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M. V. RODZIANKO.

THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN:

An Empire's Collapse

MEMOIRS OF

M. V. RODZIANKO

President of the Russian State Duma

Translated by

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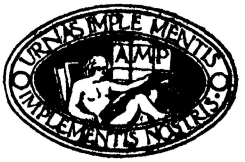

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INTRODUCTION

M. V. RODZIANKO was born in 1859 of an old noble family. He was educated in the aristocratic Corps des Pages, served in Her Majesty's Regiment of the Cavalry of the Guard, and was appointed Kammerherr of the Imperial Court. Later he served as Marshal of the Gentry and as President of the Provincial Zemstvo Executive.

When the Duma was created, and the Council of State was turned into an Upper House supplemented by elected members, M. V. Rodzianko served in it as an elected representative of the province of Ekaterinoslav. Elected to the Third Duma in 1907, he became a prominent figure in the Union of 30th October (the Octobrists). The Octobrists included a number of enlightened gentry who held high offices in the central administration; they were committed to a programme of gradual and detailed reform, and they were personally pledged not to accept office until their programme should be accepted by the Emperor. After Gutchkoff resigned the presidency of the Duma he was succeeded by Rodzianko, who continued to hold this office until the March Revolution of 1917.

Rodzianko made a good President, and his striking personality and voice helped materially to uphold the dignity of the discussions. The President of the Duma was allowed to report personally to the Emperor at more or less regular intervals, and Rodzianko, with his Court connections and the sturdiness with which he put his views, was able to add to the consequence of the House which he represented. His views were those of English

country Toryism. He was entirely opposed to the reactionary group and wished to make the national voice independent of the bureaucracy.

His tenure of office covered most of the period of the intimate though informal entente between Russia and England. Rodzianko, who could speak English, threw himself wholeheartedly into the development of this entente. I can recall that in his room at the Duma the creation of social ties with England was represented on a list of some twelve subjects in which the President wished to remain personally and directly interested. When in January, 1912, a representative party of Englishmen, including some eighteen members of both Houses of Parliament, visited Russia on an invitation which was initiated by the Duma, Rodzianko was one of the principal hosts of the visiting party, and he presided at an inter-parliamentary dinner, the first of the kind which could ever have been held in Russia.

During the war Rodzianko was necessarily always to the fore in the thousand and one activities which helped to knit closer the intimacy of the Allies. He was the personal friend of Sir George Buchanan. After the gross munition scandals of the early summer of 1915, co-operation between the Allies became even more intimate and far-reaching, and had the entire backing of the Duma. It was the principal support of the Central Munitions Committee created at its request, and on that Committee Rodzianko was the most authoritative representative of public opinion. This task he performed with success. His antecedents, his official position and his personal courage forced the incompetent Government to pay a greater attention to the pressing needs of the army. It was precisely in this field that the Duma was extending its moral influence, and it was precisely here that the Duma

as such was directly challenged by the Empress, who, while entirely loyal to the Alliance, resented any public initiative other than that of the Emperor. The letters of this unhappy lady contain many references to Rodzianko, and her complete blindness to the situation was such that an ignorant reader might almost take this solid Tory gentleman for a revolutionary conspirator.

Rodzianko, however, though an honest and courageous man, was not a strong one; and the outbreak of revolution in March, 1917, put him to a test which might easily have been too much for the soundest political judgment and the greatest political courage. When the Duma reassembled in Petrograd, it was known that the Emperor would dissolve it, and the members were determined not to disperse. Further than that they did not see. It was precisely owing to the loyalty of the Duma, and more than anyone else of Rodzianko, that the outbreak in the streets of Petrograd, which the Ministers were entirely incapable of combating, was left to develop of itself without any lead from the Duma, while Rodzianko sent telegram after telegram to the Emperor urging that the last hour had come and that the dynasty was in danger, without receiving any reply.

Finally, Rodzianko acceded to the constitution of a Provisional Government. He remained a member of the Provisional Committee of the Duma, as such, which had already been formed, but he accepted no office in the new Government. His position was still one of great moral authority, for though the Duma had lost its legal basis in the March Revolution, its President as such still possessed a public significance in Russian eyes. With the failures of the Provisional Government Rodzianko cannot personally be credited, but he may be blamed for not having put the consideration which he enjoyed

to more use during the period. He was completely prostrated by what had happened and felt himself in an entirely false position. "The most unhappy man in Russia," he said to the writer at that time, "is the President of the Imperial Duma." M. V. Rodzianko was later with Denikin in South Russia, but took no part in the Civil War. He was evacuated with the retreating troops of Wrangel, making the journey in the greatest discomfort. Thenceforward he resided in Serbia and was bitterly attacked by the ultra-monarchists.

At the time of his influence the predominating issue was the government of Russia by the infamous Rasputin. It is apparent from the Empress's letters that the head and front of Rodzianko's offending was the warning that he had the courage to give the Emperor long before the Revolution, for which the Empress hysterically insisted that he should be deprived of his Court rank. For his ultra-monarchist critics Rodzianko's offence was that he treated his Sovereign as a Sovereign and not as a mere *Eigentums-Besitzer*, and that he regarded Rasputin as an unsuitable steward for the Russian Empire.

Rodzianko was no great man; but he was a true and warm friend of this country and an unflinching supporter of the Alliance. In the home politics of Russia Rodzianko failed at a time when everyone else failed, and committed mistakes which were less errors of judgment than defaults of judgment; and his actions were throughout ruled by the highest instincts of Russian patriotism.

He died in great poverty in Serbia in 1924.

BERNARD PARES.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

In my attempt to narrate the course of events which preceded the Russian Revolution, and to describe the conditions under, or rather because of which Gregory Rasputin appeared at the Court of the Emperor Nicholas II and exercised so fatal an influence on State policy, nothing was further from my mind than to cast any aspersion on the person of the Tsar who has since died a martyr's death.

There can be no doubt that throughout his life he was filled with the most genuine desire for the good and happiness of his people. Nevertheless, through lack of will power, softness of disposition and easy submission to evil and obscure influences, he not only failed to achieve anything, but brought his country to the present state of anarchy, in which he himself and all his family perished.

I felt that, because of my close association with the rulers of Russia, I had no right to conceal those dark pages of the history of the Russian Empire that were revealed during the world war, which proved so disastrous for us.

Our descendants, for their own education, ought to know the history of their nation in all its details, and from the errors of the past gain experience for the present and future. No one has the right to withhold any intimate details of historical interest or political value which he possesses, but must unhesitatingly bequeath to posterity his knowledge and experience. It is in this spirit that I beg my readers to treat these memoirs. I have set myself to be as objective as possible, and strenuously endeavoured to avoid framing a harsh and biassed judgment of the period I describe.

Whatever may be said, the appearance at Court of Gregory Rasputin, and the influence he exercised there, mark the beginning of the decay of Russian society and the loss of prestige of the Throne and of the person of the Tsar himself. Nicholas II, however, cannot alone be held responsible for the fatal consequences for the State of the influence wielded by Rasputin. There is no doubt that the main burden of responsibility rests on the shoulders of those statesmen and courtiers who, in the selfish pursuit of their own interests, could not, or would not, realize the depth of the abyss which might engulf not only the Imperial Family, but Russia herself.

The presence so close to the Throne of an immoral and dirty adventurer cast a shadow on its lustre. It was, then, the duty of all who put the destiny of the State above their personal aims and interests to unite, with no thought of themselves, in the name of the Motherland and save her from, it might be, terrible convulsions. But this did not happen. Those very men who should have steadfastly resisted the growing evil failed in their duty to their Motherland. More than this, in pursuit of their selfish aims, they supported the blighting influence of Rasputin on the Imperial Family, as they saw in him a sure means of attaining their vain and greedy ends.

I most emphatically and definitely reject all those worthless and base insinuations which were levelled against the Imperial pair during the last years of Nicholas II's reign, as well as all the street-corner pamphlets which the excited mind of a credulous public readily accepted. My conscience urges me to declare that the causes of Rasputin's influence lay deeper. They are related to the unhealthy mysticism of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, which was continually and artificially maintained by

Rasputin and his accomplices, and was in no way founded on intimate relations.

I base my narrative on numerous documents now in my possession, as well as on the private diaries which I have kept. I shall be obliged, however, occasionally to cite rumours and stories which were current in Russian society, and which directly reflect the state of men's minds during the period I am about to describe.

M. V. RODZIANKO

CHAPTER I

Mysticism of the Empress and "Prophets" from the West—Bishop Feofan and the appearance of Rasputin —Secret of his influence on the Empress—Conflict between Bishop Hermogen and the Monk Iliodor and the High Procurator of the Synod, Sabler.

My more or less intimate acquaintance with Russia's high governing circles dates back to the time when, after the Japanese War, I was elected a member of the Council of the Empire by the Zemstvo of the province of Ekaterinoslav. Thus many details of official life became familiar to me of which the general public knew nothing.

There existed a widespread opinion in society, undoubtedly correct, that the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna had had from her childhood a strong tendency towards mysticism. This disposition, in the opinion of many hereditary, increased with advancing years till, at the time I am speaking of, it had attained a state of religious mania; nay, more—of religious ecstacy—a firm belief in the possibility of foretelling the future, plus a considerable dose of superstition.

The causes of this psychological phenomenon cannot, of course, be easily explained. Whether it was the effect of frequent childbirth and of the passionate desire for an heir, when she always gave birth to daughters, or whether this state of mind was purely temperamental, it is not for me to say. But the fact of her mysticism, with its attendant tendency towards the supernatural and even the occult, remained beyond doubt.

The far-sighted politicians of Western Europe, who always made a closer study of the Imperial

Court than we Russians, lost no time in turning this phenomenon to account. Desirous of obtaining a strong hand at the Russian Court, and having, as it were, rapidly taken their bearings, they determined to take advantage of this temperamental peculiarity of the young Empress.

Towards the beginning of 1900, various mysterious apostles of mysticism, hypnotizers and prophets of the future began to appear at the Imperial Russian Court, and gained considerable influence over the mystically inclined mind of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. Owing to the confidence these adventurers inspired in the Imperial pair, they soon became the centre of small groups of courtiers, who thus assumed a certain importance in the life of the Imperial Court. There is no doubt that agents of certain foreign Embassies had secret access to these circles, which enabled them to gain detailed information concerning Russian social and public life.

It was at this time, for instance, that a certain Philippe made his appearance at Court. He was exactly the type of man to place his influence over the minds of the Imperial pair at the service of any cause or person from whom he could expect a suitable remuneration for his "work."

This gentleman was introduced at Court by two of the Grand Duchesses. Shortly after his arrival, however, Ratchkovsky, the agent of the Russian Secret Service in Paris, reported to St. Petersburg that Philippe was a shady and suspicious character of Jewish nationality, and had some sort of connection with masonic organizations and the society called the "Grande Alliance Israelite." Philippe, meanwhile, was acquiring an ever-increasing influence. He held meetings, performed various spiritualist "passes," foretold the future and persuaded the Empress that she would soon give birth

to a son. Philippe gained such power at Court that the agent Ratchkovsky was dismissed for denouncing him. Shortly after this, however, Philippe himself disappeared mysteriously during a visit to Paris.

No sooner had he made his exit than another adventurer, a certain Papus, claiming to be his disciple, arrived in St. Petersburg, and was in a similar manner introduced at Court.

I cannot but render justice to the leading Russian statesmen of the time and to the prelates of the Russian Church. They were all profoundly perturbed by the growing influence of these mysterious arrivals, who might easily have been emissaries sent for unknown purposes. On the one hand, the civil authorities feared the possibility of political complications and intrigues arising from the confidence these men enjoyed at Court, where they became the centre of cliques of courtiers bent, it is true, on the pursuit of their own private ends, but capable of much worse things. The ecclesiastical authorities, in their turn, feared that sectarianism emanating from the Court might spread among the upper circles of society and injure the Russian Orthodox Church. Such instances had already occurred in the history of Russia, during the reign of Alexander I.

Whether by the united efforts of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, or owing to other circumstances or possible intrigues, Papus was soon dismissed. His place was taken by Bishop Feofan, the Principal of the Theological Academy of St. Petersburg, who was also appointed their Majesties' confessor. According to rumours circulated at the time in St. Petersburg society, of the truth of which I have no documentary evidence, it was decided at a secret conference of Church prelates that it was necessary for the

Church, as the guardian and defender of the Orthodox faith, to exercise her wise and moderating influence on the mystically inclined spirit of the young Empress, so as to combat the pernicious activities of base foreigners obviously in pursuit of totally different aims.

The high moral qualities of Mgr. Feofan won universal respect. A man of absolute purity of soul and a firm Christian, he was imbued with the true Orthodox spirit of faith and humility. In this respect all were agreed. Alien alike to politics and personal ambition, he was a true and faithful servant of the Church, and so could not become the centre of any base scheming or intrigues. It appears, therefore, all the more incomprehensible that it was through him that Rasputin was introduced to the Imperial Court. One can only suppose that Mgr. Feofan was profoundly mistaken in his estimate of Rasputin's moral character and personality. The meek, gentle and confiding bishop was cunningly duped by this clever and astute, though almost illiterate, *mouzhik;* his pure soul was incapable of fathoming all the depths of immorality and licentiousness in such a man as Gregory Rasputin. Presumably Bishop Feofan hoped that the simple and unsophisticated spiritual outlook of a plain God-fearing and believing Orthodox Russian peasant would be most likely to appeal to the harassed soul of the young Empress. He naturally thought that this God-fearing *starets*, as he pictured Rasputin, would by virtue of his serene simplicity be better able than anyone else to provide an answer to her questionings and disperse the clouds of mysticism which darkened her soul. But fate decreed that the honest bishop should be cruelly deceived by the cunning charlatan and should pay dearly for his mistake.

Who, then, was Gregory Rasputin? His *curriculum vitae* prior to his appearance in Russian politics has been definitely established.

A native of the village of Pokrovskoe in the province of Tobolsk, he was an ordinary peasant of average means, hardly differing from any of his fellow villagers. The evidence in his case disclosed that from his youth he had strong leanings towards sectarianism, his keenly inquiring intellect driving him to seek new paths of religious experience. It is clear that the principles of Orthodox Christianity had never been implanted in his soul, and consequently it lacked the corresponding moral qualities. Even before his appearance in St. Petersburg he was a man devoid of ethical code or conscience, greedy for material gain, of a boldness verging on insolence, utterly unscrupulous in the pursuit of his aims.

Such was the morality of Gregory Rasputin, revealed by the legal evidence which came into my possession. I have been able to gather from the same source the following details concerning his career.

Certain strange doings in and around Rasputin's house attracted the attention of the parish priest of Pokrovskoe. A building without windows, supposed to be a bath house, had been erected in a remote corner of the yard, and in it mysterious meetings were held after dusk. Rasputin himself began frequently to absent himself on visits to the Abalaksky monastery, in which persons exiled for belonging to various religious sects were confined. While the local priest was endeavouring to unravel the secret of the mysterious doings which took place in Rasputin's house, the latter decided to try his luck outside his native village and slipped away to St. Petersburg. I was unable to obtain any exact information as to how Rasputin contrived to worm

himself into the confidence of Bishop Feofan. Rumours on the subject were so numerous and varied that to credit them all was impossible. According to the most current version, Rasputin was introduced to the bishop by a certain priest named Yaroslav Medvied, the confessor of one of the Grand Duchesses. This man either visited or was exiled to the Abalaksky monastery, where he was alleged to have met Rasputin and brought him to St. Petersburg. This story seems to be the most plausible, but there were many others. In any case, Rasputin was, as early as 1900 and before the Chinese (Boxer) war, on intimate terms with their Majesties' confessor, Mgr. Feofan. That short-sighted prelate introduced him at Court as a *starets* and *natchetchik*.*

At first Rasputin behaved with the utmost caution, never revealing his actual intentions. It was natural that he should take his bearings, study the personalities, life and customs of the Court. Thus, not only did he strengthen Bishop Feofan's confidence in him, but he acquired another influential champion in the person of Bishop Hermogen of Saratoff, later a member of the Holy Synod, who subsequently realized his error and suffered heavily for it. Another of Rasputin's partisans was the notorious monk Iliodor. The latter, however, was definitely accused of being an *agent provocateur* out to make a career, though his passionate temperament and fiery eloquence made him at one time the idol of the Saratoff crowd. Certainly his influence over the populace was enormous, and, moreover, he enjoyed the powerful patronage of Bishop Hermogen.

*A *starets* was a man, not necessarily a monk or in holy orders, who for his high moral qualities and holy life was recognized as a spiritual teacher. A *natchetchik* was a man versed in the Scriptures, an "expert reader."

During this period Rasputin never abandoned the role of a pious and God-fearing *starets* and zealous intercessor for the Orthodox Church of Christ. During the troubled years of the Japanese war and the Revolution of 1905, he ministered to the spiritual needs of the Imperial Family, praying devoutly in their presence and assuring them that while he was there to intercede for them, no harm would befall either them or the little Tsarevitch. Apparently unnoticed, his influence steadily grew, so that finally he was entrusted with the office of the "Emperor's lampkeeper," whose duty it was to tend the lamps burning day and night before the holy ikons.

He thus obtained free access to the Imperial palace, and in virtue of his office came daily to the Tsar's apartments, which he had hitherto entered only by special invitation. It should be remembered that the Emperor Nicholas II was a great lover and connoisseur of ancient ikons, and possessed a rare and extremely valuable collection which he greatly treasured. It must be supposed that since the Tsar entrusted this precious collection to Rasputin's care, he must have felt a certain amount of confidence in his newly-appointed lampkeeper, and, believing his piety to be genuine, deemed him worthy to become the custodian of these holy images.

Having thus obtained a firm foothold in the palace, Rasputin began gradually to change his tactics and to give a freer vent to his depraved instincts and sectarian impulses.

With the gradual subsidence of revolutionary turmoil and resumption of normal life, rumours, at first vague and indefinite, began to circulate concerning the doings of this knave. Soon, however, these rumours became more precise. It began to be said more and more definitely that Rasputin

was engaged in founding "*khlysty* ships"*, which consisted mainly of young women and girls; also that he was frequently to be met in the private cabins of the St. Petersburg public baths, where he indulged in the most unrestrained immorality. Names of ladies belonging to the highest circles of St. Petersburg society were mentioned as having become adherents of his sectarian doctrine. These rumours gradually grew and gained publicity. People began to say openly that so and so had been seduced by Rasputin; that two sisters, both of them young girls, had been dishonoured by him; that secret orgies and promiscuous immorality were practised in certain flats.

I had in my possession scores of letters from mothers whose daughters had been seduced by Rasputin. I had also in my possession photographs of a "*khlysty* ship." In the centre sat Rasputin, surrounded by about a hundred of his followers, all of them young men and women. Two of them held in front of him a large placard inscribed with *khlysty* texts. Another photograph taken in Rasputin's drawing-room showed him in the midst of the society women who were his followers; to my amazement I recognized many of them. I was also given two photographs of Rasputin himself. In one of these he was wearing his peasant's dress with a pectoral cross, his right hand raised with fingers clasped as though giving a blessing. In the other he was in a monk's habit and cowl and again wearing a pectoral cross.

I had soon collected a whole volume of incriminating evidence. If only a tenth part of the material submitted to me were genuine, it would have amply sufficed for the institution of criminal

* The *khlysty* belonged to a sect whose religious practices were of a most obscene and erotic nature. Each community was called a "ship," with a "helmsman" at its head.

proceedings against Rasputin. As President of the Duma I received from all sides complaints and disclosures concerning the criminal activities and debauchery of this man. Finally, the matter was taken up by the daily Press. The Censorship Committee and the Minister of the Interior became seriously alarmed, especially as they undoubtedly possessed, through the medium of the Secret Service, far more precise information and much more irrefutable evidence of the truth of the rumours which were circulated in public. The State authorities were faced with a situation of exceptional difficulty. They could not but realize the depth of the abyss into which Rasputin was drawing the Imperial couple, while on the other hand the growth of the influence of this disgusting libertine over them was daily becoming more apparent.

What was the secret of this fatal influence, which undoubtedly led to the commencement of the Russian Revolution, inasmuch as it weakened the Tsar's prestige?

There is no doubt that Gregory Rasputin, apart from being a man of more than average intelligence, extraordinary astuteness, and possessing a will unchecked by any moral scruples, was further gifted with great hypnotic power. I should think that he would have been a subject of extraordinary interest to a scientist. The opinion of all those who came in contact with him was unanimous on that point, while I myself, as will be seen later, experienced the force of his power of suggestion. It goes, therefore, without saying that the neurotic and mystically inclined Empress, whose tortured soul suffered continual agonies of fear for the fate of her son, the Heir to the Throne, and for that of her exalted husband, fell under the influence of Rasputin's hypnotism to an extraordinary degree.

I can confidently assert that by this force of suggestion he gained absolute control over the will of the young Empress. By that same force he impressed upon her that while he remained at Court no harm could befall the dynasty. He impressed her with the idea that, as he was a son of the common people, he was best fitted to know their needs and the way to be followed to make Russia prosperous and happy. By his hypnotic power he implanted in the Empress a firm and unshakable faith in himself as the man chosen by God for Russia's salvation.

