. Under a constitution like the Russian in which Ministers were not party leaders and were solely responsible for their appointments and their existence to the Emperor, there were none of the tests for proving a man's competence that are in force under a Parliamentary system. In England, most men must have been through the mill before they reach high posts. Their constituents have deliberately chosen them, the House of Commons has tried their metal, a central party organisation and a more critical press have passed their virtues and vices under a microscope. When the Government comes to be formed or a ministerial vacancy to be filled, these tests have provided a list of men who will become competent and creditable Ministers. If the Prime Minister himself needs advice, and is hesitating between this or that name, a constitutional monarch, closely in contact with

the life of his country, will give him invaluable advice. The King himself knows the men about whom he is talking. It may be that they have dined and slept at Windsor. It may be that he has seen them in the still more intimate atmosphere of Balmoral or Sandringham. Almost without exception, at some time or other they will have been brought into personal relations with him. Not so, the Emperor Nicholas and the Russian Ministers. The Ministers, whom I knew, told me that there was no intimacy between the Emperor and his Government. If they saw him, it was in official audience, in uniform, with portfolios under their arms, and for a fixed and limited time. Of the general world, the non-official world that in England is constantly flowing in and out of Buckingham Palace, the Emperor saw and knew nothing. When it came to the appointment of a President of the Council or of a new Minister, there were at hand no party leaders, whose nomination had been made certain by their political careers, and there was no knowledge at Court upon which a well considered appointment could be made. The Emperor did not even have a Chef de Cabinet. Nominally there was a Ministry of the Court, with Count Friedricks, a typical old courtier, with long white moustaches and a chest covered with stars, as the Minister. In practice, there was neither staff nor Department to advise the Emperor in his appointments as the King's private secretary would advise the King, or the principal private secretary at 10 Downing Street would advise the Prime Minister. A vacancy would occur; the Emperor would have no

knowledge of the best man for it, and would appoint someone, whom he himself had seen at Court, or whose name his entourage would press upon him. In this small, isolated circle personal influence counted for much. A political adventurer like Protopopov would ingratiate himself with the Empress and, having consolidated his influence, would be always at hand to suggest a name when a vacancy occurred, to assure her that everything was prosperous in Russia, and to confirm his opinion by forged telegrams. The Emperor, having no means of testing the recommendation and, like most princes, very friendly to those around him, would make the appointment. The result would be that some Stürmer or Galitsin would become Prime Minister at a time when the overwhelming need was for men of independent character and relentless determination.

The family party at the Stavka seemed to me to be the very embodiment of the Emperor's isolation. The Governor's house in the dirty little town had become the centre not only of the military command of the largest army in the world, but also of the civil government of the greatest European Empire. Centralisation had indeed been pushed still further, for the provincial prefecture had also become the home of the Imperial family. Although the Empress and the children actually slept in their train when they visited the Emperor, they were constantly with him at the Governor's house, bringing into its ugly and pretentious rooms a delightful atmosphere of intimacy and affection.



THE FAMILY PARTY AT G.H.Q.

Looking back at the visits I made to Mogilev, I find that my most vivid and lasting impression is that of contented domesticity. I think of the Tsarevich playing with the young Grand Dukes in and out of the military maps; I think of the simple friendliness with which the Emperor welcomed his guests; I think of the Empress showing me the spring flowers in the garden, and I am certain that I never saw a more affectionate family. But how could the momentous decisions that were needed be swiftly and resolutely taken in conditions of this nature? The greatest war that the world has ever seen was being fought, and a huge, unwieldy machine was jolting along to the verge of an abyss. Yet the man who was still in theory the autocrat upon whose word every decision waited, was living with his family in a country town, remote alike from his capital and the front line trenches, and attempting at one and the same time to command the army and to govern the country. It was not that he was heartless or indifferent or irresponsible. On the contrary, he was a man of sympathy, with the deepest sense of the responsibilities that were on his shoulders. It was because he was so conscious of his responsibilities that, contrary to the wishes of many of his friends, he assumed the command of the army in succession to the Grand Duke Nicholas. It was because he was so conscientiously determined to uphold the divine right of the autocracy that he insisted upon interfering in the details of administration and in making himself all the principal appointments. A less conscientious ruler would have

pushed responsibility upon others and would not have made the fatal attempt to keep at one and the same time his hand upon every detail of family life, upon the conduct of the higher command and upon the day to day administration of the Russian Empire. Being isolated from the world, he did not realise the impossibility of the task that he was attempting to fulfil. The machine was too strong for him. Tied to the theory that the Tsar of all the Russias must govern the country and command the army, he struggled on with an almost religious intensity in an attempt that was bound to fail.

As I looked from my office across the Winter Square to the closed windows of the Winter Palace I often wished that the Emperor could have escaped from Mogilev and returned to his capital. Only twice during my stay had the Emperor come to Petrograd; once, when, amidst scenes of wild enthusiasm, he went to the Duma, and the second time, when amidst equal enthusiasm, he met the members of the Order of St. George upon the occasion of their annual festival. If only he could have realised that his work at Mogilev was little more than the revolutions of a squirrel in a cage, and that his real place was in his palace in the capital, he might not only have steadied public opinion, but have avoided the incessant mistakes that were due to his isolation in a distant town.