Besides this the Empress, who according to medical opinion was of a very highly strung and neurotic disposition, was subject to frequent attacks of mild hysteria which caused her acute suffering. These Rasputin was able to alleviate by using his powers of hypnotic suggestion, and herein alone lay the secret of his influence. It was a purely pathological phenomenon and nothing more. I remember speaking of it to I. L. Goremykin, then Premier, who unhesitatingly replied, "*C'est une question clinique.*" It was, therefore, all the more odious to me constantly to hear disgraceful insinuations and stories of alleged intimacy between Rasputin and the Empress. The blameless nature of the family life of the Imperial couple was patent to all, while to those who, like myself, became acquainted with their private correspondence during the war it was proved by documentary evidence. Nevertheless, Gregory Rasputin became the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna's oracle, and for her his opinion was law. On the other hand she, herself strong-willed, almost despotic by nature, exercised over her august consort, who lacked all traces of will or character, an unlimited, almost overwhelming influence. She contrived to make him amiably disposed towards, and even to confide in, Rasputin, though from my own personal

experience I can positively assert that to the very end of his reign Nicholas II was, in his inmost soul, assailed by painful doubts. In spite of this Rasputin had free access to him and dominated him absolutely.

My old schoolfellow at the Corps des Pages and personal friend, General V. N. Dediulin, then A.D.C. to the Emperor and Palace commandant, told me the following story. "I studiously avoided," he said, "making Rasputin's acquaintance, and even went out of my way to do so, because the dirty *mouzhik* physically repelled me. One day after dinner the Emperor said to me: 'Why is it, V.N., that you so persistently avoid meeting Gregory Efimovitch?' I replied frankly that I disliked him intensely, that he had more than a tarnished reputation, and that it pained me as a loyal subject to see this rascal so close to the sacred person of my Sovereign. 'You are wrong in thinking so,' replied the Emperor, 'he is just a good, religious, simple-minded Russian. When in trouble or assailed with doubts I like to have a talk with him, and invariably feel at peace with myself afterwards.'"

Such was the influence which, by means of the Empress, Rasputin had gained over Nicholas II. Small wonder, then, that all manner of ambitious climbers, careerists and shady characters clustered around Rasputin, in whom they found a suitable instrument for attaining their personal ends. This was a source of trouble for the State authorities, whose duty it was to safeguard and maintain untarnished the prestige of the Imperial Crown. It should also be remembered that Rasputin numbered among his circle certain highly influential personages, as, for instance, Sturmer, Sabler, the High Procurator of the Holy Synod, and the Metropolitan Pitirim.

As I have said, stories of Rasputin's exploits began to appear in the Press. So far this had been confined to the St. Petersburg and Moscow papers and had not penetrated to the provinces, so that it was not yet too late: the conflagration could easily be suppressed.

Instead, however, of fully realizing the full horror of the situation, and of uniting in their efforts to strike at the very root of the evil which menaced the Throne, and of which the Emperor and Empress were obviously unconscious, the highest officials in the State were themselves divided in two hostile camps—pro- and anti-Rasputinites. There was too, unfortunately, yet a third group—the neutrals. These, while fully realizing and deploring the existing state of affairs and capable of fighting the danger, yet, either from lack of courage or, perhaps, personal motives, obstinately remained silent and passive. The group of Rasputin's active supporters included the High Procurator of the Holy Synod Sabler, his assistant Damansky, the Archpriest Vasilieff, religious teacher of the Imperial children, General Voeikoff, the Metropolitan Pitirim, A. S. Taneieff, Gentleman Usher to the Emperor, his daughter Madame Vyrubova, B. V. Sturmer, and many others of the same stamp. Among the leaders of the second group were: P. A. Stolypin (until his death), with all his fellow-Ministers, the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, Mgr. Anthony, and the Bishops Hermogen and Feofan, both of whom had now realized their error.

It is obvious that such a cleavage among the leading statesmen only played into the hands of Rasputin's adherents. The latter, availing themselves of his influence at Court, removed their enemies from their path by calumny and intrigue, thus both clearing the way for themselves and

incidentally enhancing the importance of their patron. It should be noted, too, that the spectacle of the successful careers of Rasputin's followers lowered the *moral* of his opponents, and secessions from the ranks of the anti-Rasputinites became more frequent. Even the neutral group appeared to be vacillating. If the upper strata of Russian society could have presented a united front and could have offered a steadfast resistance to this abnormal state of affairs; if the Crown could have clearly seen that there was but one opinion about Rasputin, and that it had no one to rely on for support, it is absolutely certain that both Rasputin and his clique would have been completely destroyed.

The Rasputinites, together with the parties of the Extreme Right, laid the foundations of the Russian Revolution, for they estranged the Emperor from his people and allowed a shadow to be cast on the lustre of the Crown. Faced with this cleavage of opinions in his immediate entourage, being completely under the influence of the Empress, and certain of no other support, Nicholas II was organically incapable of adopting any anti-Rasputin policy. I venture therefore definitely to assert that the blame for the process of disruption which began to manifest itself at this time cannot be laid upon the Emperor Nicholas II alone. The burden of responsibility rests fully on those members of the ruling classes who, blinded by their ambition, cupidity and desire for advancement, forgot the terrible danger which was threatening their Emperor and Russia.

As soon as Rasputin felt that he was standing on firm ground he gradually altered his passive tactics, became aggressive and, encountering no obstacles to his fanatical outbursts, grew daily more insolent. Nevertheless, the rapidity with which he

acquired followers and disciples was amazing, especially in society, where their number was considerable, particularly among the women. They clung to him like flies to a honey-pot.

I was told the following story, which I know to be perfectly true, of Rasputin's power of suggestion. A lady who lived in the provinces, having heard of Rasputin's influence at Court, determined to try and obtain through him promotion for her husband. This lady was a happy and model wife and mother. On her arrival in St. Petersburg she managed to obtain an interview with Rasputin, who, on hearing her petition, assumed a stern and authoritative air and replied, addressing her as "thou":

"Very well, I'll try. Only to-morrow you must come to me in a low-necked dress with bare shoulders. And don't you dare come to me otherwise."

When he spoke to her his eyes seemed to pierce her through and through, and his whole behaviour was more than familiar. The lady, outraged by Rasputin's words and manner, went away, firmly resolved not to pursue her plea. On her return home, however, she was seized with an unaccountable yearning; she became obsessed with the idea that she had to do something. Next day, having procured a *décolletée* dress, she presented herself at the appointed hour at Rasputin's flat. Shortly afterwards her husband received his promotion.

It can easily be imagined what a repulsive impression the orgies of Rasputin and his women followers made, not only on the servants, from whom nothing ever remains a secret, but also on simple folk in general. How great must have been their contempt for the "gentry" who so cynically indulged in shameful immorality! What religious considerations or what quest of higher truths could

justify such conduct? It was clear to all that those who sought Rasputin's patronage were guided solely by the lowest of instincts and nothing else. It is worthy of note that all the common people who ministered to the freaks of this libertine, such as the cabmen who drove him and his women to the baths; the bath attendants who showed him to his private room; the waiters who served him during his drunken orgies; the policemen and Secret Service agents who stood freezing at street corners all to protect his precious life—all these people were not in the least imposed upon by Rasputin's sanctity, because his everyday life, which lay open to them, told them quite a different tale. Their comments were pithy and to the point: "The gentry are out for fun." Yet Rasputin was intimate with, and under the patronage of, the most exalted persons. What conclusions were drawn from this my readers can judge for themselves!

Rasputin's increasing immorality and cynicism at last opened Bishop Feofan's eyes to the true nature of his former protégé. The Bishop overtly joined the camp of Rasputin's opponents and endeavoured to persuade the Empress that the pseudo-righteous *starets* was quite unworthy of the honour and attention bestowed on him, and that he ought to be banished from the Court, which he discredited by his presence. The unworthy *starets* proved more powerful than the righteous prelate. The combat was unequal. Bishop Feofan was soon relieved of his office as the Emperor's confessor and from the post of Principal of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, and was transferred to the see of Simferopol, in the Crimea.

Rasputin was victorious. The ease with which this victory had been carried off made him fully realize the extent of his power. He straightway proceeded, first, to sweep from his path all those

who opposed him at the Imperial Court, next to apply these tactics to the ranks of the higher clergy, and finally turned his attention to the statesmen and dignitaries of the realm. The fate of Bishop Feofan was shared by Rasputin's other patron, Mgr. Hermogen, who also came at last to realize the true nature of the holiness of the *starets* whom he had so rashly recommended. The removal, or rather the downfall, of Bishop Hermogen was, however, the occasion of a public scandal. Since he had no access to the Court, Mgr. Hermogen decided on another course. Having become convinced of Rasputin's immorality and of the danger that threatened the Imperial Family through their association with him, Mgr. Hermogen summoned him to his house. He then, in the presence of the monk Iliodor, a Cossack officer named Rodionoff (author of a fairly well-known book, "Our Crime"), a lay brother in the bishop's service and a pilgrim named Mitia, arraigned Rasputin for all his disgusting behaviour and admonished him to repent and voluntarily to leave the Emperor's house.

"You are an impostor and a hypocrite," Mgr. Hermogen said to Rasputin (I repeat here the story told me by Rodionoff). "You pose as a holy *starets*, while leading a shameful and unclean life. You duped me in the past, but now I see what you really are and feel that I have sinned in introducing you to the Emperor's family. You disgrace it by your presence, while by your behaviour and conversation you cast a slur on the name of the Empress, whose sacred person you dare to touch with your unclean hands. This can no longer be tolerated. I adjure you in the Name of the living God to depart and to cease from troubling the Russian people by your presence at the Imperial Court."

Rasputin's answers to the indignant bishop were

insolent, and a violent scene followed, in the course of which Rasputin, after abusing Mgr. Hermogen in vulgar language, flatly refused to submit to his command and threatened to "make short work of him." At this Bishop Hermogen, losing his self-control, exclaimed: "So, you dirty scoundrel, you refuse to submit to my episcopal command, and dare to threaten me. Then know that I, as a bishop, anathematize you!"

Rasputin, as if possessed, clenched his fists and flung himself on the prelate, his face, said Rodionoff, losing every trace of humanity. Afraid lest, in his access of fury, Rasputin should murder the bishop, Rodionoff drew his sword and, with the others, hastened to the rescue. With difficulty they managed to drag Rasputin away. His bodily strength was such that he managed to wrench himself from their grasp and take to his heels. He was, however, overtaken by the lay brother and the pilgrim Mitia and roughly handled. Still he managed to escape and ran out into the street shouting: "You wait a bit, I'll pay you out." This threat, taking advantage of the following circumstances, he carried out to the letter.

A bishop, one of the members of the Holy Synod, told me that at a secret conclave of the latter the High Procurator Sabler, one of Rasputin's most influential patrons, recommended Rasputin as a candidate for the priesthood. The Holy Synod rejected this proposal with righteous indignation. In vain Sabler insisted, and intimated that the suggestion emanated from high quarters. The Synod could not be persuaded to yield. Bishop Hermogen on this occasion delivered a fulminating speech exposing the immoral life and activities of the pseudo-holy *starets*. The latter, of course, heard of all that took place from Sabler himself.

Almost simultaneously the following episode occurred. The Empress's sister, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, presented to the Synod a request stating her desire to found, or rather restore, the ancient Order of Deaconesses. In the early days of the Christian era these semi-monastic communities did many works of charity: they organized prayer meetings, founded hostels and asylums, children's homes and almshouses for aged people, and ministered to the sick and the infirm. The discussion of this question in the Synod almost coincided with the incident concerning Rasputin's ordination. The debate was an extremely heated one. The moving spirit of the opposition to the Grand Duchess's request was again Bishop Hermogen. In opposing the scheme he argued that the foundation of such communities would be contrary to the canons of the Church, for the Order of Deaconesses had been abolished by a decree of one of the Œcumenic Councils.

Meanwhile Sabler, seeing that the Synod remained unyielding on the point of Rasputin's ordination, devised another scheme, which he presented to the Synod at the same time as the Grand Duchess's request. He suggested that a certain Archimandrite Barnabas, an adherent of himself and of Rasputin, an ignorant monk, who before taking the vows had been a common market gardener, should be consecrated Suffragan Bishop of Kargopol. The High Procurator hoped that this bishop would prove an obedient tool in his hands and would ordain Rasputin. In all justice to the Synod, it must be stated that this proposal also met with unanimous opposition and rejection. Nothing daunted, Sabler declared that it was no concern of his personally, but that it was the will of persons more highly placed than himself. The Synod began to waver. The presiding member,

Mgr. Anthony, Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, was so profoundly shocked by this intrigue that he fell seriously ill after the meeting and remained confined to his bed all through the winter, taking no part in the deliberations of the Synod. Sabler finally succeeded in cajoling the majority of the members of the Synod into acquiescence. At a conclave presided over by Bishop Sergius of Finland, acting as deputy for the Metropolitan Anthony, the motion for Barnabas' consecration was put to the vote and carried.

Bishop Hermogen remained true to himself. Refusing to give in, he inveighed against the High Procurator and the weakness of the members of the Synod, and finally created a demonstration by quitting the assembly, declaring that he would not be a party to such wickedness and threatening to excommunicate its participants for their lack of zeal for the honour and purity of the Orthodox Church. By some strange freak of fate all these intrigues happened to coincide. The result of Bishop Hermogen's denunciatory speech was quite unexpected. By an Imperial ukase he was deprived of his membership of the Synod and ordered to return immediately to his diocese. At the same time Iliodor, who had nothing whatever to do with the Synod's decision, was also banished from St. Petersburg.

Such drastic treatment of the two most avowed enemies of the *starets* showed plainly who was the instigator of these proceedings, and who was taking his revenge by sweeping them from his path. Mgr. Hermogen, however, would not accept his disgrace. In a sincere and impassioned letter he implored the Emperor to eradicate the tares which had sprung up around the Throne, and brought irrefutable evidence to prove how cowardly the Synod had been and how morally wrong and

disgraceful the whole affair was. He used all the strength of his fiery eloquence in praying the Emperor to take heed of the danger, to guard himself, the Heir to the Throne and the whole Imperial Family from the terrible evil with which they were menaced. He claimed for himself the right to be tried before a court of bishops, which alone, according to the canons of the Church, could deprive him of his membership of the Synod. The letter remained unanswered, and Hermogen himself was informed by the High Procurator Sabler that, as a punishment for his disobedience to the Emperor's command, he was to be exiled to the distant Zhirovetsky monastery, whither he would be conveyed forcibly should he refuse to go of his own free will. The bishop was taken seriously ill, but on his recovery humbly submitted to the order and went voluntarily into exile.

The monk Iliodor, however, took advantage of his own banishment to create a sensation. Wherever possible, he gave interviews in which he openly pointed to Rasputin as the principal cause and instigator of all that had occurred. Later he disappeared mysteriously, having set off to Saratoff on foot. He was closely pursued by reporters, who described every detail of his pilgrimage, which assumed the character of a triumphant progress. Finally, Iliodor was arrested and domiciled in the place appointed for his exile. All this caused considerable public scandal. Indignation was widespread, and Bishop Hermogen received messages of sympathy from all quarters. I well remember how one day V. M. Purishkevitch*, a member of the Duma, entered my study in a violent state of agitation and, in a voice trembling with horror and grief, said to me: "Where are we going? Our last mainstay, the Holy Orthodox Church, is being

* One of those who murdered Rasputin in 1917.

destroyed. There was a revolution which attempted to undermine the Crown; it failed. The army remained loyal to its duty; it is now being openly subverted. As a climax, the powers of darkness are now attacking Russia's last hope—the Church. And the most terrible part of it all is that this seems to emanate from the Throne itself. A charlatan, a *khlyst*, a filthy, illiterate peasant is playing his dirty tricks on our prelates. Into what abyss are we being driven? Oh, my God! I want to sacrifice myself and kill this vermin, Rasputin!"

And yet Purishkevitch belonged to the Extreme Right wing of the Duma. But he was a sincere and honest man, a warm-hearted patriot, who did not think of himself or his career. I had the greatest difficulty in calming his agitation and persuading him that all was not yet lost, that the Duma might still have a word to say in the matter, and that perhaps the Emperor might listen to the voice of the chosen representatives of the people.

It is characteristic of the Emperor Nicholas II that personally he had nothing against the exiled bishop. On his arrival at his new abode Mgr. Hermogen sent his secretary to me with a letter, in which he exhorted me to do my duty by revealing to the Emperor the whole truth and warning him of the approaching danger.

When next I waited on the Emperor to present my customary report, I laid before him the whole inner history of the incident which had taken place in the Holy Synod, and petitioned for leniency for the bishop, who had been made to suffer for no offence at all. The following were the Emperor's very words:

"I have nothing against Bishop Hermogen. I consider him to be an upright and truthful pastor, a straightforward man capable of fearlessly and

firmly defending the truth, steadfast in his service of upholding the purity and honour of the Orthodox Church. He will soon be allowed to return. But I was obliged to inflict a punishment on him for openly refusing to submit to my command."

Forgiveness, however, did not follow. Probably other influences proved stronger, and overruled the Emperor's feeble will.

The Emperor sent his A.D.C., Mandryka, to Tsaritsin to investigate Iliodor's case. In the course of the inquiry, Mandryka obtained a great deal of information concerning the criminal activities of Rasputin, and, being an honest man, decided on his return to St. Petersburg to acquaint the Emperor with all the facts. At an audience with the Emperor, at which the Empress was present, Mandryka, in a state of the most violent agitation (he actually fainted, and the Emperor himself brought him a glass of water), told the Emperor all he had learned at Tsaritsin of Rasputin's dealings with the *khlysty*. This affords further proof that the Emperor was not left in ignorance concerning Rasputin.

The public conscience was roused and clamoured for the truth. The whole case, with all the minutest details, appeared in the Press. Editors paid heavy fines to the censor, but continued to publish the articles. From whatever standpoint the affair was regarded, truth and justice remained on the side of Mgr. Hermogen.

Such was the powerful influence exercised by Rasputin and his circle even so far back as the end of 1911. How could the Russian public remain an indifferent spectator of all that was taking place? But who did anything to combat the growing and spreading evil?

CHAPTER II

P. A. Stolypin and Rasputin—Case of the Imperial Children's Nurse—Disgrace of the Metropolitan Anthony—Questions about Rasputin in the Duma—Conversation with the Dowager Empress.

I MUST here go back to an earlier date, namely, to the period between 1908 and 1910. I am bound to state that Rasputin's unexpected and steadily growing influence was viewed with considerable apprehension by P. A. Stolypin, who then held the posts of Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior. His anxiety was shared by P. P. Izvolsky and Lukianoff, both of whom consecutively occupied the post of High Procurator of the Holy Synod during Stolypin's Premiership. Stolypin had more than once drawn the attention of the Emperor to the disastrous consequences which might result from the proximity to the Imperial pair of an avowed sectarian. During the period between 1905 and 1909, however, Rasputin remained comparatively in the background, though slowly and surely paving the way for his future activities. Little by little, as he realized his growing power, this fanatic let himself go. His amorous exploits became more cynical and overt; the number of his victims increased, as also did the circle of disciples and women followers. In view of these circumstances the then Procurator of the Holy Synod, Lukianoff, with the approval of Stolypin, proceeded to investigate all the existing documentary evidence concerning Rasputin in order to cast a light on the hitherto mysterious and obscure personality of this adventurer. The truth was soon revealed in all its unattractive nakedness.

Lukianoff, who had all the secret archives of the Synod at his disposal, found no difficulty in deciphering the actual personality of the "great *starets*." These documents which the investigation brought to light were later studied by me. The results of the inquiry were sufficiently convincing.

Stolypin, on the strength of these documents, drew up a comprehensive report, which he presented to the Emperor. This step led to a somewhat unexpected result. Nicholas II listened attentively to the Premier, but came to no definite decision, and desired Stolypin to interview Rasputin and form his own judgment of the man. A statement to that effect was made to me by the Emperor himself on the occasion of my own report to him on the subject. Stolypin, too, told me of his interview with Rasputin. On entering the Premier's study, the *starets* immediately attempted to hypnotize him.

"He ran his pale eyes over me," said Stolypin, "mumbled mysterious and inarticulate words from the Scriptures, made strange movements with his hands, and I began to feel an indescribable loathing for this vermin sitting opposite me. Still, I did realize that the man possessed great hypnotic power, which was beginning to produce a fairly strong moral impression on me, though certainly one of repulsion. I pulled myself together and, addressing him roughly, told him that on the strength of the evidence in my possession I could annihilate him by prosecuting him as a sectarian. I then ordered him to leave St. Petersburg immediately of his own free will for his native village and never show his face here again."

This happened at the beginning of 1911. The Premier proved to be more powerful than the hypnotizer, who, realizing that matters were assuming a bad turn, suddenly disappeared from St.

Petersburg and was not seen there for some time. Nevertheless, it is worthy of comment that by his hypnotic power Rasputin had been capable of producing an impression even on a man of such iron will as Stolypin. How much greater, then, would his ascendancy be over natures endowed with weaker nerves and less self-control!

In spite, however, of the Emperor's seeming acquiescence to Rasputin's exile, on which Stolypin had insisted, matters soon took a different turn. Soon after the departure of the *starets* to his native village, he was followed by A. A. Vyrubova, one of the ladies attached to the person of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna*. Rasputin returned with her, not to St. Petersburg, but to Kieff, where the Imperial Family had arrived for the inauguration of the Zemstvo institutions in South-Western Russia. It should be remembered that Stolypin's position at Court was by now seriously compromised. The bill for the introduction of Zemstvos in South-Western Russia, which was passed by the Imperial Duma, was thrown out by the Council of the Empire. Stolypin offered his resignation to the Emperor. A compromise was reached by which both the legislative chambers were prorogued for three days. The South-Western Provinces Zemstvos Act, as passed by the Imperial Duma, was passed by decree on the strength of Article 87 of the Fundamental Laws, and Stolypin withdrew his resignation. The anger of the members of the Council of the Empire knew no bounds, and a violent agitation against the Premier was started in Court circles. It was rumoured that the Rasputin faction, which was already in existence, took an active part in this campaign. Whether

Mme. Vyrubova never occupied the official post of lady-in-waiting to the Empress. Her position at Court was that of an "intimate friend" of her Majesty.

these rumours were true or not, the fact of Madame Vyrubova's journey to Pokrovskoe with the obvious purpose of bringing back Rasputin appeared to corroborate them. It was definitely asserted at the time that Rasputin had already succeeded in persuading the Imperial pair of the beneficent effect of his presence at Court, which would preserve them, and especially the little Tsarevitch, from any possible harm. The mystically inclined Empress, whose love and constant fear for her son almost bordered on distraction, was completely subjugated by the suggestions of the astute hypnotizer. She was firmly persuaded that it was her duty to take every precaution for guarding the safety and welfare of her adored son, and became convinced of the necessity of Rasputin's constant presence in Kieff during the numerous ceremonies and public functions at which the Imperial pair were to appear. At all events Rasputin was brought to Kieff by Madame Vyrubova, and later followed the Imperial Family to Livadia, in the Crimea. He did not live at Livadia itself, but at the Hotel Edinburgh at Yalta, under the assumed name of Nikonoff. As soon as the Prefect of Yalta, General Dumbadze, a bluff and honest soldier, heard of this, he immediately expelled Nikonoff-Rasputin from the town, without considering the danger to his own career. When the Imperial Family returned to St. Petersburg Rasputin was already there, and was very soon reinstated in his former position at Court. The apparent victory won by Stolypin and the Procurator Lukianoff had been nothing but a temporary concession to public opinion, and things soon resumed their ordinary course.

In the midst of the Kieff celebrations Stolypin was treacherously assassinated during a gala performance at the theatre. V. N. Kokovtzeff was appointed Prime Minister. Lukianoff, realizing

that he would never retain his post without Stolypin, resigned, and was replaced by V. K. Sabler, a staunch supporter of Rasputin. It was during his tenure of office that the incidents described in the previous chapter, which resulted in the disgrace of Bishop Hermogen and the monk Iliodor, occurred in the Holy Synod.

Emboldened by such a series of political victories, Rasputin gave vent to his instincts.

It became known that he had seduced the nurse of the Imperial children, formerly an inmate of the Imperial Home for Foundlings. It came to my knowledge that the girl disclosed her secret to her confessor, and told him she had accompanied her seducer to the baths; later, realizing the gravity of her sin, she had confessed everything to the Empress, imploring her to renounce her faith in Rasputin and guard the children from the terrible influence of this "devil," as she called him. This nurse was shortly after pronounced to be suffering from nervous disorder, and sent to the Caucasus for treatment. She there visited the Metropolitan Anthony, who was taking a water cure at Kislovodsk, told him all, and after describing in detail Rasputin's criminal doings in the Palace, entreated the Metropolitan to save the little Tsarevitch from the "clutches of the devil."

On his return to St. Petersburg at the beginning of 1911, Mgr. Anthony requested an audience of the Emperor, and presented him with a detailed account of the events which had come to his knowledge. The Emperor heard him with obvious displeasure, and remarked that the Imperial Family's private affairs did not concern the Metropolitan. Mgr. Anthony possessed sufficient strength of character to reply: "No, Sire, this is

not merely a family affair, but the affair of all Russia. The Tsarevitch is not only your son, but our future Sovereign, and belongs to all Russia." And when the Emperor silenced him a second time by declaring he would permit no one to interfere with what was going on within the Palace, Mgr. Anthony, overcome by emotion, replied: "Sire, I obey your command; but I may be permitted to think that the Tsar of Russia ought to live in a palace of crystal, where his subjects can see him."

The Emperor bade the Metropolitan a curt farewell. Soon after Mgr. Anthony had a nervous stroke, from the effects of which he never recovered.

Meanwhile, Rasputin's influence was visibly increasing, as was also the number of his adherents. Appeals and applications for help were addressed to him from all sides. He now had a staff of secretaries; like a person of high rank he received at certain hours and was even difficult of access. Nevertheless, people came to him from far and near, even from the provinces, with all manner of possible and impossible requests, with a firm belief in the power of the "holy *starets*." Rasputin himself apparently shared this belief. At any rate, Stolypin, and after him other leading statesmen, began to receive from Rasputin illiterately written notes, couched in peremptory terms, and addressing his correspondent as "thou," with orders to "help so and so," or "grant so and so's request," because "I know him, he is a good man."

These importunities, I regret to say, seldom met with a refusal. I myself once received a similar note, which of course I ignored, and after certain drastic steps on my part the attempt was never repeated.

Owing to the privileged position which he enjoyed, Rasputin soon became the centre of groups of business men of shady character and

doubtful reputation, who hoped to "do good business" with the help of the *starets*. And what is more, there was sufficient evidence that they succeeded. The Imperial Duma, of course, could not remain indifferent to all that was said about the political significance of the growing scandal. There was a feeling of great apprehension among its members. But of its very nature the Duma was, to a certain extent, powerless to take any steps to calm public opinion. Many members feared an open avowal on the part of the Duma of the fact that an adventurer and a *khlyst* had assumed the exclusive role of the Emperor's counsellor and wielded such power as to necessitate the intervention of the legislative assembly. Unfortunately, such intervention could not in the end be avoided. As yet the members of the Duma refrained from direct action in the matter.

There would have been no particular cause for alarm if it had only been a question of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna's infatuation for this man's imaginary gift of prophecy and hypnotic power, which alleviated her nervous complaint and allayed her fears for the safety of her family, particularly for the life of the Tsarevitch. But once Rasputin had gained the complete confidence of the Imperial Family, he proceeded to organize a closely united group of confederates—or rather, it was organized for him by others. This intimate circle, which began by pursuing its own private interests, soon transferred its activities to wider spheres, first interfering in Church matters and finally in affairs of State, removing popular statesmen and replacing them by its own nominees. The Heir Apparent, too, was growing up. Rasputin's interference in the private family life of the Emperor was common knowledge, and the fear that Rasputin's sectarian teachings might have a profound impression on the

child's receptive mind, and that the young Heir to the Throne would be alienated from the Orthodox Church, was, therefore, not without foundation. Moreover, the fanatical ideas of this pervert might gradually cloud the boy's spiritual outlook with an unhealthy mysticism, so that he would grow up nervously high-strung and devoid of will-power and self-control. Lastly, the mere fact of the close proximity to the Emperor's Throne of a debauched, illiterate and immoral peasant, the fame of whose disgusting adventures had spread far and wide, was in itself sufficient to undermine and uproot all the respect and reverence due to the Crown.

Dark rumours were current that this was actually the plan of those who inspired Rasputin's group of followers, some of whom were alleged to be acting on directions emanating from foreign countries. At any rate, when I was collecting material for an impending report to the Emperor, I received some foreign Press cuttings. According to these, the Masonic Congress held in Brussels in 1909 or 1910 had, among other things, discussed the question whether Rasputin was a convenient tool for spreading in Russia the slogans of the Order, and whether under his destructive influence the dynasty could last for more than two years. I fully realized, therefore, that taking into account the general state of public opinion, I, as President of the Imperial Duma, would not be in a position to avoid presenting to the Emperor a detailed report on the situation. Events, however, moved quicker than I had anticipated.

At the time of the sensational affair of Bishop Hermogen and the monk Iliodor, which occurred towards the end of 1910, a M. Novoseloff, a lecturer at the Moscow Theological Academy and an expert on sectarianism, published a pamphlet containing detailed and documentary evidence

exposing Rasputin as belonging to the sect of the *khlysty*. In this pamphlet Novoseloff accused the highest dignitaries of the Church of tolerating sectarianism. The pamphlet was immediately withdrawn from sale and confiscated by the police. The daily paper *Golos Moskvy*, in which a spirited article by the same author appeared, together with excerpts from the pamphlet, was heavily fined by the censor, and copies containing the article were seized by the police. These measures of suppression, of course, produced exactly the opposite effect. There was a general rush for the pamphlet and the remaining copies of the *Golos Moskvy*, which fetched fabulous prices, and articles on Rasputin and the illegal confiscation of Novoseloff's book appeared in all the daily papers. Letters from Rasputin's former victims were openly published, as well as photographs of himself surrounded by his followers. The greater the zeal displayed by the police and the censor's committee, the more numerous became the articles, notwithstanding the heavy fines paid by the editors. The case of Bishop Hermogen had already aroused great excitement and apprehension in the Duma; the publication of the Novoseloff pamphlet, with the attendant scandal of its seizure by the police, merely added fuel to the fire. In view of these circumstances I resolved no longer to delay my request for an audience with the Emperor.

Quite unexpectedly, however, and without previously consulting me, a group of members of the Duma presented a written interpellation on the illegal action of the Government in confiscating the Novoseloff pamphlet and the number of the *Golos Moskvy*. By the order of procedure of the Imperial Duma I had not the right to disallow a debate on a question raised as urgent. As, however, the debate on the urgency of the interpellation

would itself probably lead to an outburst in the Duma, I invited the various party leaders to a private conference on the subject, and endeavoured to persuade Gutchkoff, who was the first signatory of the interpellation, to postpone the motion in order to save the Crown from becoming the subject of a heated debate in the Duma. I felt that the time had not yet come for exposing all these events to the judgment of the nation, and considered such publicity to be premature. I urged that a wiser course would be to attempt, by means of a report by the President of the Duma, to demonstrate to the Tsar, on the strength of irrefutable evidence, the dangerous trend of events, and secure the banishment of the pernicious false teacher from the Court.

A. I. Gutchkoff replied that public feeling was running so high that, if the interpellation were dropped by the moderate parties, it would be taken up by the Socialists, whose tactics would only thicken the atmosphere instead of clearing it. On the other hand, if the interpellation were moved by the moderate parties, a compromise might be arrived at, and a scandal averted. Gutchkoff was of opinion that a debate on the present interpellation could be confined to the subject of Bishop Hermogen and the Novoseloff pamphlet, whereas otherwise the whole question would be brought up during the debate on the Synod Budget Estimates. Gutchkoff's opinion carried the day, and the question of the urgency of the interpellation was submitted to debate.

In justice to the Duma it should be said that the attitude of all the members was perfectly correct during the debate, which passed off without any unseemly demonstration. A. I. Gutchkoff and V. N. Lvoff spoke in favour of urgency, and the motion to that effect was carried unanimously.

The attitude of the Government towards this

incident is worth mentioning. The post of Minister of the Interior was then occupied by A. A. Makaroff. When the interpellation on the seizure of the Novoseloff pamphlet was laid before the Duma, I wrote him a letter requesting that a copy of this pamphlet should be forwarded to me for perusal, to enable me to control the debate. Makaroff replied that he had no copies of the pamphlet at his disposal, neither did he see any reason for circulating it. This reply made me exceedingly angry, and I resolved to call on the Minister myself. My visit obviously came as a surprise, for on being ushered into his study, I observed to my astonishment that several copies of the notorious pamphlet were lying on the Minister's desk. This proved that even such a perfectly honest man as Makaroff undoubtedly was was nevertheless not entirely free from servility when it came to shielding Rasputin. After a stormy scene, I succeeded in securing a copy of the pamphlet. Here was another clear example of Rasputin's power: Government officials thought it necessary to shield him instead of devoting their energies to more important affairs of State.

Thanks to the interpellation in the Duma, the whole affair was brought to the public notice. The article from the *Golos Moskvy*, which led to the seizure of the paper, figured in the stenographic reports of the debate and was therefore reprinted in all the papers. This article, entitled "The Voice of an Orthodox Layman," and signed by Mikhail Novoseloff, editor and publisher of the review, the *Religious and Philosophical Library*, had appeared in No. 19 of the *Golos Moskvy* in the form of a "Letter to the Editor," and began with the words:

> "*Quo usque tandem!*" . . . . Such is the cry of indignation escaping from the lips of all Orthodox

> men and women against that cunning conspirator against our Holy Church, that fornicator of human souls and bodies—Gregory Rasputin, acting under the holy cover of that Church. "*Quo usque?*"—such are the words which, in anguish and bitterness of spirit, the sons of the Orthodox Church are compelled to address to the Synod, in view of the unheard-of tolerance exhibited towards the said Gregory Rasputin by the highest dignitaries of the Church. . . . How much longer will the Synod remain silent and inactive in the face of this shameful comedy, enacted for years before its very eyes? . . .

The letter ended with an "apology for its author's boldness," and the "respectful request to be allowed to produce before a supreme ecclesiastical court conclusive evidence proving the justice of the charge laid against the heretic seducer —Rasputin."

The appearance in the Press of the Novoseloff pamphlet, together with the interpellation to the Government concerning its confiscation, placed the whole case of Gregory Rasputin's activities and influence at Court on a documentary footing. No doubt whatever could now be entertained as to the truth of all the rumours and stories that were circulated about him. Now that an interpellation on the subject of Rasputin, based on circumstantial evidence, had been moved in the Duma, the Crown was faced with the necessity of deciding once and for all whether Rasputin was or was not to be. Everyone realized that the combat between Rasputin and Russia must be decided by the victory or the defeat of one of the opposing sides. But the forces were too unequal. On Rasputin's side was the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, strong-willed, despotic, and exercising unbounded influence over the Emperor. She was supported by the Court clique, who knew what they wanted. On the other hand, indecision and

fear of incurring the displeasure of highly-placed personages reigned in the opposing camp. Solidarity and singleness of purpose were lacking there, because none really cared for what ought to have been paramount in their thoughts—the good of Russia.

The Emperor was vacillating between the two and waiting for events which would force him to dismiss Rasputin, for in those days he was still dimly conscious of the true significance of what was passing, but he was entirely dominated by the stronger will of his consort. The whole burden of the struggle, therefore, fell upon the Imperial Duma. This gave certain circles an opportunity of accusing the Duma of revolutionary tendencies, while, as a matter of fact, the Duma was fighting for the inviolability of the Emperor's prestige.

After the interpellation in the Duma, the Prime Minister, Kokovtzeff, was summoned to the Emperor. He told me afterwards that the Empress had insisted on the dissolution of the Duma. If before the interpellation I had entertained any doubts as to the expediency of presenting a report to the Emperor, my mind was now firmly made up, and I resolved to request an audience, in the course of which I determined that I would speak to the Emperor about Rasputin.

A whole month was spent in collecting evidence. I was assisted by Gutchkoff, Badmaieff, Rodionoff and Count Sumarokoff, who was in touch with agents abroad. Prince Yusupoff kept us informed of what was going on at the Palace. Badmaieff supplied us with *data* concerning Mgr. Hermogen and Iliodor and their connection with Rasputin. Rodionoff produced the original letter of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna to Rasputin, which had been wrested from him by Iliodor during the scuffle in the corridor of Bishop Hermogen's

house, when the *starets* had been roughly handled by Iliodor and the lay brother. Rodionoff also produced letters written by the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana and Marie.

In February, 1912, I learnt through Prince Yusupoff that the Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna was greatly perturbed by all she had heard of Rasputin. Prince Yusupoff was of opinion that I ought to wait on her and acquaint her with the details of the case.

Soon afterwards I received a call from General Oseroff, general in waiting on her Majesty, who transmitted to me the desire of the Dowager Empress to see me and learn from me all there was to hear. Before this, the Empress had summoned Prince Yusupoff, questioned him about me as a man, and asked him whether the President of the Duma was in a position to tell her all there was to know. Prince Yusupoff replied: "He is the only man, thoroughly informed, on whom you may rely to tell you nothing but the absolute truth."

The whole Imperial Family awaited my audience with the Emperor in a state of keen excitement: would I dare speak of Rasputin? and what would be the impression produced by my report? The Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna told Prince V. M. Volkonsky that she very much hoped the President of the Duma would speak to the Emperor about Rasputin.

A few days before the date fixed for my audience with the Emperor, I received a telephone message bidding me wait on the Empress Marie Feodorovna next morning at eleven o'clock. Collecting all the documents in my possession I started for the Dowager Empress's Palace. I was immediately introduced into her boudoir, where the Empress was awaiting me. She received me with the words: "You are of course aware of the object of our

interview? First of all, however, I wish you to explain to me the cause and meaning of the interpellation. Were not its actual motives of a revolutionary character, and, if so, why did you not prevent it?"

I explained to the Empress that though I was myself opposed to the interpellation, I nevertheless resolutely denied its having been inspired by revolutionary motives. On the contrary, it had been a necessary step for the calming of public opinion; the rumours had gone too far, and the attitude of the Government merely served to increase the general irritation.

The Empress then desired to see all the documents in my possession. I read her extracts from the Novoseloff pamphlet and told her all I knew. She informed me that she herself had only recently learnt the whole story. She had certainly heard of Rasputin before, but had never attached much importance to his existence.

"I only learnt all these details a few days ago from a person of my acquaintance, and I was absolutely aghast. It is terrible, terrible," she repeated. "I know, too, that there is a letter from Iliodor to Hermogen"—(a copy of this denunciatory letter was actually in my possession)—"and a letter from the Empress to that dreadful man. Show it me," she added.

I replied that I was unable to do so. At first she insisted on having it, but finally, laying her hand on mine, said:

"You will destroy it, will you not?"

"Yes, your Majesty, I will destroy it."

"That is good."

This letter is still in my possession. I soon learnt that distorted copies of it were being circulated and deemed it wiser to preserve the original.

The Dowager Empress said to me:

"I hear that you intend to speak to the Emperor about Rasputin. Do not do so. Unfortunately he will not believe you, and it will cause him much pain. He is so pure of heart that he does not believe in evil."

I replied that to my great sorrow I could not leave such an important matter unmentioned in my report. It was my duty to speak and inform my Sovereign. The affair was too serious, and the consequences might be too dangerous.

"Have matters gone so far then?"

"Madam, it is a question of the dynasty. We Monarchists can no longer keep silent. It is a great joy to me, your Majesty, that you have given me the pleasure of seeing you and speaking frankly on the subject. You see me now profoundly perturbed by the thought of the responsibility which rests upon me. I most humbly ask you to give me your blessing."

She raised her gentle eyes to my face, and laying her hand on mine, said in a voice trembling with emotion:

"God bless you."

I was on the point of leaving the room, when the Empress made a few steps forward and added softly:

"Do not hurt him too much."

I subsequently heard from Prince Yusupoff that after my audience the Empress Marie Feodorovna visited the Emperor and declared to him, "Either I am here or Rasputin," intimating her intention of departing if Rasputin remained.

On my return home I had calls from Prince V. M. Volkonsky, and Prince F. F. and Princess Z. N. Yusupoff. The Prince said to me: "We have overcome a big intrigue."

It appeared that the Court clique had endeavoured to prevent my interview with the

Dowager Empress, and when this failed, V. N. Kokovtzeff (the Prime Minister) visited the Empress Marie Feodorovna in order to ask her to dissuade me from speaking of Rasputin to the Emperor. Meanwhile, everything was ready for the report, and I presented my request for an audience to the Emperor.

CHAPTER III

Audience of the Emperor concerning Rasputin—Documents on the Case—Interview with the Emperor's Confessor—The Emperor's Refusal to grant an Audience.

I PERFECTLY realized the relative uselessness of a report presented solely by the President of the Duma, for it could not possess sufficient weight for the Emperor to adopt, on the strength of it, an irreconcilable attitude towards Rasputin, and defy any efforts made in defence of the favourite. My idea was to prevail on the Prime Minister and the Metropolitan presiding in the Holy Synod to present with me a joint report to the Emperor. Such a step would surely demonstrate to him that it was not the Duma alone, but all sections of the nation, that realized and feared the depth of the abyss into which Russia and the Emperor were being precipitated through Rasputin's influence.

Unfortunately my efforts were not successful. For one reason or another the persons mentioned above demurred from supporting me, and I was therefore compelled to act alone, thus taking upon myself the full responsibility for the ultimate consequences of my decision.

The Emperor sent for me at six o'clock on February 26. That morning my wife and I drove to the Kazan Cathedral, where we heard a special service of intercession. My report to the Emperor lasted nearly two hours. I first spoke of current affairs, touching also on conditions in the Artillery Department, administered by the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch*, and referring to the doubtful

* Second cousin to the Emperor.

safety of the Caucasus under the equally doubtful administration of Count Vorontzoff-Dashkoff. I then broached the principal subject of my report.