Particularly should he have shown himself in Petrograd during the critical months of January and February 1917. The murder of Rasputin and the growing food shortage had created a dangerous feeling of suppressed

excitement. Every kind of rumour was rife. Defeatist talk was universal. No one supported the Government. The upper classes were criticising everything that happened, the lower classes were intermittently striking as a result of the high cost of necessities and the general difficulties of life.

Wherever we went in society, we heard nothing but these defeatist attacks upon authority. No doubt, all the more vigorous elements of Russian life were concentrated in the army, and the talk that we heard was the kind of talk that might have been heard in any war capital. But in Petrograd defeatist gossip was universal, and it was far more bitter than in Paris or Rome. The old men in the London clubs grumbled at the British Government, but they none the less accepted the new restrictions of life, and stood stolidly behind the Ministers in their efforts to win the war. Petrograd society, on the other hand, had ceased to believe that Russia could win the war, and had lost all faith in the Government. War restrictions were made to be circumvented, and the more influential the Russian, the easier was it to obtain exemption. Scarcely a day passed that did not aggravate the evil effects of the defeatist poison. It was the upper classes that chiefly spread it, and it was they rather than the manual workers who were primarily responsible for the break-down of the capital's morale.

Step by step, we felt a catastrophe approaching. Life was swiftly becoming intolerable. The bitterest tragedy was that the economic crisis in Petrograd was really passing, and no one knew it. We believed that food

was growing scarcer, and that in a few weeks Petrograd would be faced with famine. In point of fact, the Minister of Agriculture, Rittich, had been making vigorous efforts to provide the army with sufficient supplies for the spring offensive, and had just succeeded in his task. For the first time for many months the army was well provided, and Brusilov, in particular, had forty-two days' food with which to begin the spring campaign. This great effort, however, had involved the concentration of food supplies from east to west. Transport facilities had been monopolised by the army and, as a result, Petrograd had in the meanwhile been left very short. If the people had known the real reason of their shortage, the state of the capital would have been very different from what it was. But almost everyone in Petrograd was convinced that the bread queues were due to either Jewish speculation or a corrupt Government, and that the universal shortage was swiftly developing into an intolerable famine. The fact that the Government took no steps to instruct public opinion upon the real cause of the shortage was further evidence of the loss of grip amongst the governing classes. If the city had been told the truth, and had held out for a few weeks longer, the trains that had taken the food supplies to the army would have been restocking the empty granaries. But no one took the trouble to explain the position. The press was as hostile to the Government as were the educated classes, and a situation that might have been retrieved by frank explanation and

vigorous government, was allowed to deteriorate into irreparable chaos.

As the weeks passed, the rumours of discontent in the army became more definite. The evidence that had reached me undoubtedly showed that political propaganda was having some effect amongst the troops, particularly amongst the new officers. When, however, I made a more detailed inquiry, I was definitely informed that the general spirit of the troops was more satisfactory than it had been a few months before, that the army was better equipped with munitions than at any time during the war, and that the morale, even amongst the prisoners, who had been repatriated from Austria and Germany, was generally good. Red Cross workers assured me, as they have also told me since the revolution, that the loyalty of the common soldiers was even then almost touching in its intensity. Prisoners in German and Austrian camps would still mutilate themselves rather than help even indirectly to make enemy munitions, soldiers would still die in hospital with prayers on their lips for the Emperor and Holy Russia. The cause of the Allies, the *Soyuzniki*, about whom three out of four Russians knew nothing, still exercised a mysterious spell over the common soldiers. If the morale of the officers was not always as good as that of their men, there was some excuse in the fact that the whole cadre had time after time been destroyed by appalling casualties. But, speaking generally, it may be affirmed that in the weeks before the revolution, the state of the army was, in the matter of morale, of food and

of munitions, not unsatisfactory. The evidence that I received from dependable sources convinced me that although the Russians would not be able to endure another war winter, they would still be able to take their share in the allied campaign of the spring and summer.

It was, however, essential that someone should govern. Yet, just when the final effort was to be made and resolute leadership was especially necessary, everyone had abdicated. The feeble hold that the Government may once have exercised had been withdrawn. Even the Ministers who were not unsuccessfully carrying out their duties had no influence upon public opinion and were anxious to give up their task. Trepov, who had been strongest amongst them, had actually resigned, and the President of the Council was an old gentleman of good intentions but with no driving power.