I said:

"Your Majesty, my report to-day extends to matters far beyond its usual scope. Granted the gracious permission of your Majesty, I intend to lay before you the detailed and documentary evidence concerning a process of destruction which has begun, pregnant with the most disastrous consequences to all concerned . . ."

The Tsar glanced at me in some astonishment.

I continued:

"I refer to the *starets* Rasputin and to the inadmissible fact of his presence at your Majesty's Court. I beseech you, Sire, as your Majesty's most loyal subject—will it be your pleasure to hear me to the end?—if not, say but one word, and I will remain silent."

With bowed head and averted gaze the Tsar murmured in a low voice:

"Speak."

"Your Majesty, the presence of this man of more than tarnished reputation in the most intimate Court circles is an event unparalleled in the history of the Russian Monarchy. The entire nation, all circles of the community, view with profound apprehension the influence this man exercises on the affairs of Church and State. The whole machinery of government, from Ministers to the inferior ranks of the secret police, is mobilized for the purpose of shielding this adventurer. Rasputin is a tool in the hands of Russia's enemies; he is their instrument for undermining the Church and the Monarchy itself. No revolutionary propaganda could achieve as much as Rasputin's mere presence at Court. Everyone fears his intimacy with the

Imperial Family. Public feeling is running very high."

"But why such attacks on Rasputin?" interrupted the Tsar; "why is he considered so harmful?"

"Your Majesty, the fact that Rasputin has created a split in the Synod has become common knowledge, both by hearsay and through the Press. Everyone knows that bishops are being transferred from their posts owing to his intrigues."

"Which bishops?" asked the Tsar.

"The case of Mgr. Hermogen aroused universal indignation, as being an undeserved insult to a prelate. Mgr. Hermogen has many supporters. I have received a petition signed by ten thousand people, begging me to intercede on his behalf before your Majesty."

"I think Mgr. Hermogen is a good man," said the Tsar; "he will soon be permitted to return. Still, I could not allow him to remain unpunished for his flagrant disobedience to my Imperial order."

"Your Majesty, according to the canons of the Church, an episcopal court can alone sit in judgment on a bishop. Mgr. Hermogen was sentenced to banishment on the sole charge of the High Procurator and on the strength of his personal report. It was an infringement of the canons of the Church."

The Tsar listened in silence.

"The case of Iliodor, too, has made a most painful impression on the people. After the inquiry held by order of your Majesty, his trial was cancelled a year ago. Now, without trial, he is confined in the Floristchevo hermitage—and this was done after he had dared to speak openly against Rasputin. These two were not the only ones to suffer. Bishop Feofan was deprived of his office of the Empress's confessor and removed to Sim-

feropol. Bishop Anthony of Tobolsk, who was the first to inform the Synod of Rasputin's adherence to the *khlysty* sect and to demand his trial, was transferred to Tver. Anyone who dares utter a word against Rasputin is persecuted by the Synod. Such a state of affairs cannot be tolerated, your Majesty. How can Orthodox Christians stand by in silence, when Orthodoxy is being defiled and destroyed by the pernicious activities of this rogue? One may well understand the general outburst of indignation which followed the disclosure that Rasputin was a *khlyst*."

"What proofs have you?"

"The police discovered that he went to the baths with women. That is one of the peculiarities of their religious practices."

"What of that? It is merely a custom among common people."

"No, your Majesty, there is no such custom. Perhaps husbands and wives go together, but what we have here is sheer debauchery. Permit me, in the first place, to read you letters from those of his victims who fell into the trap and repented afterwards. Here is a letter from a priest in Siberia, addressed to several members of the Duma [I did not like to mention Gutchkoff by name], and imploring them to inform the authorities of Rasputin's exploits, his immoral conduct and the rumours he circulated concerning his position and influence at the Imperial Court." (This letter I read out from end to end.)

"Here is another letter written by a lady confessing having been seduced and morally corrupted by Rasputin. She afterwards recoiled from him and repented of her fall . . . and met him one evening coming out of the baths in the company of her two daughters. . . The wife of an engineer, Mme. L., also fell a victim to Rasputin's teachings.

She became insane and is now in a lunatic asylum. Will your Majesty order this evidence to be verified?"

"I believe you," said the Tsar.

I read him other letters and extracts from Novoseloff's pamphlet; I laid stress on the painful impression which the prohibition of any publication in the Press concerning Rasputin had made on the public mind. He did not belong to the category of persons of whom it was forbidden to write. He occupied no exalted position, neither was he a member of the Imperial Family. Ministers of the Crown, the presidents of the Imperial Duma or of the Council of the Empire were freely criticized in the Press. Why, then, this enforced silence concerning Rasputin? Such a policy naturally led the public to suppose him to be intimately connected with the Imperial Family.

"But why do you assume him to be a *khlyst*?"

"Your Majesty should read Novoseloff's pamphlet. He made a special investigation of the case. He states that Rasputin was prosecuted on the charge of belonging to that sect, but that for some reason or other the prosecution was stopped. Moreover, as has been ascertained, meetings of Rasputin's followers were held at Sazonoff's flat, where Rasputin himself was staying at the time. Permit me to show you a foreign newspaper cutting, in which it is said that at the Masonic Congress in Brussels Rasputin was mentioned as being a useful instrument for carrying out the freemasons' policy in Russia. The whole intrigue, with all its subsequent developments, is as clear as daylight. It is not the fate of the dynasty and the prestige of the Imperial Family alone which are involved."

"How?" inquired the Tsar, greatly agitated.

"Your Majesty, there is no serious or responsible person in charge of the Tsarevitch; he is

entrusted to the care of a country yokel, Derevenko, who may be a very good man, but is a simple peasant. Ignorant folk are naturally inclined towards mysticism. What if anything were to happen to the Heir Apparent? This is a subject of profound anxiety to all. . . . Such a charming child, so universally beloved."

The Tsar was evidently struggling to overcome his emotion. He nervously lit one cigarette after another, then threw them down again.

I here decided to approach the subject from another side and to persuade the Emperor that Rasputin was a sycophant. I produced a photograph of the *starets* wearing a pectoral cross.

"Your Majesty knows Rasputin is not in holy orders; yet here he is depicted as a priest."

The Tsar replied:

"Yes, this is really going too far. He has no right to wear a pectoral cross."

"It is blasphemy, your Majesty. He is an illiterate peasant and not entitled to wear a cowl, which appertains to the priesthood. Here is another photograph. It is a '*khlysty* ship.' This was reproduced in the *Ogonek** and circulated throughout the country. Here is Rasputin surrounded by young girls; there are also boys with him in their midst. Here he is with two young men. They are carrying a placard inscribed with *khlysty* texts, and he is holding a *khlysty* ikon of Our Lady in his hands. It is a 'ship' bearing its inmates towards fornication."

"What is that?" asked the Tsar.

"Read Novoseloff's pamphlet, which I will submit to you. Here is another photograph of Rasputin with two women, and inscribed: 'The Way to Salvation.' . . ."

"The suppression of any mention of Rasputin

An illustrated weekly.

in the Press encourages the idea that the *khlysty* enjoy the patronage of the Tsar. What if a war broke out? Where is the prestige of the Tsar's name and authority? A number of persons closely connected with the Court are openly designated as Rasputin's followers. Rumours are current that the highest society is contaminated with his sectarian teachings. Thus a slur is cast on society and on the Court. In defiance of the censorship all the rumours and stories about Rasputin are being feverishly seized upon and reproduced by the provincial Press."

"Have you read Stolypin's report?" asked the Emperor.

"No, I have heard it spoken of, but never read it."

"I rejected it," said the Tsar.

"It is a pity," I replied, "for all this would not have happened. Your Majesty, you witness my profound emotion. It pains me exceedingly to be obliged to speak the cruel truth. But I dared not keep silent, I had no right to conceal from my Sovereign the menacing state of affairs with their possible terrible consequences. I believe that God has placed me as a mediator between the Tsar and the representatives of the people summoned together by his august command. It is my duty, Sire, as a Russian and as your Majesty's loyal subject to warn you that our enemies are striving to undermine the Throne and the Church and to cast a shadow on the beloved name of the Tsar. I always bear in mind the text of the oath of allegiance. In the name of all you hold sacred, in the name of Russia, and for the sake of the welfare and happiness of your successors—I implore you to banish this villainous rogue, and so dispel the fears which assail those who are loyal to the Throne."

"He is not here now," replied the Tsar in a low voice.

"Will you authorize me to tell everyone that he will not return?"

The Tsar remained silent for a while, then said:

"No, I cannot promise you that. Nevertheless, I fully believe all you have told me."

"Do you believe, Sire, in the absolute loyalty and trustworthiness of all those who raised the question in the Duma? Will you believe that they were inspired by the same motives which prompted my coming to lay the whole case before you?"

"I felt the sincerity of your report, and I trust the Duma because I trust you."

I was anxious to learn whether the Emperor was pleased with my report. I continued:

"Your Majesty, I came here fully prepared to pay the penalty if I had the misfortune to incur your Majesty's displeasure. If I have overstepped my rights, you have but to say a word, and I will resign my office of President of the Imperial Duma. I sought but to do my duty in laying the whole matter before you. In view of the excitement raised by this affair in the Duma, I did not think it right to conceal it from my Sovereign."

"I thank you. You acted as an honourable man and a loyal subject."

"Your Majesty, may I, as a special favour, be granted the happiness of being presented to his Imperial Highness the Tsarevitch?"

"Do you not know him?"

"I have never seen him."

The Tsar sent for the Tsarevitch, to whom I introduced myself as "the biggest and fattest man in Russia," at which the boy broke out into a merry laugh. On my asking him whether yesterday's collection on behalf of an "Ear of Corn" had been successful, the child's singularly attractive face lit

up with pleasure, as he answered quickly: "Oh yes! I alone collected fifty roubles. That *is* a lot, you know."

The Tsar added, smiling tenderly at his son: "He would not part with his collecting box all day."

Then the Tsar rose from his chair, and holding out his hand to me, said: "*Do svidàniya*, Mikhail Vladimirovitch."*

As I left the room I heard the Tsarevitch's loud whisper: "Who's that?" and the Tsar's answer: "The President of the Duma."

The little Tsarevitch ran after me into the hall, and all the time stood peeping at me through the glass door.

"Don't catch cold," I said to him; "it is draughty here."

"No, no, it's all right!" he shouted back.

The smiling Derevenko† appeared on the scene. I scrutinized the faces of the footmen, soldiers and Cossacks standing at attention in the hall. How lovingly they all looked at the Tsarevitch!

A typical glimpse into the state of mind prevailing among the Court servants was given me at my departure. On seeing me to the door the Emperor's head valet, Tchemoduroff, said to me: "Come more often, your Excellency. So few people visit us, and we never hear any news."

I was deeply moved by the Emperor's mark of confidence in me and the patience with which he had heard me to the end. And this was in spite of the warnings received by me from all sides: he will not listen to you, he will be angry, he will assume his stubborn mood, etc.

That same evening I had a curious conversation

* *Au revoir.*

† The sailor attached to the Heir Apparent.

by telephone with A. S. Taneieff*, who was at the head of his Majesty's Private Chancellery. He called me up at my flat.

"Mikhail Vladimirovitch, would you mind telling me what was it two members of the Duma wished to see me about?"

"I can't tell you, because I know nothing about it."

"I am afraid it might have something to do with Gregory."

"What Gregory?"

"Oh, you know. . . Gregory . ."—stammer—"Rasputin . . ."

"What connection is there between you and Rasputin?"

"Well, you know . . . I thought . . ."

"I am glad you admit there is a reason for speaking to you about this disgusting sectarian. Let me tell you that if you are an honourable man you ought to turn him out of Tsarskoe . . . And you know how."

"I know nothing at all."

"Yes, you do. And if you fail in your duty as an honest man, all Russia will hate you for it. As it is, your name is everywhere coupled with that of Russia's curse—Rasputin."

(Inarticulate murmurs) . . . "*Au revoir.*"

That same evening I drove to the Duma, where I was immediately surrounded by groups of deputies. I gave them a brief account of the interview and of the gracious reception accorded me by the Emperor. My narrative produced a most excellent impression on all. I gave a *verbatim* account of the whole interview to my most intimate associates.

On the morning of February 28, General V. N.

* Mme. Vyrubova's father.

Dediulin, Commandant of the Imperial Palace and A.D.C. to the Emperor, telephoned to me from Tsarskoe Selo, asking me to call on him at his flat in town. General Dediulin was an old schoolfellow of mine and a personal friend; hence the conversation which ensued was of an intimate nature. Dediulin imparted to me the following news.

"After your visit to Tsarskoe Selo," he said to me, "it became known that the Tsar had scarcely touched his dinner and remained all the time extremely taciturn and thoughtful. When I reported to him next morning I took the liberty of saying to him: 'Your Majesty, you have received Rodzianko. It appears he has fatigued you very much.'"

The Tsar replied: "No, I am not in the least tired. I see that Rodzianko is a loyal subject who is not afraid of speaking the truth. He told me much that I knew nothing about. You are an old schoolfellow of his. Tell him, from me, to investigate Rasputin's case. Let him take from the Synod all the secret documents concerning Rasputin, thoroughly examine them and report the results to me. But tell him to keep the whole affair secret for the time being."

I was astounded by the news. That same evening I invited V. I. Karpoff, a member of the Council of the Empire, and the members of the Duma Kamensky, Shubinsky and Gutchkoff, to come to see me. We discussed far into the night the best means for proceeding with the mission entrusted to me by the Tsar. Next day I asked M. Damansky, Assistant High Procurator of the Synod, to come to the Duma and bring me the secret *dossier* on Rasputin's case. Damansky arrived. In order the better to draw him out, I decided to feign complete ignorance. This manœuvre met with complete success. My informant divulged all I

wished to know. In his endeavours to persuade me of Gregory's holiness and purity, he declared that the *starets* was honoured and respected by many highly placed persons, who enjoyed and found edification in his conversations. Damansky revealed many names and confirmed much evidence already familiar to me through other channels. He said that Rasputin lodged with the Sazonoffs, a very respectable family with whom he, Damansky, was on intimate terms; that the house was visited by M. Taneieff, Gentleman Usher to the Emperor, by the wife of General Orloff, Countess Witte*, "such a universally respected man" as Bishop Barnabas, and many others. I expressed my astonishment at all this, and nodded in assent.

All this time Damansky kept a firm hold on the file of documents in his hands, and kept repeatedly assuring me the case was in itself too trivial to be worth looking into. While dwelling on the virtues of the *starets*, Damansky professed profound indignation at the gossip and calumny of which he was the subject. "He is accused of being a *khlyst* and a libertine. Some people go so far as to allege an intimacy between him and the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna . . ."

Here I dropped the mask, struck the table with my fist, drew myself up to my full height†, and looking as ferocious as I could, shouted at the top of my voice, so as to be heard in the adjoining room:

"Are you mad, sir? How dare you utter such abominations in my presence? You forget of whom and to whom you are speaking! I refuse to listen to you any further."

My outburst was so unexpected that he turned pale, cowered and hastened to excuse himself. The

* Wife of the ex-Prime Minister.

† M. Rodzianko was an exceptionally tall and powerful man.

object of his mean behaviour was obvious. He imagined me to be his dupe, and hoped to lead me on to talk scandal with the intention of reporting it in certain quarters afterwards. He expected to convince me by his explanations, and prevent my claiming the documents. He was, therefore, completely taken aback when I wrenched the file from his grasp, locked it up in my desk and, placing the key in my pocket, declared: "By order of his Majesty the Emperor, I shall examine these documents, and inform you later of the results."

Having obtained possession of these important documents, I at once ordered the clerical staff of the Duma and the sworn-in lady typists to make complete copies of them. With the aid of J. V. Glinka, the head of the Duma clerks' office, I myself proceeded to draft a plan of procedure for the task in hand—a task demanding great circumspection in view of the extremely delicate nature of the case.

The very next day Damansky telephoned asking for a private interview at my flat. Suspecting a trap, I replied that I did not give private interviews on matters of State; I therefore requested his presence in my room at the Duma at three o'clock that afternoon, and to avoid any further explanations I immediately hung up the receiver.

On my arrival at the Duma I found Damansky waiting for me. To my astonishment he was accompanied by the Archpriest Alexander Vasilieff, the religious teacher of the Imperial children. The reverend father's presence at the Duma was rather surprising. I at once realized that some plan for putting pressure on me was afoot, and decided to separate them. They were, therefore, shown into different rooms.

First I tackled Damansky. He explained that he was entrusted with a mission to reclaim from

me the file containing the documents on Rasputin. I expressed surprise at this request, and replied that the documents had been placed in my keeping by the Emperor's orders, and that their surrender could only be claimed by a similar act, i.e., by an Imperial order transmitted either verbally through an adjutant-general or a Secretary of State, or by written decree. At this juncture, looking somewhat perturbed and agitated, and lowering his voice, Damansky explained that though he did not bear an order from the Emperor, the demand came from a very exalted person.

"Who was it?" I asked. "Sabler?"

Damansky made a deprecating gesture.

"No, someone much more highly placed," he replied.

"Who was it, then?" I repeated, putting on an expression of astonishment.

"The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna."

"If that is the case, will you kindly inform her Majesty that she is as much a subject of her August Consort as myself, and that it is the duty of us both to obey his commands. I am, therefore, not in a position to comply with her wishes."

"What!" exclaimed Damansky, "must I really tell her that? But it is her desire."

"I am very sorry," I replied, "but nevertheless I am unable to accede to it." And to prevent further insistence on Damansky's part, I ended the interview.

I then passed on to Father Vasilieff. He was instructed by the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, he said, to communicate to me his opinion on the *starets*.

"He really is a God-fearing and pious man, absolutely harmless and even rather useful to the Imperial Family," said Father Vasilieff.

"What part does he play in the intimate life of

the Imperial Family, particularly in relation to the children?"

"He has talks with them about God and about religion . . . ."

At these words I flew into a passion.

"You dare tell me that! You, an Orthodox priest and the religious teacher of the Tsar's children! You tolerate that a stupid, ignorant *mouzhik* should speak to them on matters of faith; you tolerate his pernicious hypnotic influence on their pure childish souls? You are a witness to the part played by this sectarian *khlyst* in the family life of the Tsar, and yet you keep silent. By countenancing this man's criminal activities you betray your holy office and your oath of allegiance. You know everything that is going on, and yet out of cowardice and servility you prefer to hold your tongue when, as a servant of the Church of God, your duty bids you raise your voice in defence of our faith. By your criminal connivance you, too, become a sectarian and a participator in the devilish conspiracy engineered by the enemies of Russia and of the Tsar, who aim at defiling the Throne and the Orthodox Church."

The unfortunate priest, completely taken aback by my vehemence, grew pale and murmured tremulously:

"No one has ever spoken to me like this before. You have opened my eyes. Tell me what I am to do."

"Go and tell the Empress from me, that if she does not want to see the ruin of her husband and son and the collapse of the Throne, she must dismiss this obscene *khlyst* from her presence for ever. The position is serious. No revolutionary propaganda could inflict greater injury on the Monarchy nor degrade the prestige of the Imperial House as does Rasputin's presence at the Palace. If you

continue to be silent and fail to disclose the truth —then the cross you wear upon your breast will brand your very heart and soul."

He told Prince Volkonsky afterwards: "When I left the President I was trembling all over, and fully realized the force and truth of his arguments."

Father Vasilieff, however, as I was subsequently informed, gave a completely distorted account of our interview to the Empress, thereby merely strengthening the disfavour in which she already held me. He continued to encourage her infatuation for Rasputin, and persevered in his ambiguous behaviour.

From Gutchkoff I learnt that my prolonged interview with the Tsar had seriously agitated all Rasputin's followers, and that they had decided to recall him to St. Petersburg.

Princess Z. N. Yusupoff informed us by telephone that the Empress was so distressed by Rasputin's dismissal that she took to her bed. It is interesting to recall that after the questions on Rasputin in the Duma, the Empress wrote a despairing letter of eight pages to Princess Yusupoff complaining of the unjust attacks and calumnies of which they were the object. "No one loves us," wrote the Empress; "everyone is trying to do us harm. This interpellation was a revolutionary act."

The Empress's complaints of their tragic position were so bitter that Princess Yusupoff felt sorry for her and sent a telephone message that she would come to see her next day. Owing, however, in all probability to some intrigue on the part of Mme. Vyrubova, Princess Yusupoff was informed that the Empress was indisposed and unable to receive her.

It was not till March 9, 1912, that Princess Yusupoff was admitted to see the Empress. Her

visit took place after Gutchkoff's speech in the Duma on the Synod estimates, in which he made a further allusion to Rasputin. Princess Yusupoff spoke very gravely on the subject and tried to impress the Empress with the same arguments I had submitted to the Tsar, but in vain. The Empress remained obdurate, working herself into a state of great indignation and excitement. She expressed her displeasure at the tenor of my report to the Tsar, and was particularly angry at my refusal to return the Rasputin documents.

"What right had he to keep them and refuse their surrender?" the Empress repeated.

Princess Yusupoff tried to persuade her to believe the word of the President of the Duma. "He is an honest and truthful man," she said.

"No, no! You don't know what he told Father Vasilieff! Hanging is too good for men like Rodzianko and Gutchkoff!"

"How can you say such things?" the Princess exclaimed indignantly. "You ought to thank God for sending you honest men who speak the truth to the Tsar. Rasputin must be turned out. He is a *khlyst* who abuses your confidence."

"No, no, that is a calumny. He is a holy man."

A thorough examination of the documents produced by Damansky revealed the history of Rasputin in all its sordid reality.

The first time that Rasputin was arraigned as a *khlyst* was as far back as 1902, when, on the strength of an official intimation from the parish priest of Pokrovskoe, the head of the district police denounced him to the Governor of Tobolsk. The Governor handed over the case to the local bishop, Mgr. Anthony, who ordered one of the diocesan

missionaries to carry out a detailed investigation. The latter, being an energetic man, made a domiciliary search in Rasputin's house, carried off various material proofs, and brought to light numerous obscure facts all tending to prove irrefutably Rasputin's adherence to the *khlysty* sect. A detailed report on the case, supported by important circumstantial evidence, was presented to the bishop. Some of the details mentioned in the report were of so obscene and revolting a nature, that it was impossible to read them without a feeling of repulsion.

On receiving the report Mgr. Anthony handed it over for study to an expert on sectarianism, a M. Berezkin, inspector of the Theological Seminary at Tobolsk. The affair dragged on indefinitely. Rasputin, meanwhile, had made his way to St. Petersburg, where, as I have previously described, he gradually wormed himself into the confidence of highly-placed persons and was introduced at the Palace.

A survey of the very thorough and conscientious investigation carried out by Berezkin, confirmed, moreover, by the evidence of numerous witnesses, letters and references to the teachings of the *khlysty*, revealed beyond the shadow of a doubt Rasputin's adherence to that disgusting sect. He was, moreover, a *khlyst* of a superior order, a clever propagandist and a pernicious corrupter of souls of simple-minded Orthodox folk. The evidence in hand established beyond doubt his connection with many of the *khlysty* "prophets," among whom he occupied a more or less important position.

In his report to the Bishop of Tobolsk, M. Berezkin declared that he had no doubt whatever that Rasputin belonged to the *khlysty*, and recommended that the whole case should be referred to

the civil authorities in order that Rasputin might be prosecuted. Before doing so, however, M. Berezkin advised the Bishop to collect certain additional evidence on the case. Acting on the strength of this report Bishop Anthony ordered the consistory of Tobolsk to carry out M. Berezkin's injunctions and hand over the case of Gregory Efimoff Rasputin to the judicial authorities.

While this inter-departmental procedure was going on, Rasputin returned from St. Petersburg to his native village. He brought with him considerable sums of money and proceeded to build himself a large, well-furnished house. He openly boasted of favours received from members of the Imperial Family, and exhibited to everyone the presents they had given him—for instance, a richly ornamented gold cross on a golden chain, a medallion containing a portrait of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, and photographs of exalted personages with appropriate inscriptions. He flaunted about in expensive sable-lined coats. In a word, the prosecuted sectarian was transformed into an influential personage, whose patronage was already beginning to be sought by many.

After Bishop Anthony's resolution recommending Rasputin's prosecution, the affair was brought to an end by an ukase of the Holy Synod appointing, by Imperial warrant, Bishop Anthony of Tobolsk to the archbishopric of Tver and Kashin, i.e., the removal of Mgr. Anthony from his former diocese. As I learnt afterwards from competent sources, to avoid a public scandal over the Rasputin case, Bishop Anthony was given the choice of two alternatives: either to withdraw his charge against Rasputin and receive promotion to the see of Tver, or to retire to a monastery. He chose the former, and Rasputin's prosecution was suppressed.

Having completed a thorough and all-round examination of the documents submitted to my investigation, I drew up a comprehensive and concise summary of the case, and on March 8, 1912, presented a request for an audience with the Emperor for the purpose of reporting on the result of the mission entrusted to me by his Majesty.

For a long time my petition remained unanswered. The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, I learnt, was absolutely opposed to my having a second interview with the Emperor, particularly as I should confront him armed with official and incriminating evidence against Rasputin.

A few days prior to the Imperial Family's departure for the Crimea, my petition for an audience was at last returned, not to me, but to the Prime Minister, V. N. Kokovtzeff. The Tsar had written on it the following note: "I request V N. to inform the President of the Duma that I am unable to receive him, nor do I see any necessity for so doing, as I received him a week and a half ago. The Duma debates on the Synod's budget estimates have taken a turn of which I disapprove. I desire you and the President of the Duma to take steps to prevent a recurrence of this in the future."

We were both dumbfounded on reading these lines, which contained a direct affront to the Duma and a slight on its president. According to the Fundamental Laws of the country the presidents of the legislative chambers enjoyed the right of direct communication with the Sovereign. Now the Premier was charged with a mission he was not entitled to execute, as he did not possess the right to act as intermediary between the Crown and the president of one of the legislative chambers. I declared to Kokovtzeff that as the dignity of the

Duma had been slighted, I should be obliged to tender my resignation and divest myself of my Court rank.

Such a step would inevitably create a state of conflict between the Duma and the Crown, and give colour to the charge of revolutionary tendencies already made against the Duma, thus further complicating a sufficiently unpleasant situation.

We finally arrived at the following decision. Kokovtzeff would go to Tsarskoe Selo on the very next day, point out his blunder to the Tsar, and insist that he should either grant an audience or send a personal letter to the President of the Duma. This plan was carried out to the letter. Kokovtzeff discharged his mission exceedingly well. He repeated my words to the Tsar and emphasized my intention of resigning and giving up my Court rank. To this the Tsar replied:

"I did not mean to hurt his feelings; on the contrary, I am very well satisfied with him. The Duma under him is quite changed; they have voted credits for the Navy and the Artillery Department. . . . What is to be done?"

Kokovtzeff advised the Tsar to write an autograph letter, which I received next day. It ran as follows: "Being pressed for time and unable to receive you before my departure for the Crimea, I request you to forward me a written report."

This letter I have kept.

I did not consider it necessary to inform the Duma of this incident, merely stating that I had received an autograph letter requesting me to forward a written report.

This of itself aroused considerable displeasure, many of the members expressing their indignation at the Tsar's having found time to receive Balashoff, a delegation of students, and various other

* Honorary Court ranks were given for distinguished service.

people, and refused to see the President of the Duma.

I immediately proceeded to draw up a written report, in which task I was rendered valuable assistance by V. I. Karpoff and the head of the Duma office, J. V. Glinka.

The report was very convincing, particularly the latter part of it, which dealt with the measures to be taken to pacify public opinion and reform the Church. Mgr. Hermogen must be recalled, Rasputin banished, and a Church Convocation summoned. While engaged in this task I had a visit from Rodionoff, who brought me a message from Bishop Hermogen saying he knew of my conversation with the Tsar in defence of the Orthodox faith. The bishop sent me his blessing, said he remembered me in his prayers, and bade me stand firm.

In the meantime Rasputin again made his appearance at St. Petersburg and, according to the papers, received a great welcome from his admirers assembled at the flat of Mme. Golovina. This time he was closely tracked both by the police and by pressmen. Rasputin was brought by his friends to Tsarskoe Selo, but their attempts to gain him admittance to the Empress suffered a defeat.

In the sixth week of Lent the Imperial Family left for the Crimea. Mme. Vyrubova succeeded in smuggling Rasputin on to the suite's train, where he was concealed in Prince Tumanoff's compartment. Someone informed the Emperor, who was exceedingly angry at such flagrant disobedience to his command and ordered the train to be stopped at Tosno.* Rasputin was removed from the train and, under surveillance of a secret

* A station on the Nicholas railway between St. Petersburg and Moscow.

service official, conveyed to the province of Tobolsk.

My words had struck home. After that Rasputin ceased for some time to appear at Court. Now and again he returned to St. Petersburg, never daring to remain for more than two or three days. The chief of the police department used to complain to me: "I am utterly sick of him. He has to be watched. Directly he arrives, off he goes, straight from the station to the baths, with two ladies."

The Empress, I feel sure, never forgave me for my interference. No news reached me concerning the fate of my report; I received neither reply nor reproof. Had the Tsar read it? I did not know. A rumour was current that he read it in the Crimea with his brother-in-law, the Duke of Hesse.

CHAPTER IV

Imperial Levée for Members of the Duma—The Emperor's Displeasure—Effects of the Reception—Borodino Anniversary Celebrations—The Fourth Duma Election Campaign—M. V. Rodzianko's Re-election—Audience of the Emperor.

In May, 1912, I was present in Moscow at the unveiling of the memorial to the Emperor Alexander III in the presence of the Imperial Family. The Emperor's attitude towards me was cool; the rest of the Imperial Family, on the contrary, treated me with particular cordiality.

Many members of the Duma belonging to the parties of the Right and the Octobrists, and especially the peasants of all parties, expressed their wish to be presented to the Emperor before the end of the spring session. Such a desire, in my opinion, was inspired by a feeling of sincere patriotism and loyalty to the Throne. I therefore began to work hard, through Kokovtzeff, to secure the granting of this request. The Emperor treated it somewhat suspiciously and—probably influenced by the Empress, who was present at the interview with Kokovtzeff and kept repeating all the time that it was absolutely unnecessary—at first flatly refused to receive the members of the Duma. Meanwhile pressure in favour of their being received was being applied from other quarters through the intermediary of Baron Fredericks, Minister of the Imperial Court. Only when both Kokovtzeff and Baron Fredericks declared that they would resign if the Duma were not received, did the Emperor give a grudging consent.

The news of the coming reception was received

with acclamation by the Duma, and the members started for Tsarskoe Selo in high spirits. Great was their disappointment and mortification at the Emperor's words of displeasure and criticism concerning "the impassioned and immoderate tone of the debates on certain questions." That was all. No allusion whatever was made to the patriotic work of the Duma—the credits for the Navy, the progress of the agrarian reform, the legislation concerning the province of Kholm or the Zemstvos in Western Russia, the question of Finland—all this work was ignored by the Emperor. The impression created by the reception was that the Emperor was dissatisfied—indeed, angry with the Duma. Everybody understood that the cause of this was the Rasputin case and the influence of the Empress. In the official statement to the Press, the text of the Emperor's address to the Duma was much toned down. But those of us who listened to it well remember how bitterly we all felt the undeserved affront.

The Emperor's final words contained a reminder concerning the bill for the provision of funds for the parish elementary schools. He expressed the hope that the credits for the development of institutions particularly dear to the heart of his late father would be passed by the Duma. Next day a gloom seemed to pervade the Duma. On my questioning the various party leaders and influential members as to the probable results of the vote on the Parish Schools' Credits Bill, they all (with the exception of a few belonging to the Extreme Right) emphatically declared that the bill would be rejected. Even the Nationalists openly said that the Emperor had no esteem for us. "God knows how he treats us. He thinks more of Rasputin and Sabler . . ." and so on. My own position was a most delicate one. It was impossible to place on the agenda a bill in

which the Emperor took an interest, knowing that it would be immediately thrown out. By so doing I should be creating a conflict between the Crown and the Duma, and the session would close, as it were, with a demonstration against his wishes. I resolved to strike the bill off the agenda. By so doing I took all the blame for the incident on myself and shielded the Duma. My decision aroused great resentment among members of the Right wing, especially the clergy. Without troubling to go into the matter they raised an uproar, and declared that they would make a disturbance at the close of the session. As I walked through the Duma to take the chair, I had to be escorted by a bodyguard of Duma serjeants-at-arms to avoid the possibility of an unpleasant demonstration on the part of the clerical members. In the interval of the sitting I sent for Bishop Eulogius to my room and explained the motive of my action. He realized his error and apologized, as did many of the Conservative members who had previously expressed their resentment.

During my stay at Nauheim that summer (I was there taking a cure), I learnt from the papers as well as from a letter written to me by a member of the Duma, Kovzan, that the Government intended to dissolve the Duma three days before the centenary anniversary of the Battle of Borodino on August 26, so that the representatives of the people would not take part in the festivities. Knowing what an unfavourable impression such a step would be bound to create, I wrote at once to Kokovtzeff urging him at all costs to persuade the Emperor to postpone the dissolution of the Duma until after August 26. I received a reply a few days later to the effect that the Duma would be dissolved on the 30th.

On my return to St. Petersburg I at once went

to the Duma, where I found about twenty deputies, among them several who had arrived in the hope of obtaining tickets for the celebrations. They were keenly disappointed when, on reading the programme of the ceremony, they saw that no places had been reserved for the members of the Duma either on the battlefield of Borodino or in Moscow. After studying the arrangements for the ceremony I noted that, although the President of the Duma was everywhere placed on an equal footing with the President of the Council of the Empire, the members of the two houses were not treated as equals. Such an attitude towards the representatives of the people made me extremely angry, and my first impulse was to refuse to take part in the celebrations. The members of the Duma, however, especially the peasants, persuaded me to revoke my decision. "If we are not there," they said, "then at least let the President of the Duma be present at this great anniversary of our national glory."

After some hesitation I decided to attend the unveiling of the memorial at Borodino, while avoiding the rest of the celebrations. I explained the cause of my absence from Moscow to Kokovtzeff and to the Master of Ceremonies, Baron Korff. The latter's reply was characteristic: "Members of the Duma do not enjoy the right of access to the Court," to which I retorted: "This is not a Court, but a national celebration. Besides, Russia was saved, not by masters of ceremonies, but by her people."

The Emperor, who passed quite close to me on the field of Borodino, looked askance at me and did not acknowledge my salutation. I understood that the causes of his dissatisfaction with me were the elimination of the Church Schools' Bill from the agenda of the Duma and my report on the Rasputin case.

After the Borodino celebrations, the Government apparently decided on a most drastic course of action to ensure, during the coming electoral campaign for the fourth Duma, the election of such candidates as would be willing blindly to support the Government's policy. No stone was left unturned to discover some point of law which could be utilized to eliminate candidates of "undesirable" or independent views.

I was re-elected President of the Imperial Duma. The Extreme Right and the Nationalist parties found themselves in a quandary. They left the assembly in a body as a protest against my election, and in order to demonstrate their unwillingness to hear the inaugural speech of a President who had been elected by the votes of the Left (I obtained a majority by the vote of the Cadets; the Socialists and Labourists, as usual, abstained from voting). A number of members of the Right, however, did not obey their leaders, but crowded at the door, where they stood silently watching the "revolutionary" (as they called it) Duma cheering the President's statement on the recovery of the Tsarevitch from his illness. Even the deputies of the Extreme Left, on purpose, applauded and cheered their loudest. The discomfited Conservatives said afterwards that had they known the contents of my speech beforehand, they would certainly have remained in the hall.

This incident was taken up by the Press; only papers of the Right said nothing about it.

Immediately after my election I solicited an audience with the Emperor. On receiving me the Emperor appeared somewhat agitated and, contrary to his usual custom, remained standing throughout the interview, which only lasted twenty minutes.

I said:

"I have the honour to present myself as the newly-elected President of the Duma."

"Yes, fancy . . . how quickly it has all happened," the Emperor began, seemingly ill at ease, and added: "I learnt with pleasure of your re-election, Mikhail Vladimirovitch. I thank you for your splendid speech. Every Russian ought to think and feel like that. But why do you call our form of government constitutional?"

"Sire, it was your Majesty's magnanimous desire to summon the representatives of the people to take part in the work of legislation. Such participation means constitutional government, and I therefore deemed it impossible to oppose even by a single word your Majesty's sovereign will."

"Yes, yes, now I understand you. But tell me, why, then, did the members of the Right and Nationalist parties leave the hall during your speech? How very tactless and out of place that was, while you were delivering your highly patriotic speech!"

"Sire, they were expecting a different speech, and had decided to protest in advance, and not to take part in revolutionary manifestations. Yet I dare assure you, that in spite of the numerous acts of injustice which your Government committed during the election campaign, the Imperial Duma, or at any rate the majority of it, is not revolutionarily inclined. My speech was a true reflection of the feelings actually animating the members of the Duma. As a matter of fact, by absenting themselves from the hall during my address, the Nationalists and the Right wing placed themselves in opposition. They took no part in the loyal demonstration made by the Duma in response to my motion for expressing to your Majesty our joy at the recovery of the Tsarevitch, and were thus punished for their tactlessness."

"The Empress and I were deeply touched by your words, and I beg you to convey our thanks to the Duma."

Two days after the audience I received the following intimation from the Minister of the Imperial Court:

"DEAR MIKHAIL VLADIMIROVITCH,

In reply to the petition presented by the member of the Duma, Jägermeister Balashoff, on behalf of a group of deputies, soliciting the honour of being presented to his Majesty the Emperor, his Imperial Majesty has graciously pleased to accord in principle his consent to receive the members of the fourth Duma in accordance with the precedents of 1907 and 1908.

In informing your Excellency of this his Majesty's pleasure, I beg you to forward me the list of those members of the Imperial Duma who have signified their desire to have the pleasure of being received by his Imperial Majesty.

Believe me,

Yours respectfully and sincerely,

BARON FREDERICKS,

November 27, 1912."

It transpired that the Nationalists and members of the Right, desirous of justifying their strange behaviour, had decided as a group of "loyal Conservatives" to petition for an audience from the Emperor, without the knowledge of the President of the Duma. This step apparently displeased the Emperor, and without replying to Balashoff, he addressed an answer direct to the President.

The deputies proceeded to register their names for the reception. I called on Baron Fredericks to

inquire whether it would be the Emperor's pleasure to receive members of the Cadet party. The Baron replied that the Emperor was willing to receive anyone desirous of being presented, even the Socialists. A large number of Cadets signified their wish to go, and at a meeting of the party it was decided to give individual members liberty to act as they pleased in the matter. I took great pains to induce as many members as possible to go to the reception. For a long time I tried to persuade Miliukoff. Our conversation took place in the corridor of the Marie Opera House, during the performance of "Judith" with Shaliapin in the leading part. Miliukoff brushed my arguments aside. "I am afraid the mere sight of me will recall too many unpleasant recollections in the Emperor's mind," he finally said, evidently hinting at the Viborg manifesto.*

Miliukoff did not go, but the members of the Opposition who did attend numbered 26 Cadets, 44 Progressives, the Poles, the Lithuanian and White Russian group, the Mussulmans and the non-party members—87 in all, while the number of deputies who attended the reception was 374 out of the total of 440. This was a momentous event, as it was the largest attendance at a reception ever recorded, and the Cadets had never before taken part in one at all.

The Emperor gave us a most cordial welcome. He shook hands with the President and made a tour of the deputies, who were grouped according to their constituencies. The Master of the Ceremonies, Baron Korff, began to present them by

* After the dissolution of the first Imperial Duma in 1906, a group of members of the Constitutional Democratic Party assembled at Viborg, in Finland, and issued a manifesto to the people urging them to refuse to pay taxes and supply recruits to the army, as a protest against the action of the Government. This appeal produced no impression whatever.

name, but the Emperor waved him aside, saying: "Do not trouble, Baron, the President of the Duma will present the deputies to me." The Emperor found a word to say to each member, and appeared to treat the Conservatives more coolly than the rest.

One of the deputies, Khvostoff, appeared decorated with a large badge of the Union of the Russian People.* This was a breach of etiquette, because no fancy orders or decorations might be worn with uniform. The Emperor asked him: "What is this badge?" Khvostoff replied: "It is a sign of membership of the Union of the Russian People." The Emperor passed on, shrugging his shoulders with a murmured: "Strange,"—after which Khvostoff removed his badge.

After the Emperor had made a tour of the assembly, the members of the Right moved forward as if to encircle him, but the Emperor walked into the centre, said a few words conveying his wishes for our united and fruitful labours, and wished everyone a happy Christmas.

* A patriotic and extremely reactionary society.

CHAPTER V

The Tercentenary of the Romanoff Dynasty—Rasputin's Expulsion from the Cathedral—Radko Dmitrieff's Visit to St. Petersburg.

FRESH rumours of Rasputin's reappearance in St. Petersburg began to be persistently circulated in the Duma. I received a letter from Tsaritsin, confirmed by numerous signatures, informing me that to the certain knowledge of the inhabitants, Rasputin was staying at the house of V. K. Sabler, and had been re-admitted at Court. I forwarded this document to Sabler, accompanied by a letter requesting him to give these people a conclusive reply. Sabler wrote me a somewhat unpleasant note to the effect that he had never met Rasputin or had anything to do with him.

Shortly after I had received this letter, the new Minister of the Interior, Maklakoff, paid me an official call and stated that the Emperor had received information that the Duma was preparing a fresh interpellation on the question of Rasputin, and that this step had the support of the President. Maklakoff had been commissioned by the Emperor to express his Majesty's disapproval and his wish that the question of Rasputin should not again be raised in the Duma. I replied that nothing of the sort had happened, that this was probably an intrigue of Sabler's, and acquainted him with the contents of the letter from Tsaritsin. Soon after I met Sabler at a dinner party at Kokovtzeff's, and expressed to him my indignation at his having thus misrepresented the complaint of the citizens of Tsaritsin concerning Rasputin's presence in the High Procurator's

house. Sabler was exceedingly abashed and assured me that I had misunderstood him. I, for my own part, warned Sabler that I should report the affair to the Emperor. And at my first audience I presented the following version of the incident.