Worst of all, the Emperor was himself becoming infected with this epidemic of Nihilism. Having clung too long and too closely to the minor details of power, he was at last beginning to doubt the infallibility of his *régime*. Rumours had already reached him of plots to depose him in favour of his son or of one of the Grand Dukes. These warnings he had so far ignored, for the Empress and he were still convinced that the common people remained faithful to them. But well founded stories were none the less current that, in spite of an outward appearance of resolution, he was already contemplating, if not abdication in favour of the Tsarevich, at least great changes in the Government as soon as the war was ended. When

an autocrat ceases to believe in the infallibility of autocracy, a period of extreme danger inevitably ensues; the Government loses the spirit upon which it has lived; its hand is uncertain, its foot faltering. Conviction has departed and uncertainty begins to sap the old loyalties upon which a traditional system has been built. During January and February 1917 everything seemed uncertain in Petrograd. Could Russia endure the strain of the war? Time after time, the Emperor reiterated his pledge of loyalty to the Allies, but in the towns and villages men and women were beginning to believe that he could not keep his word. Could the great cities like Petrograd endure the anarchy and hardship of daily life? The well-to-do classes were as doubtful as the women in the bread queues of a future that seemed to be bringing upon them inevitable famine.

From the Tsar to the mujik, from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea, there was everywhere spreading the psychology of Nihilism. Negation had taken the place of assurance, a cynical doubt had corroded the props upon which society rested. In the spirit as well as in the letter "*nichevo*" was the answer to almost every question that was being asked.

In this fog of disillusionment there came the final crash. We were just returned from the Arctic Ocean and Scapa when we heard the news. I was not surprised, though I had hoped that it might at least have been delayed until after the spring offensive. It had come because a nation, ill-equipped for the strain of a modern war, stricken by terrible casualties and

overwhelmed by almost intolerable hardships, had thrown aside the loyalties that had hitherto inspired it. Faith in the autocracy had been dimmed and destroyed by the isolation of the Emperor and the weakness of the Government, confidence in victory had been shaken by the millions of dead and wounded that the country had sacrificed. When the break came, the general morale, already strained, collapsed in a few hours. At the time, I was astounded by the completeness of the crash. Like Cromie, I could not understand how a disciplined navy could become in the course of a few hours a mob of brutal murderers. Like the Red Cross workers to whom I have spoken, I could not believe that young peasants, whose courage in the army was almost miraculous, and whose holy deaths were as the deaths of saints, could ever fall victims to the wave of treachery that swept through their ranks.

Before the war ended, however, I was to see in other Allied countries how strangely susceptible to sudden changes were the great crowds of human beings that war had forced into altogether abnormal association. The only difference between the happenings in Russia and in other countries was that Russia, being generations behind the west, had less organised resistance to offer to the strain and, being isolated from the Allies, was deprived of the support that might otherwise have been given her. When Milan organised its industries for resistance, and General Plumer arrived with the British Army, Italy recovered from the collapse of Caporetto. Isolated and almost unresisting, Russia went

down with little hope of recovery. The army and the navy degenerated into leaderless mobs, communism soon raged in the towns, and the peasants withdrew into the recesses of the country. No Government tried to govern, for the elderly doctrinaires who called themselves the Provisional Government knew neither what they were doing nor whither they were going.

Saddest of all, the Emperor by his abdication destroyed the last remaining loyalty in Russia. The foundations of government had been destroyed and a void created into which inevitably the Bolsheviks, being men of relentless purpose, were free to enter. The war seemed to have been fought in vain, and millions of lives thrown away to no purpose. Suffering almost beyond bearing had been endured. Yet, instead of victory, there was Bolshevism, instead of the end to years of danger and sadness, there was a life more grim and tragic than any that the war had caused during its continuance. On all hands a stifling, deadly emptiness destroyed the morale of to-day, just as it dissipated the hope of to-morrow.

On March 20th, when the Empress and the Imperial Family were prisoners at Tsarskoe Selo, there appeared "through the falling snow," I quote the words of Baroness Sophie Buxhoeveden, the gallant Lady-in-Waiting who stayed with her master and mistress to the end, "a small, bedraggled group of horsemen, parleying in front of the great closed gates. Horses and riders looked dead beat. The horses were hanging down their heads from sheer weariness, while the men

still tried to keep up a military bearing. After the conversation had lasted some time, I saw them move slowly away. It was the reserve squadron of the Chevalier Garde Regiment, which was stationed at the Muravev barracks near Novgorod, some 150 versts from Tsarskoe Selo. On hearing what was happening in Petrograd, the young officer in command set off with his men for Tsarskoe Selo. They rode for two days with hardly a stop through the bitter cold, over roads deep in snow. Men and horses were nearly exhausted when they reached their goal. At the gates of the Palace they were told that they had come too late. There was no longer an Emperor. There was no monarchy to defend."

The gates of the Palace that no longer housed an Emperor were closed in their faces. Hopeless and exhausted, the Cornet of Horse and his little troop limped away into the darkness.

The old loyalties were destroyed, for there was none to receive them, and Nihilism, the antithesis of faith and hope, had for the time overwhelmed a great people. The Russian monarchy had ended, but more had passed away than a Royal House and a political system. It was not so much the rising of a people as the falling of a city's walls. The guards had left their posts, the rulers were gone, and the common folk stood sheeplike and helpless in the deserted citadel, gazing at the ruin, and waiting for someone to give them guidance. Whilst these things were happening in the capital, I thought of the Old Believer whom I had met in the Moscow

bookshop. Was he not now poring over his treasured Apocalypse, and pointing with his finger to the prophecies that were being fulfilled before his eyes:

"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."

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