"I take the liberty," I said, "to lodge a complaint to your Majesty against the High Procurator of the Holy Synod in that he intentionally misinformed your Majesty concerning the petition of the citizens of Tsaritsin, to which were affixed nearly 500 signatures. As the petition was directed against the activities of the High Procurator, the normal course would have been to refer the case for investigation at its source, that is to say, to the High Procurator himself. He therefore had no business to trouble your Majesty. With regard to the second part of the question transmitted to me by your Imperial command through the medium of N. A. Maklakoff—it is all absolutely untrue. The spirit which animates the Duma is wrongly interpreted; all mention of Rasputin has died down, there is no question of any interpellation, and I am therefore of opinion that the High Procurator of the Holy Synod has simply slandered me, for reasons of which I am, of course, in ignorance."

After listening attentively to my report, the Emperor admitted the validity of all my arguments.

Seeing the Emperor was graciously disposed towards me, I took advantage of the opportunity offered to plead the cause of the priest Dmitrieff. The priest Dmitrieff, a member of the third Duma, was, after its dissolution, subjected to persecution by Bishop Agapit of Ekaterinoslav for belonging to the Octobrist party. The bishop deprived him of his parish, and dismissed him from the post of divinity teacher at the high school. The

unfortunate priest was left without any means of livelihood, was dependent on the charity of his former parishioners, and suffered a regular persecution. I pleaded that complete restitution should be made to Dmitrieff. The Emperor wrote down the whole case in his note-book and promised to accede to my request, which, in fact, he did.

In spite of my having been obliged to touch upon the delicate topic of Rasputin, the audience terminated graciously. My request for permission to deliver a congratulatory address at the forthcoming Romanoff jubilee celebrations was graciously granted by his Majesty.*

These celebrations were fixed for February. A rumour that the members of the Council of the Empire intended to present the Imperial Family with an ikon became current in the Duma. Having verified this report, the members of the Duma determined not to be outdone by the Council.

I convened the Senioren-convent, at which it was decided to present an ikon to the Imperial Family from the Duma. The President's secretary, Stchepkin, was dispatched to Moscow to consult Professor Ostroukhoff, who advised the purchase of a beautiful ikon of rare antiquity. Professor Ostroukhoff also proposed to buy an antique tapestry on which was depicted Mikhail Feodorovitch Romanoff (the first Tsar of the Romanoff dynasty) welcoming his father Filaret Nikititch on his arrival in Moscow. This tapestry was made of white linen cloth, twenty yards long, on which were embroidered processions of boyars and their wives in multi-coloured garments, armed *ryndys* (guards), Filaret descending from his coach, peasants offering the bread and salt, and Mikhail Feodorovitch prostrating himself before his father. In the back-

* According to the programme, there were to be no speeches at the celebrations.

ground rose the golden cupolas of the Moscow Kremlin, and above was an image of the Holy Trinity surrounded by angels blowing trumps of glory. A cloth of gold of antique design was bought, out of which two cases were made tied by long gold cords; on their ends were suspended gold tassels and antique eagles ornamented with precious stones. The effect of the whole was beautiful and most appropriate.

The Duma approved and consented to make good the overdraft on the sum originally intended.

The Romanoff tercentenary celebrations were to be inaugurated by a liturgy and special thanksgiving service in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan, which were to be celebrated by the Patriarch of Antioch, clad in the vestments presented to him by the Emperor. That very morning I learnt that the places reserved in the Cathedral for members of the Duma were not in accordance with the dignity of that institution. As a matter of fact the space reserved for the Duma was not only far in the rear of that set apart for members of the Council of the Empire, but also of that reserved for the Senate. If the Romanoff jubilee was intended to be a national rejoicing, it should not be overlooked that in 1613 it was an assembly of the people and not a group of officials that elected Mikhail Feodorovitch Romanoff Tsar of Russia.

I pointed this out to Baron Korff and Count Tolstoy, the Masters of the Ceremonies, and, after an unpleasant argument, insisted that the members of the Duma should occupy the places reserved for the Senate, the latter being removed to the far end of the Cathedral. Having achieved my object, I walked out into the Cathedral porch for a rest, as there was still plenty of time before the arrival of the members of the Duma. I must add that in order to "fortify" our newly occupied "positions,"

I surrounded them by a cordon of the available Duma serjeants-at-arms. I had not been in the porch ten minutes when Baron Fersen, the senior serjeant-at-arms, rushed out of the Cathedral, looking very excited, and told me that an unknown man, in peasant's dress and wearing a pectoral cross, had placed himself in front of the space reserved for the Imperial Duma and refused to move. I guessed at once who it was, and hastening to our places found there the individual described by Baron Fersen. Sure enough, it was Rasputin. He was dressed in a magnificent Russian tunic of crimson silk, patent-leather top boots, black cloth full trousers and peasant's overcoat. Over his dress he wore a pectoral cross on a finely-wrought gold chain.

I drew quite close to him and said in an impressive whisper: "What are you doing here?"

He shot an insolent look at me and replied: "What's that to do with you?"

"If you address me as 'thou,'* I will drag you from the Cathedral by the beard. Don't you know I am the President of the Duma?"

Rasputin faced me, and seemed to run me over with his eyes; first my face, then in the region of the heart, then again he stared me in the eyes. This lasted for several moments.

Personally I had never yielded to hypnotic suggestion, of which I had had frequent experience. Yet here I felt myself confronted by an unknown power of tremendous force. I suddenly became possessed of an almost animal fury, the blood rushed to my heart, and I realized I was working myself into a state of absolute frenzy.

I, too, stared straight into Rasputin's eyes, and, speaking literally, felt my own starting out of my head. Probably I must have looked rather formid-

*The conversation was carried on in the second person singular.

able, for Rasputin suddenly began to squirm and asked: "What do you want with me?"

"Clear out at once, you vile heretic, there is no place for you in this sacred house!"

"I was invited here at the wish of persons more highly placed than you," Rasputin answered insolently, and pulled out an invitation card.

"You are a notorious swindler," I replied, "no one can believe your words. Clear out at once, this is no place for you."

Rasputin shot a sidelong glance at me, fell heavily on his knees and began to pray, bowing down to the ground. Outraged by such insolence, I nudged him in the side and said: "Enough of this tomfoolery. If you don't clear out at once, I'll order my serjeants-at-arms to carry you out."

With a heavy groan and a murmured: "O Lord, forgive him such sin!" Rasputin rose slowly to his feet and, shooting a parting look of anger at me, slunk away. I followed him to the western doors of the Cathedral. There a Court Cossack helped him on with his magnificent sable-lined coat and placed him in a car, and Rasputin drove away.

Much later, Rasputin himself recounted this episode to a member of the Duma, Kovalevsky, whom he accidentally met in a train in the summer of 1913. Rasputin began by abusing me, asked why the President of the Duma was so popular among the members, and finally declared: "He is not a good man. Do you know what he did at the celebration? He actually turned me out of the Kazan Cathedral, and never even gave me a chance of telling him that the Tsar himself had asked me to be there."

In repeating this to me Kovalevsky had added: "To tell you the truth, till now I always thought your story of how you turned him out of the church was a bit of brag!"

The whole Duma was present at the *levée* at the Palace. I delivered my address and presented the ikon and tapestry, which was held unfolded by the deputy-presidents. The fact that the President of the Duma was the only one to deliver an address, when it was officially declared there were to be no speeches, was particularly significant.

The Balkan war with Turkey was by that time nearing a climax. The heroic struggle for liberty of the Slav peoples was watched with attentive enthusiasm by the Duma. Sympathy with their cause was whole-hearted. This feeling increased in proportion to the growth of indignation against the blunders of our diplomacy, particularly against the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sazonoff. The Duma held him responsible for the insignificant part played by Russia in the crisis. Outside the Duma, this feeling of general resentment and national humiliation found expression in the Press of all shades of opinion.

In March, 1913, the Bulgarian General, Radko Dmitrieff, the national hero of the war, with the President of the Bulgarian National Assembly, arrived in St. Petersburg. They were met at the station by Slavonic associations, crowds of young men and women and many members of the Duma, and received an enthusiastic ovation. The day after their arrival, I believe, there came the news of the fall of Adrianople. This event made a tremendous impression in the Duma. The sitting was interrupted, there were enthusiastic cheers and demands for a Te Deum.

Several deputies were dispatched to fetch Radko Dmitrieff, Daneff and the Bulgarian Minister Bobcheff. On their arrival they were borne shoulder high amid wild cheering, embraced and kissed.

The enthusiasm was general. Party and personal quarrels were forgotten, all shook hands and congratulated one another on this pan-Slavonic triumph. The Slavs were moved to tears. The Te Deum was celebrated in the Catherine hall by the priests who were members of the Duma. The deputies formed a choir, which I conducted. The Russian and Bulgarian national anthems were sung.

At the height of this outburst of enthusiasm I was called up on the telephone by the Prime Minister, Kokovtzeff.

"What is going on in the Duma? Couldn't these demonstrations be stopped?"

I replied: "It is impossible. Popular enthusiasm cannot be stifled. Besides, why should it?"

"Look here, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, this may provoke Austria and give rise to unpleasant complications."

"Try yourself. Come here and try to quell this enthusiasm! I can't!"

It turned out that news of this demonstration had reached the Austrian Embassy, and representations had been made to the Prime Minister.

Next day I gave a large dinner party in honour of our Bulgarian guests Bobcheff, Daneff and Radko Dmitrieff, and later a reception, at which over sixty members of the Duma, all the party leaders, the members of the Committee of the Octobrist party in the Duma and prominent Octobrists were present. The reception was extremely animated. Everyone clustered round Radko Dmitrieff to hear his accounts of the war and the general situation in the Balkans. The Slavs behaved with great tact and calmness. They never so much as hinted at our diplomatic policy, nor did they even show much resentment against Austria, though they did not conceal their distrust of that country.

In proposing the toast of "the heroic Slavonic peoples" I said: "We all watch with tense admiration their glorious advance in the name of the Cross and liberty." We never doubted, I said, the victorious termination of the war, but the fruits of every campaign were judged by the success of the peace treaty following on war. "Permit me I continued, "to offer you good advice in the name of Russia, the elder sister of the Slavonic nations: keep peace among yourselves, as allies and fellow-fighters. Beware of dangerous and ill-advised jealousies and rivalries, and we, your brothers, now rejoicing at your military prowess, implore you to strain every nerve to preserve your unity of purpose in the days of coming peace . . . I drink to the success of our victorious brother Slavs, and to the unity and welding together of the Slavonic family. . . ."

After exchanging looks with his companions, Radko Dmitrieff rose to reply. We were right, he said, in calling them our younger brothers, because the Slavonic peoples had of old been accustomed to look up to Russia with love and reverence. The Slavonic nations would never forget that they owed their new life and freedom to the sacrifices and magnanimity of the Russian people. . . . In their first independent fight against their age-long foe, they still looked to their elder brother and asked him to remove all pernicious alien influences. It was for Russia to avert or suppress any misunderstandings which might arise between the Slavonic nations. Great Russia alone had the right to intervene in their domestic quarrels, and the Slavonic peoples would submit them to her alone. His voice quivered with emotion as he said this.

During the after-dinner talk the Slavs said to us: "You have no idea of the extent of Russia's

prestige in the Balkans; with what hope and trust we all look towards her, how she is feared in Europe. Now or never, Russia must say the word." Our only answer to this could be: "You have seen the expression of public opinion and of the Press, you witnessed the enthusiasm of the representatives of the people. We can say nothing more, nor guarantee you anything."

Radko Dmitrieff led me off to my room and said: "I have come on a secret mission to lay Constantinople at his Majesty's feet. What am I to do—how shall I speak of it to the Tsar?"

I replied: "Be frank. He loves the truth, and in any case, this would be much the safer course. For my part, I think it would be better, before your interview with the Emperor, for me to ask for a special audience."

Radko Dmitrieff thanked me and asked me to do so. One longed to believe, and did believe, that Russia would utter the decisive word, advance victoriously southward and support the Slavs. As events soon proved, these were but empty hopes.

On March 16 there were popular street demonstrations in honour of the fall of Adrianople. The Slavonic Society celebrated the event by a Te Deum in the Church of the Resurrection.* On leaving the church Radko Dmitrieff was carried shoulder high amid deafening cheers. A huge crowd of people poured into the Nevsky Prospect singing "God save the Tsar" and "Shumi Maritsa,"† and marched to the Bulgarian Legation. Bobcheff came out on the balcony and made a speech ending with: "Long live Great Russia!" The crowd answered by singing the Bulgarian and

* Erected on the site of the assassination of the Emperor Alexander II (1881), who fought for the liberation of the Balkan Slavs in the Turkish War of 1877–1878.

† The Bulgarian national anthem

Russian national anthems. Then, swelled by fresh numbers, it marched to the Serbian Legation. The Serbian Minister, too, stepped out on the balcony, but no sooner had he uttered a few words than up came a squad of mounted police, dealing blows to right and left. Remonstrances to the effect that the crowds were perfectly peaceful and singing "God save the Tsar" were of no avail. The police, having apparently received definite instructions, worked with a will. They were particularly careful to guard the Foreign Minister Sazonoff, whose house was surrounded by two squadrons of mounted gendarmes, and the Austrian Embassy, whither the crowds had not the slightest intention of going. Besides, the crowd consisted of serious, well-conducted people—officers, society ladies, senators, Government officials, etc. It was even said that one senator was badly bruised in the *mêlée*.

That same night Sazonoff had a dinner-party, to which I was invited.

"I had a pleasant surprise on entering your house," I said to him. "I rejoice to see that at last our diplomacy is following the right course."

"What do you mean?" inquired Sazonoff in astonishment.

"I see you are arming to help the Slavs; there are two squadrons of soldiers in your courtyard."

Next day there was an interpellation in the Duma on the subject of the police attack on the demonstrators. The Minister of the Interior, Maklakoff, gave absolutely unsatisfactory explanations in excuse of the action of the police. Similar incidents were repeated during the next two days. The Prefect of the city, Drachevsky, himself drove up in a car to disperse the crowds who were singing "God save the Tsar." Shouts arose of: "We're singing the national anthem; please stand up!"

He rose reluctantly and stood at attention. The Government was, nevertheless, perturbed by this popular effervescence, and Sazonoff determined to offer some explanations. He invited the members of the Duma to "a cup of tea," but divided them into two groups, Right and Left, and received them on different days.

As a matter of fact Sazonoff gave no explanations at all. The Cadets alone were satisfied, and sang his praises in their party organ, the *Retch*.

CHAPTER VI

The Intrigues of the Right—Boycott of the Duma—Unveiling of the Stolypin Memorial—Bishop Agapit—A. I. Gutchkoff's Warnings.

FROM the very beginning of the new session a feeling of unrest pervaded the Duma. The Government was disappointed that in spite of all the pressure exercised during the election, the spirit of the Duma was different from what they had anticipated. They had reckoned on a majority of the Right, which did not materialize, and moreover, the presidential body was elected by a majority of the Left. As time wore on the Government's hostility to the Duma increased. The pro-Slavonic demonstrations, the criticisms of the Government's policy, the stern rebuke given by the Duma to General Sukhomlinoff* for the illegal modification of the Statutes of the Military Medical Academy, which even the Senate refused to publish—all these irritated the Government. Rumours of the Government's desire to "disperse" the Duma cropped up persistently. Prince Mestchersky, editor of a journal of the Extreme Right, the *Grazhdanin* ("The Citizen"), wrote denunciatory articles against the Duma and its President. Everyone knew that the *Grazhdanin* was the only paper read by the Emperor, and it seemed almost as if the Government's policy depended on the influence exercised by this subsidized publicist. All this was most disheartening.

There was an obvious desire on the part of the Government to do away with the Duma by passive if not by active methods. In spite of blatant

* The Minister for War.

promises to introduce new reform bills the Government stubbornly refused to do anything, and nothing was left to the Duma except the Budget Estimates and interpellations. Even the data necessary for the work of the Budget Commission was withheld by the Ministries. The members of the Extreme Right, who resented being in a minority, launched, with the support of the Government, an intrigue against the majority in the Duma. They called a joint conference of all the Monarchist organizations, the first point on the agenda being a discussion on the necessity for dissolving the fourth Duma. They tried to keep this a secret, but of course it all came out at once, while the full text of the agenda appeared in the *Vechernie Vremia* and other papers. The absence in the Duma of a solid majority, the uncertainty and constant expectation of a speedy dissolution, the absolutely fruitless work—all the most important interpellations and bills brought no response from the Government—could not but affect the general spirit.

During Holy Week I presented my report to the Emperor. He greeted me graciously, as usual. Nevertheless, I was obliged to tell him many unpleasant facts. Referring to the Statutes of the Military Medical Academy and the Duma interpellation, I pointed out the illegality of the proceedings of the War Minister Sukhomlinoff, who had thrown the responsibility for his action on to the Crown.

I said: "Your Majesty was misinformed and given to ratify a statute passed by Order in Council, whereas, according to the law, it should first have been submitted to the legislative chambers."

The Emperor said nothing to this.

With regard to the activities of the police during the street demonstrations, I remarked that the

feeling of resentment and wounded national pride would rankle for a long time. The Emperor appeared to agree with me, and commented on the Minister of the Interior's want of tact. I urged decisive action. Troops could be moved against Erzerum from the one side, and against Constantinople from the other. I repeated several times:

"Your Majesty, there is still time. We must take advantage of the popular enthusiasm. The Straits must become ours. A war will be joyfully welcomed, and will raise the Government's prestige."

The Emperor maintained a stony silence.

I spoke of administrative tyranny, and recounted how the chairman of the Zemstvo Board of the province of Tchernigoff, Savitsky, a popular and respected public servant, was prosecuted for the escape of a political prisoner. His prosecution was engineered by N. A. Maklakoff, then Governor of the Tchernigoff province. Its object was perfectly clear. Persons who were the subject of preliminary legal proceedings, or had been committed for trial, were deprived by law of both active and passive electoral rights. N. A. Maklakoff, who at that time was Governor of Tchernigoff, was ill-disposed towards Savitsky. The mere fact of a political prisoner's escape from the Zemstvo hospital was not in itself sufficient ground for a prosecution. If responsibility for what occurred at the hospital was thus shifted from the senior medical officer to the chairman of the Zemstvo Board, then, in ascending order, first the Governor, and finally the Minister of the Interior, must be held to blame, especially as the latter was now that same Maklakoff who was then Governor of Tchernigoff.

To this the Emperor remarked: "Yes, you are right."

Towards the close of the session there occurred an incident trivial in itself, but pregnant with far-reaching effects. During a debate on the Budget Estimates of the Ministry of Finance, Markoff II rapped out: "No stealing allowed." Prince Volkonsky, who was presiding, failed to call him to order, and the Minister of Finance, Kokovtzeff, treated this sally as a personal insult. He declared that the whole Duma was in fault for not having censured the deputy, and that it ought, therefore, to apologize to the Government. "Until this is done by the President of the Duma," added Kokovtzeff, "the Cabinet Ministers will abstain from attending the Duma."

The Duma refused to consider itself responsible for a remark made by an individual member, and I had no intention of tendering any apologies. The whole incident—both the sharp words used against the Government by a deputy of the Extreme Right, and the unexpected touchiness of the Ministers, rather savoured of a deliberate provocation. At first it was treated as a joke, but the situation soon became impossible. Owing to the Ministerial boycott work in the commissions practically came to a standstill. Explanations of the estimates of the various Ministries were given, not even by the Assistant Ministers, but by secretaries of departments, with whom the Chairman of the Budget Commission, Alexeyenko, finally refused to deal.

In a report presented by me to the Emperor in June, 1913, after the close of the session, I again spoke on questions of foreign policy and urged decisive action. Then I mentioned the Ministers.

"Your Majesty, the Ministers no longer come to the Duma, they refuse to take part in legislative work. This may inspire the nation with rather a bold idea."

"What idea?"

"Well, that they could be dispensed with."

To which the Emperor replied: "They will have thought better of it by the autumn."

In the autumn of 1913 we went to Kieff for the unveiling of the memorial to P. A. Stolypin. It was characteristic that the elements which were hostile or unfriendly to the Duma in general and its President in particular took advantage of the occasion to emphasize their disdain. Thus the most uncomfortable compartment was reserved for me on the official train. No one came to meet me on my arrival, no accommodation was reserved, and the Governor permitted himself a somewhat incorrect and even rude behaviour towards us. The public, on the other hand, vied with one another in their endeavours to express due regard for the Duma delegation.

At the laying of the foundation stone of the Zemstvo council building I had the following conversation with the Prime Minister. I approached Kokovtzeff, who was standing slightly apart, and said to him:

"Well, Vladimir Nicolaevitch, are you going to stop the boycott of the Duma? Is there any hope of seeing you there in the autumn?"

"Until the Duma apologizes we have all decided not to go there."

"I must tell you that the Emperor, at my last audience, expressed the hope that you would think better of it by the autumn."

A few days later this conversation, with a strong tendency to caricature my part in it, appeared in the newspaper *Russkoe Slovo*. A paragraph was added announcing Kokovtzeff's forthcoming departure to Livadia with a report to the Emperor. As no one was present during our conversation with Kokovtzeff, I realized that he himself was the author of this paragraph. His object was probably

to show a cutting to his Majesty and point out how lightly the Sovereign's words were treated by the President of the Duma, who even permitted himself to print them in a more or less Opposition newspaper.

Having read this paragraph, I published a refutation stating that the conversation referred to had taken place in *tête-à-tête* and in quite a different form, and that therefore no doubt was possible as to who was the actual author of the newspaper report.

On my arrival at Kieff I was shown the list of speakers. Balashoff was the only one chosen from the Duma. The desire to prevent me or any other member from speaking was obvious from the haste with which the list was submitted to me. The Octobrists were deeply offended and determined to refrain from making any speeches, and Gutchkoff, who laid a wreath at the foot of the memorial, merely bowed to the ground in silence. This silent homage expressed more eloquently than words the profound sorrow caused by Stolypin's death.

After the Kieff celebrations I joined a party of members of the Duma who were going to visit the Dnieper rapids in connection with the proposed credits for sluicing the river. We arrived at Ekaterinoslav by steamer.

Everywhere the population came out to welcome its chosen representatives, the members of the Imperial Duma. At Kremenchug, for instance, almost the whole town assembled on the pier. The mayor presented the bread and salt* and delivered a moving address. Ceremonies like this took place even in the villages, and the elders of the communes greeted the travellers in artless but touching words.

At a reception given by the Ekaterinoslav

* An old Russian custom signifying welcome.

marshal of the nobility, Prince Ourussoff, I had a curious talk with Archbishop Agapit.*

Mgr. Agapit had taken an active part in the election campaign, agitating against the Octobrist party, and after the elections had preached a sermon from the pulpit in which he said: "Whom have you elected? Octobrists who sold Christ!"

I naturally avoided him at the reception, but Mgr. Agapit himself came up to me saying, "Allow me, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, in token of reconciliation to give you my blessing. I know you are angry with me."

"No, Vladiko, I will not accept your blessing. You insulted me profoundly during the elections, and afterwards you said that we had 'sold Christ.'"

"Not you personally, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, not you," interrupted the archbishop, clasping his hands to his breast.

"It makes no difference whether it referred to me or to those I stand for. In insulting the Octobrists you insulted me. Though perhaps I am much more Orthodox than many of your priests, particularly those ignoramuses who receive parishes so liberally at your hands. Remember that when I came to Ekaterinoslav last year, I called on you at once out of respect for your rank. Really, it would be much better if you kept away from politics. Your place is the church; you ought, like a good shepherd, to draw your flock together by love and charity, instead of sowing discord by denunciatory sermons and instructing your priests how to vote. Let the priests remain pastors of the Church. What have you gained by it all? You have destroyed the last vestige of respect which still existed for the office of priest."

* This prelate, after the Revolution, delivered an address of welcome to Petliura when the latter occupied Kieff before the arrival of the Bolsheviks.

"Forgive me, Mikhail Vladimirovitch," murmured Mgr. Agapit, in consternation.

"You may well say 'forgive,' but forget I cannot. I did not seek this interview; you came up to me yourself. I suppressed my feelings, but now I can remain silent no longer. I must speak out and let you feel my indignation. Remember what you told me when I called on you. I did not ask for your support; you yourself assured me that you considered the Octobrists trustworthy Orthodox men. You repeatedly told me and others that I was your candidate. And what happened during the elections? You cannot deny that the clergy were mobilized to work against us."

"Pardon me, Mikhail Vladimirovitch," the archbishop said, trying to interrupt me. But I was too excited to let him speak.

"No one forced you to express your opinions. Why did you act against your conscience? Why profess one thing before the elections and practise another? What is the result? You have merely dishonoured your high calling and demeaned the clergy in the eyes of the electors."

Champagne being brought in at this juncture, Mgr. Agapit took a glass, saying: "Your health, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, and may our next meeting be more friendly."

"I am willing to drink your health," I replied. "As for our next meeting, it will probably occur in the world to come. And I may confidently assert that I shall not be called upon to answer before God for what I have said to you to-day."

We touched our glasses, and I moved away. All through this conversation Mgr. Agapit gave one the impression of a schoolboy in disgrace trying to excuse himself before his seniors. Our talk soon became public property in Ekaterinoslav. Most people were pleased that the archbishop had

received a "drubbing" for his disgraceful role at the elections; others criticized me.

Next day I called on Prince Ourussoff to apologize for my curt behaviour in his house to a guest of his. Great was my surprise when I learnt from him that on taking leave, Mgr. Agapit had particularly thanked him for the opportunity of having "such a good talk with Mikhail Vladimirovitch."

The result of this conversation was that appointments of semi-illiterate priests ceased entirely, and Mgr. Agapit's general behaviour became much subdued.

With the opening of the new session of the Duma the question of the "Ministerial strike" was again brought into the foreground. Before the opening I called on the State Comptroller Kharitonoff, who advised me not to invite the Cabinet for the opening ceremony, as the Ministers would decline to come, thus merely creating a fresh pretext for misunderstandings. This advice was followed, and the Ministerial box was conspicuous by its emptiness. Such a state of affairs went on for about a fortnight. The Government at last realized the disadvantages of its policy and made a move towards reconciliation. The Ministers decided that they would be satisfied by an apology from Markoff alone. This was conveyed to Markoff; at the sitting of November 1 he read out an abridged formula of apology and the incident was closed. The Duma preserved its dignity, while the Ministers became still more unpopular. This victory of the Duma was particularly gratifying, as rumours were still current of the Government's intention to "disperse" it. Frequent remarks to that effect in the *Grazhdanin* made one think such an event to be within the range of possibility.

Shortly before this, the Prime Minister Kokovtzeff had returned from abroad, where, in an interview with a French reporter, he had complacently affirmed that "no one in Russia within a hundred versts' radius from the capital and thirty from the district towns gave a thought to politics." This statement was ridiculed by the Press. As a counterpart to Kokovtzeff's statement Gutchkoff made a brilliant survey of the internal and international situation of Russia in a speech delivered on November 8 at a Congress of the Octobrist party in St. Petersburg. The Government, he said, were heading towards Russia's ruin; the country was on the eve of a second revolution, and the time had come to turn over a new leaf. As a matter of fact, Gutchkoff's speech was anti-dynastic, and the Octobrists as a loyalist party ought not to have followed the course urged on them by their leader.

The Congress passed the following resolution regarding the policy of the party in the Duma: "It behoves the parliamentary faction of the Union of October 17, as an organ of the party best equipped with the means of influencing the Government, to assume the duty of combating the dangerous and pernicious tendencies of the policy of the Government, as well as all the instances of abuse and violation of the law from which the country is continuously and grievously suffering. The parliamentary faction should resort in full measure to all legal forms of parliamentary combat, such as the freedom of the tribune, the right of interpellation, the rejection of bills and the refusal of credits."

The impression made on the Government by this resolution was instantaneous, almost ludicrous. The very next day all the information and data withheld for a year were presented by the Ministers concerned.

The time for the elections to the presidential body approached. My more intimate friends tried to dissuade me from standing for the presidency.

"The Tsar will not listen to you. There is no majority in the Duma, the situation is uncertain; it will only mean endless nerve-racking."

Unfortunately events admitted of no refusal. No other candidate was even nominated. Moreover, the political situation was such that after my inaugural address a refusal would have been tantamount to a repudiation of our programme, a surrender of our positions without a fight. The initiator and promoter of a definite political course would be likened to a captain abandoning his ship. I was therefore compelled by sheer force of circumstances to accept, and was elected by an enormous majority of 272 against 70 votes, larger than on any previous occasion. I delivered a speech, which, though applauded, was less appreciated than that of the year before. I myself thought it inferior, weaker and, above all, more colourless than the former. I had been uncertain whether I ought to make a speech at all, and whether I should repeat what had been said a year ago.

After the elections, disaccord set in in the parliamentary group of the Octobrist party. At their very first meeting the Right wing, under pressure from the Government, contested and even condemned the resolution passed by the Octobrist Congress. The Centre decided to "take note of it," while the Left wing insisted on its being laid down as the basis of the group's policy in the Duma. The deputies of the Left, led by Gutchkoff, held meetings in which the Centre took no part. The Centre declared that they refused their adherence to the Right wing, but, at the same time, declined to submit themselves blindly to Gutchkoff's orders.

A split occurred. I summoned a conference and endeavoured to patch up the party, but failed. Twenty-two members of the Left seceded from the group. The chief among them were Sergei Shidlovsky, Khomiakoff, Zvegintzoff, Godneff and others. A second conference met at my flat to try and save the situation. Savitch, Nicholas Shidlovsky, Alexeyenko and myself resolved to form a new party—the "Zemstvo-Octobrists." The party determined to be distinct from the Right wing. When this became known in the Duma a great many members wanted to join our group, which soon numbered fifty members, and rose to seventy during the Christmas recess.

Thanks to this successful move the party again obtained a majority. On the other hand the need arose of providing it with an energetic leader. The former chairman of the parliamentary group (Gutchkoff) had failed to weld it together during a split, and when matters came to a climax hastened to withdraw. I began to contemplate resigning the presidency of the Duma and putting myself at the head of the new party.

CHAPTER VII

The Audience of December 22, 1913—Dispute over the Purchase of Dreadnoughts—Admiral Beatty's Squadron off Reval—Port Hangö.

ON the Tsar's return from the Crimea I asked for an audience, and on December 22, 1913, was received by his Majesty. It was of urgent importance that the Emperor should be informed of the absence of co-ordination in the Government's policy. Quite recently, the Prime Minister, Kokovtzeff, had defended in the Council of the Empire a bill which Maklakoff had secretly ordered the members to reject. The majority of the members of the Council nominated by the Crown did not attend the sitting, the others voted against the bill and, to the amazement of the unsuspecting Kokovtzeff, it was rejected. It was essential that the Emperor should know of these proceedings. At my next audience I said to him:

"Your Majesty, permit me to inform you that we have no Government."

"What do you mean—no Government?"

"We have been accustomed to think that part of the executive power of the Crown was delegated to the Ministers and to the nominated members of the Council of the Empire. These latter execute the will of the Government and are its dependents in the legislative assembly. We, the members of the lower chamber, have been accustomed to think so. What happens now? During the last session we debated the bill for the admittance of the Polish language in the schools of the Vistula provinces*. It was your Imperial Majesty's wish that the

* Ten Polish provinces in the basin of the river Vistula.

language should be admitted in order to improve the position of the Poles and make it comparable to their position in Austria, and so enlist their sympathies on behalf of Russia."

"Yes," replied the Tsar, "that is just what I had in view."

"So we understood it, and the bill was worked out in the Duma in that sense. Now this bill is being debated in the Council of the Empire, and its leading principle is defended by a representative of the Government. Meanwhile, some of the nominated members of the Council are absent, others vote against it, and the bill is rejected. Your Majesty will agree that members of the Government either do not wish to carry out your will, or do not take the trouble to understand it. The nation feels bewildered. Each Minister has his own opinion. The Cabinet is generally split into two parties, the Council of the Empire forms a third, the Duma a fourth, and your own will is unknown to the nation. This cannot go on, your Majesty; this is not a Government, it is anarchy."

"But what am I to do? I cannot influence the freedom of opinion of members of the Council of the Empire."

"The list of the nominated members of the Council is in your Majesty's possession. Revise it, appoint more liberal members, who agree with your views. Compel the Ministers to obey you."

This conversation had no effect. The list of members of the Council of the Empire remained practically the same, or, if revised, in exactly the opposite way to that which I recommended.

During the same interview I showed the Emperor two Press cuttings: one from the *Kolokol* ("The Bell"), the official Synod review, the other from the *Vechernie Vremia*. The passage from the

Kolokol ran approximately as follows: "That we escaped a war last year is due to the influence of the holy *startsy* who direct our foreign policy, for which we should be profoundly grateful. The appointment of new hierarchs is also due to them. Let us trust that in this sphere their influence will be equally beneficent."

The *Vechernie Vremia* retaliated by pointing out to the *Kolokol* that the direction of foreign policy was a prerogative of the Crown, "and we remind the *Kolokol* that there can be no question of *startsy*. The direction of foreign policy is an attribute of the Crown, and bishops likewise are appointed by the Emperor."

Having read this, the Emperor said: "What *startsy*? Who are the *startsy* alluded to?"

"Your Majesty," I replied, "there is but one *starets* in Russia, and you know who he is. He is the sorrow and despair of all Russia."

The Emperor was silent.

"Your Majesty," I continued, "I have one more question to submit to you. It is of vital importance to the State, and though not directly concerned with my report, one which I should very much like to bring to your notice."

"Please tell me."

The Duma Commission on Military and Naval Affairs, I told the Tsar, was informed that in the yards of Vickers and Armstrong there were five super-Dreadnoughts, which were for sale for the total sum of 120,000,000 roubles. The cost of each was ten million less than the estimates submitted in Russia. By purchasing them we should save 50,000,000 roubles. They were all first-class ships and already finished or nearly so, whereas the building of similar ships in Russia would take years. For some reason or other the Ministry was very averse to purchasing them. The

Duma was taking this matter very much to heart, and had built high hopes on my report to his Majesty.

The Emperor said: "Yes, but what would be the use of buying ships for the Baltic, when we need to strengthen the Black Sea? We cannot transfer them there."

"If the Germans trouble us in the Black Sea, we can trouble them from the north, and in diplomatic conversations we shall always be able to remind them that we are stronger than they are in the Baltic."

"Yes, you are right," said the Emperor. "Do you remember what you said to me a year ago about the Balkan problem? You were right then, too. Had we then acted with greater energy, the Straits would now be ours."

"Your Majesty, it is not too late even now. If we buy those Dreadnoughts we shall be stronger than Germany; then our building can go on without being accelerated, we shall improve our old ships, and by 1915 we shall possess a powerful fleet."

The Emperor appeared greatly interested, thanked me for my information, and expressed his desire to purchase the ships at once.

"Only, do not allow the matter to be discussed in the Ministry of Marine," I said on taking my leave. "Simply order the ships to be bought, your Majesty; for the Ministry will oppose it."

"Why?"

"Because, your Majesty, they will gain nothing from the transaction."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It is not for me to explain, your Majesty. You know better than I do."

"Yes, they were inclined that way, I remember. But what about the Duma? It has risen. The purchase will have to be carried through by means

of Article 87, and there will be unpleasantness with the Duma."

"Your Majesty, I give you my word that the Duma will only applaud you."

Next day the Minister of Marine rang me up on the telephone.

"What did you tell the Emperor? Why am I urgently summoned to Tsarskoe?"*

I declined to pursue the conversation by telephone and went to see Grigorovitch* myself. For two hours we shouted at one another, each defending his particular point of view and paying no heed to the orderly who was serving tea.

Soon after a special conference, consisting of Ministers and higher Admiralty officials, was called by order of the Emperor to discuss the purchase. The conference was opposed to it, and the matter was adjourned. Meanwhile Turkey, subsidized by Germany, bought the most powerful Dreadnought out of the five, the one which was most similar in type to ours. Two others, also through German efforts, were withdrawn from sale, while the price of the remaining two was raised. While the higher Admiralty officials were opposing the transaction, the rank and file of naval officers were continually asking: "Will the purchase be arranged soon?" Some said: "Our grandpapa (the Minister of Marine) is making a fool of himself. You must persuade him in the Duma."

In the Commission on Military and Naval Affairs feeling ran high, and on Grigorovitch's arrival he was met in battle array. I purposely refrained from attending the sitting to prevent his thinking that the Commission was acting under pressure from the President. I was kept informed of the progress of the debate by the Duma serjeants-at-arms. Representatives of all parties were unanimous, and

* The Minister of Marine.

all Grigorovitch's arguments were refuted by actual statistics. He was especially nonplussed by the attitude of the Socialists and Labourists, who insisted on the advantages of the transaction. "If we must spend money on armaments," they said, "better save ten millions on each ship."

No alternative was left to Grigorovitch but to state that in his next report to the Emperor he would back the desire of the Commission. This statement was received with tumultuous applause. He kept his word. Before my departure for the Easter vacation I was again received by the Emperor, who said to me:

"Is it not strange?—the Minister of Marine at first opposed this purchase, saying it would create ill feeling in the Duma. Now, it appears, the Duma is in favour of it, and he himself supports this view."

Grigorovitch sent me the following message: "Tell the President of the Duma that the two Dreadnoughts will be bought; and tell him also that the Minister of Marine will have nothing to gain personally from the transaction."

Admiral Stetsenko, known for his sterling integrity, was, by the desire of the Duma, appointed to transact the business.

On meeting me at the wedding of Prince Felix Yusupoff, Grigorovitch said: "I trust we now have your approval."

The general impression during the winter of 1913-14 was as if the higher society of St. Petersburg had suddenly had its eyes opened. Everyone spoke of Rasputin with the greatest apprehension. What had stirred the Duma two years ago had only now reached Court circles. People who so far had kept strictly silent on matters concerning the

Imperial Family, whether from a feeling of decency or simply out of respect for their Sovereign, now spoke of this man, some with fear, others with disgust or with an ironical smile.

I will here mention a characteristic incident illustrating the unbounded influence exercised by Rasputin. The little Tsarevitch had to undergo a slight operation. The Court surgeon Fedoroff, after preparing everything in the operating room, went out to call the Tsarevitch. Imagine his horror, when on his return he found all the requisites—bandages, muslin, etc.—which he had thoroughly sterilized, covered with a dirty nondescript article of clothing. On questioning his assistant he was told that "Gregory Efimovitch" had just been in the room, had prayed over the requisites prepared for the operation, and covered them with a garment of his own. Fedoroff went to complain to the Emperor, but the latter treated the matter lightly.

The whole of the spring session was devoted to conflicts between the Duma and the Minister of the Interior Maklakoff, who was issuing illegal orders and had appointed as governors in the provinces men unfit for their posts. His influence, however, grew at Tsarskoe Selo. According to information from Court sources, he had assumed the role of Court jester. He told funny stories, mimicked various people, birds and animals, amused the young Grand Duchesses by acting "the love-sick panther," and generally posed as the "funny man" on an intimate footing at the Palace. As a member of the Government, however, he was universally despised.

The Duma session was very long and lasted well into the summer. Progress was considerably ham-

pered by the continued boycott on the part of the Government.

In May, members of the Commission of Defence paid a visit to Reval, there to inspect the docks and fortifications. This trip coincided with the arrival at St. Petersburg of the British squadron under command of Admiral Beatty. As this would inevitably entail a visit of the members of the Duma to the British squadron then anchored off Reval, which would have the character of an official greeting to the British guests before their arrival in the capital, I solicited a special audience of the Emperor to ascertain his views on the matter.

The Emperor considered it right for us to meet the squadron, and gave his approval to the most cordial speeches of welcome possible. Armed with the Imperial sanction, a large party of members of the Duma, including the whole presidential body, started for Reval on board the cruiser *Bogatyr*, escorted by the torpedo boat *General Kondratenko*.

We were greeted by a combined salute from the Russian and British squadrons, Admiral Beatty's flagship, the *Lion*, flying the Russian national flag in honour of the Duma. The British Admiral's flag-captain immediately arrived on board the *Bogatyr* with an invitation to us all to lunch on board the *Lion*. I decided to deliver my address of welcome in Russian, and asked a member of the Duma, Zvegintzoff, to act as interpreter.

At the close of my speech Admiral Beatty turned to Zvegintzoff and asked him to translate his reply. As previously agreed, Zvegintzoff replied: "There is no need, as the President of the Duma both understands and speaks English."

To this Admiral Beatty and all the commanders and officers assembled from the ships uttered a long-drawn "Oh—oh," and afterwards signified their appreciation of the motives which prompted

the President of the Duma to greet the British guests in his own tongue. Later, the officers who showed us round their splendid ship told us they realized the necessity of studying Russian in view of the inevitable future alliance between the two countries. After the festivities attending the visit of the British squadron and an inspection of the Reval fortifications, the members of the Duma made a cruise among the Finnish skerries, calling at Hangö, while the British squadron sailed for St. Petersburg.

The British were greatly impressed by the presence at Reval of a delegation from the Imperial Duma headed by its President. They regarded this as a mark of special courtesy. All the papers were full of it. The incident created a great commotion in Germany. German politicians were disturbed by the British visit and still more by the presence at Reval of the Duma delegates. It may be that this event, or the visit of the French President, hastened the war. It was rumoured that the Kaiser had declared: *Jetzt oder niemals* ("now or never").

On June 4, 1914, news appeared in the Press that Rasputin had been murdered in his native village of Pokrovskoe, in the province of Tobolsk. An ugly, noseless woman had come up to him and "stuck" a knife into his abdomen. Rasputin telegraphed to Tsarskoe Selo a message which may be rendered: "Hussy stuck knife in my belly." The woman proved to be one of his former mistresses. She declared that she wanted to kill him because he was an impostor and a false prophet. She denied having any accomplices. The papers said that she had received Iliodor's blessing for the attempt, but this she also denied. During her examination the woman was in violent hysterics. The Press, glad of the opportunity, again took up

all the old and forgotten stories of Rasputin's exploits. News appeared to the effect that the Court surgeon Fedoroff had been despatched to Pokrovskoe; that Rasputin's women admirers, including Mme. Vyrubova, had left St. Petersburg and were on the way to Siberia; that Rasputin was at the point of death. All this rejoicing, however, proved to be premature. The next news was that Rasputin kept on repeating: "I'll pull through, I'll pull through." His condition soon improved, and the Press ceased to trouble about him. Eventually he did "pull through" and recovered.

Public attention was diverted by the visit of foreign guests from friendly countries—the British and French sailors. They were warmly welcomed in St. Petersburg. While officers and men were being entertained at dinners and receptions the diplomatists were busily at work, and the Triple Entente was apparently transformed into an Alliance.

On the return voyage from Reval a group of members of the Duma, at the insistent request of Admiral Essen, visited the port of Hangö, in Finland, opposite Reval. There a harbour had been built, splendidly equipped to facilitate a landing of large German forces. The Finnish authorities explained the construction as being intended for merchant ships, and said it had cost them ten million marks. An inspection proved, however, that all these constructions were designed for a military landing. Meanwhile the promontories on the surrounding coast, on which Peter the Great had ordered forts to be built, remained unfortified.

Essen asked that this fact should be reported to the Emperor. I did this at my audience after the close of the session. The Emperor knew nothing of it. Essen had declared that if war broke out he would cause all these constructions to be blown up. This he did on the very first day of the war.

CHAPTER VIII

Declaration of War—Disorganization in the Red Cross—At the Warsaw-Vienna Station—General Rennenkampf—Army Boots and the Minister N. A. Maklakoff—The Emperor at Lvoff (Lemberg).

THE heir to the Austrian Throne, leader of the war party and oppressor of the Slavonic people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was assassinated at Serajevo, with his wife, on June 15 (old style) by a Slav patriot. The blame for the crime was laid by Austria on the Serbian Government. An exchange of diplomatic notes was followed by an ultimatum and finally by the declaration of war. The Austrians crossed the Danube. The Serbs abandoned their capital and retired into the interior of the country.

The days that preceded the outbreak of war found me at Nauheim, where I was taking a cure.

On my return to St. Petersburg from abroad I learnt that the day before I had been repeatedly called up on the telephone by General Sukhomlinoff, the Minister for War. On hearing that I was expected home at any moment, he left a message asking me to telephone to him directly I arrived. I did so, and received a pressing request to call on him at once on a matter of urgent importance, as he himself was unable to come on account of pressure of work. I went at once, and the following conversation took place.

"I asked you to come and see me," said Sukhomlinoff, "because I am in a very awkward situation. Imagine what an awful thing has happened. The Emperor is suddenly vacillating in his decision, and has ordered the mobilization in the

military districts intended for action against the Austrians to be stopped. I am utterly at a loss how to explain this sudden decision. If he insists on this order being carried out, the result may be a catastrophe. All the mobilization notices and orders have already been sent out. It is impossible to recall them, and any delay in the matter will be fatal. What am I to do? Give me your advice."

"I must tell you," I replied to the Minister, "that the declaration of war by Germany is absolutely imminent; if there is the slightest delay, the Germans will cross the frontier unopposed. Passing through Wirballen I saw a cordon of German cavalry stationed along the frontier, in full war kit and ready for action. You must tell the Emperor of all this at once."

"On the contrary, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, I beg you yourself immediately to request an audience at Peterhof and inform his Majesty of these circumstances personally."

"I should be pleased to do so, but time is short. There is not a minute to lose, and the procedure of requesting an audience is long. No, it is you who must go, and at once."

"But I have said it all several times, both by telephone and in conversation. It is obvious that the Emperor does not believe me. I am absolutely at a loss what to do."

I advised him to call immediately on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sazonoff. We found him on the point of starting for Peterhof. Apparently he was ignorant of the Emperor's altered state of mind. We informed him of the actual state of affairs. Moreover, I requested Sazonoff officially to transmit to the Emperor that I, as the head of the representatives of the people, solemnly declared that the Russian people would never forgive a delay which might precipitate the country into

fatal confusion. Apparently the report of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, backed by the weighty evidence of the Minister for War and of the President of the Duma, obtained the desired effect. The Emperor overcame his scruples; the mobilization was not cancelled and followed its normal course.

Characteristically enough, the rumour of the postponement of the mobilization made the most painful impression on the troops of the St. Petersburg military district. A great number of officers visited me, demanding a definite answer as to whether the mobilization had been postponed. Their attitude to the ruling powers was by no means a friendly one, and had the mobilization been cancelled dangerous complications would undoubtedly have arisen.

St. Petersburg was the scene of ceaseless popular demonstrations, which took place mainly in front of the Serbian Legation, opposite my house. Every day the crowd approached our house and clamoured to see me. I came out on the balcony, and one evening, the clamour having become particularly insistent, I had come down into the street with some other members of the Duma. I was asked to stand up in a motor car and address the crowd.

On the day that the Emperor issued the manifesto announcing a state of war with Germany, huge crowds assembled in front of the Winter Palace. After a special service in the chapel, the Emperor spoke a few words to the assembly in the Palace, concluding with the solemn promise not to lay down arms while a single span of Russian land remained in the enemy's hand. Thundering cheers resounded through the Palace and were taken up by the crowds outside. The Emperor came out on to the balcony, followed by the Empress. A vast

crowd filled the whole square and all the adjacent streets. At the sight of the Emperor, an electric current seemed to pass through the mass of people; a mighty "hurrah" filled the air. Banners and placards, on which were inscribed the words "Long live Russia and the Slavonic cause," were lowered to the ground, and the whole crowd, as one man, fell on their knees before the Emperor. He tried to speak, raised his hand: the front rows endeavoured to silence the rest, but nothing could be heard amid the deafening cheers and roaring of the crowd. The Emperor stood for a while with bowed head, overpowered by the solemnity of the moment, when Tsar and people became one. Then he turned slowly, and withdrew into his apartments.

On leaving the Palace we mingled with the crowd of demonstrators, and came across some factory workers. I stopped them and asked how they came to be here, when they had been on strike, and almost on the point of an armed rising a short time ago. The workmen replied: "That was our own family dispute. We thought reforms came too slowly through the Duma. But now all Russia is involved. We have rallied to our Tsar as to our emblem, and we shall follow him for the sake of victory over the Germans."

The Imperial Duma and the Council of the Empire were convened on July 26 (Old style), 1914. Before the session the members of both Chambers were received at the Winter Palace by the Emperor. All the members attended the reception, even the Labourists. Everyone was stirred to patriotic enthusiasm, and party differences were forgotten. All the Ministers of the Crown, the highest dignitaries of the Court, the whole Council of the Empire, and the Imperial Duma were assembled in the great Nicolaevsky Hall.

The Emperor entered accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch, and addressed the assembly in the following words:

"I welcome you in these solemn and anxious days through which all Russia is passing. Germany, followed by Austria, has declared war on Russia. The great wave of patriotism and loyalty to the Throne which has swept our native land is to me, and presumably also to you, a token that our great Mother Russia will carry on that war, sent as a visitation by God, to its desired consummation. This unanimous impulse of love on the part of my people and their readiness to sacrifice everything, even life itself, give me the necessary strength, calmly and steadfastly to anticipate the future. We are not merely defending our honour and dignity within the confines of our own country, but are fighting for our congenital brother-Slavs. I rejoice to see that at this solemn moment the Slavs are being so closely and indissolubly united with Russia. I am certain that each of you, at your respective posts, will help me to bear the trials which are sent us, and that we all, beginning with myself, will do our duty to the end. Great is the God of the Russian land."

Ringing cheers resounded through the hall. The following speech was delivered by the Deputy-President of the Council of the Empire, Golubeff (the President, Akimoff, was ill and died soon after). The next speaker was myself. I said:

"Your Imperial Majesty: It was with a feeling of profound emotion and pride that Russia heard the call of the Russian Tsar summoning his people to be one with him in the solemn hour of trial sent to our Motherland. . . .

The representatives of the people, called into political being by the will of your Majesty, now stand before you. The Imperial Duma, which embodies in itself the unanimous impulse of all Russia's component parts and united in a singleness of purpose, has empowered me to tell you, Sire, that your people are

ready to take up arms for the honour and glory of the Motherland. Without differences of opinion, views and convictions, the Imperial Duma, speaking in the name of the whole Russian nation, says calmly and firmly to her Tsar: 'Sire, be of good cheer, the Russian people are with you. With a firm belief in the grace of God, they will grudge no sacrifice until the foe is vanquished and Russia's honour vindicated.'"

The Emperor's eyes were full of tears. He replied:

"I thank you from my heart, I thank you, gentlemen, for your patriotic spirit, which I never doubted, and of which you have now given me actual proof. With all my heart I wish you every success. God is with us."

The Emperor made the sign of the Cross; so did we all, and sang: "Lord, save thy people."

The general enthusiasm was unbounded. Coming up to me, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch embraced me and said: "Now, Rodzianko, I am your friend till death. I'll do anything for the Duma. Tell me what you want."

Taking advantage of this, I asked that the embargo should be removed from the daily paper *Retch**, which the Grand Duke had ordered to be suppressed for anti-patriotic articles against Serbia.

"Miliukoff has made a mistake," I said, "and himself repents of it. Make him promise to alter his policy. We shall now need all the support of the Press."

The embargo was removed, the *Retch* reappeared next day, and Miliukoff maintained a national policy throughout the war.

After the reception in the Palace, the deputies

* A Liberal paper voicing the opinions of the Constitutional Democratic (Cadet) Party.

adjourned to the Taurida Palace, where the Duma sat. There was first a special service of intercession. The Cabinet was present in a body, as were the diplomatic representatives of the friendly Powers. Spectators crowded the galleries. The opening speech was delivered by the President of the Duma, who was followed by the Prime Minister Goremykin and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Sazonoff. The latter was loudly acclaimed by the Duma; he appeared to be deeply moved. It was some time before he could commence his magnificent speech. It was said that it had been written by Prince G. N. Trubetzkoy. Sazonoff was followed by the Minister of Finance, Bark.

After the Cabinet Ministers came the turn of the deputies from all parties and nationalities. All united in the cry—the integrity and honour of the Motherland must be defended. The speech of the Lettish representative was particularly pithy. "In every one of our huts the enemy will meet a deadly foe, whom he may perhaps behead, but even from the dying he will hear the cry: 'Long live Russia!'"

After the historic session of July 26 the Duma was prorogued.

After the very first battles, news of the highly unsatisfactory state of the medical transport service spread from the front. Chaos reigned supreme. Goods trains arrived in Moscow packed with wounded, who lay on the bare floor of the trucks without straw litter, themselves often without clothes, with badly dressed wounds and having had no food for several days. At the same time my wife, who was patroness of the Elizabeth community of sisters of mercy, received letters from the nurses at the front telling her that their unit was

left without work and was constrained to remain an inactive spectator of the disorder, the nurses not even being allowed to enter the trains at the railway station. This state of affairs was the result of rivalry between the Ministry for War and the Red Cross. Instead of co-ordinating their work, each department acted independently.

The first aid organization on the military side was worst of all. There were no vehicles, no horses, and no medical appliances. In spite of this, no other organizations were allowed at the front. The only possible solution was to lay the matter before the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch. I wrote him a letter, in which I pointed out that the general patriotic enthusiasm had caused numerous voluntary sanitary organizations to spring up, but that all these bodies, which were far better organized and efficient than the corresponding military service, were looked at askance by M. Evdokimoff, the head of the Army Medical Department, who placed difficulties and obstacles in the way of their work wherever he could. Meantime the wounded could not wait. They had to be doctored and looked after, while the advancing troops in the firing line had to be provided with properly equipped flying units. No time could be lost. As co-operation between the Army Medical Department and the volunteer organizations was apparently out of the question, it was necessary to place a dictator at the head of the whole medical and sanitary service, who could be entrusted with the task of bringing order out of chaos.

Having despatched this letter, I called at once on the Empress Marie Feodorovna, who was residing at the Elagin Island Palace, and told her everything. She was horrified.

"Tell me what you think ought to be done," said the Empress.

I advised her to send a telegram to the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch, requesting him to order the head of the Army Medical Department, Evdokimoff, to improve the existing conditions and permit the volunteer Red Cross organizations, which he was deliberately preventing from working at the front, to take part in the work. The Empress immediately asked me to write out a telegram in her name. The result of our efforts was first a telegram and then a letter from the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch, saying that he was in complete agreement with the President of the Duma, and promising to take the necessary steps. Soon afterwards Evdokimoff was summoned to the Stavka (General Headquarters) and Prince Alexander Petrovitch of Oldenburg was appointed supreme head of the Medical and Evacuation Department with a dictator's powers.

The Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch wrote to me that he had long ago insisted on Evdokimoff's dismissal. It was not carried out because he was in high favour with Sukhomlinoff and the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, who persuaded the Emperor to keep him at his post. The reason for this, it was rumoured, was the Empress Alexandra's desire to oppose the wishes of the Empress Marie Feodorovna.

Soon after the opening of military operations it became apparent that the young Empress had nothing to do. In order to give Alexandra Feodorovna a prominent position in the public war work, a Supreme Council was established under her nominal presidency. The composition of this Council was exceedingly cumbersome. Though the Empress was nominally president, the Prime Minister, I. L.Goremykin, presided at the meet-

ings, thus introducing an undesirable dual control in the management of affairs. Goremykin endeavoured to anticipate the wishes of the Empress, while she herself did not know what she was expected to do. The main source of the Council's activities—the financial side—hung, so to speak, in mid-air, as it had no legal funds at its disposal, and grants were expected to be forthcoming from the war fund, which itself was placed under the control of the Council of Ministers.

The members of the Council realized from the outset that debates would be purely academic and that all decisions would depend on other organizations, whose views on the subject were absolutely unknown and undefined. The sittings were purely formal and bored everybody, and the presence of the Empress created an icy atmosphere.

Soon after my arrival in Warsaw in the autumn of 1914, the plenipotentiary delegate of the Zemstvo Union, Vyruboff, called on me and proposed that I should visit the Warsaw-Vienna railway station, at which 17,000 wounded from the battles of Lodz and the Beresina were collected. There we found a heartrending scene: the platforms were strewn with countless numbers of wounded, who lay in the cold rain and mud without so much as straw litter. The air was filled with their piteous cries: "For God's sake, have our wounds dressed, we've been without dressings for five days." It should be noted that after fierce fighting these wounded were removed from the front in goods trucks in complete disorder, and abandoned without help at the Warsaw-Vienna railway station. The only medical staff in attendance on these poor creatures were the Warsaw doctors, assisted by volunteer nurses. This was a

Polish society unit numbering about fifteen members. One cannot speak too highly of the indefatigable devotion and self-sacrifice of these true friends of humanity. I do not remember their names, but heartily wish my earnest gratitude to reach them as a token of a Russian's heartfelt admiration. At the time of my arrival at the station these splendid people were working the third day at a stretch without rest or respite.

Such treatment of the wounded roused my profound indignation, and I immediately summoned by telephone the chief of the Medical Department, Daniloff, and the Red Cross delegate, General Wolkoff. As soon as they arrived we, with Vyruboff, discussed some means of coping with this horrible and tragic situation. Both General Daniloff and General Wolkoff declared emphatically that they had no medical staffs at their disposal; yet, on visiting a Red Cross hospital a short time before, I had found six doctors and about thirty nurses doing nothing. On my pointing out that they ought at once to be turned on to work, General Daniloff replied decidedly that he was unable to do this, as they were for staffing hospital trains now in formation. And this was said when 18,000 sufferers were lying unaided on the station platforms.

I demanded that General Daniloff should immediately proceed to organize special trains with heated trucks for the removal of the wounded from the station. Daniloff declared that this, too, he was unable to do, as by orders received from the supreme head of the Medical Department, the wounded were to be evacuated into the interior in hospital trains only, and he had only eight of these at his disposal. Outraged by such heartless indifference to the fate of these suffering men, I threatened to telegraph to the Prince of Olden-

burg and inform him of the disgraceful state of affairs and demand that those in authority should be brought to trial and dismissed for criminal inaction. The fear of the Prince was so great that my menace took effect, and they went energetically to work. Available doctors and nurses were found, and during the next two or three days all the wounded were attended to and removed to the rear.

Such was the state of the Army Medical Department during military operations.

While at Warsaw I visited General Russky. The Commander-in-Chief* made an excellent impression. As a man he was exceptionally modest, almost shy. I alluded to him as a national hero, and said I considered it my duty to call on him on my arrival in Warsaw. He looked terribly uncomfortable, and waved his hands in protest. "Oh no—I've nothing to do with it," he said.

While in Warsaw I asked the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch's permission to visit the Stavka. I wanted to acquaint him with all I had seen and heard in Warsaw. In his conversation with me General Russky had complained of the shortage of munitions and kit, in particular the lack of boots. The soldiers in the Carpathians were fighting barefoot, and the delegate of the Zemstvo Union asked me to see to that. Russky said that the lack of munitions made the situation very difficult; elaborate manœuvres were necessary to enable the troops to hold their ground.

The Red Cross hospitals and units I came across were all up to the standard. Conditions were bad only in the military hospitals: there carelessness, lack of requisites, and absence of co-ordination between the various departments were very marked. To get from the military clearing stations at the front to the Red Cross hospitals, one was some-

* Of the Western Front

times obliged to walk ten miles or more with no chance of even hiring a waggon, as all the population had either fled or been completely ruined.

The Grand Duke greeted me very cordially, told me he was going to a conference of army commanders at Brest Litovsk, and asked me to accompany him. My proposal to use waggons loaded with hay for transporting the wounded met with his approval, and a few days later the Government was commandeering them in our province, and horses and waggons were being despatched to the front.

In general the Grand Duke listened willingly to all I had to tell him, and invited me to come oftener and inform him of what was going on. At the mention of Rasputin I repeated to him the latest Petrograd gossip. The story ran that Rasputin had wanted to go to the Stavka and sent a telegram to that effect, but that Nicolai Nicolaevitch had replied: "Come—and be hanged." On my asking whether this was true, the Grand Duke laughed and said, "Well, not exactly." It was clear from his answer that something of the sort had actually taken place.

The Grand Duke complained of the fatal influence of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. He said frankly that she was a great hindrance to everybody. When at the Stavka the Emperor agreed to everything, but on rejoining her he altered all his decisions. The Grand Duke realized that the Empress hated him and desired his dismissal. He spoke of Sukhomlinoff, in whom he had no confidence and who was trying to gain an influence over the Emperor. He said that he had been compelled temporarily to suspend operations owing to the lack of munitions and the shortage of boots.

"You have influence," the Grand Duke added,

"and you are trusted. Do organize the supply of footwear for the army as soon as possible."

I replied that this could be done by inviting the co-operation of the Zemstvos and other public organizations, particularly the former. Plenty of material could be found in Russia; labour, too, was plentiful, but one province produced leather, others nails, soles and so forth, while the cheap labour, the bootmakers who worked at home, lived in yet another region. The best way to bring all these together was to call a conference of presidents of the provincial Zemstvo Boards and organize the business with their assistance. The Grand Duke entirely approved of my scheme.

On my return to Petrograd I went to the Duma Organization Committee and asked the advice of the members of the Duma as to the best way of organizing the supply of footwear. We decided to send a circular of questions to all the presidents of the Zemstvo Boards and mayors of the towns. This was soon done, and favourable answers came pouring in. As there was reason to expect that this scheme would be opposed by the Government, I decided to call on some of the Ministers separately and talk it over with them. Krivoshein, Sukhomlinoff and Goremykin approved of the idea of a conference and promised to support my proposal before the Cabinet. The interview with the Minister Maklakoff took rather a peculiar turn. On my statement that I was entrusted by the Commander-in-Chief with the urgent task of organizing the supply of boots for the army and of summoning a conference of presidents of the Zemstvo and Municipal Boards in Petrograd, Maklakoff said: "Yes, yes, what you say tallies exactly with the information we have received through our agents."

"What information?"

"According to my secret information, this conference, under cover of the needs of the army, will discuss the political situation and demand a constitution."

The Minister's declaration was so unexpected and grotesque that it made me actually jump in my chair, and I replied sharply:

"You have gone out of your mind. What right have you to insult me like this? To suppose that I, the President of the Duma, should, at such a time and under pretence of war needs, summon a conference for promoting revolutionary manifestations! Besides that, you are completely wrong, because we have a constitution already."

Maklakoff was visibly abashed and endeavoured to smooth matters over.

"Please, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, don't take my words as a personal offence. In any case I cannot authorize such a conference without the consent of the Council of Ministers, and I will raise this question at our very first meeting."

I informed Maklakoff that some of the Ministers had promised their support, and left him, feeling very indignant and upset.

The proposed conference was spoken of among the members of the Duma, and many presidents of the Zemstvo Boards were unofficially informed of the Commander-in-Chief's desire to enlist the Zemstvos' assistance for war work. The response was widespread. Some sent the necessary information; others, without waiting for an invitation, arrived personally in Petrograd. Then came letters from the Zemstvos reporting that orders had already been placed with the home-working boot-makers and the small workshops, that leather was being bought up and work was in full swing. One Zemstvo, in view of the shortage of tanning materials, despatched its agent to the Argentine.

Even some of the governors responded to the call and expressed their approval of the idea of getting the Zemstvos to supply the army.

Here, too, the Minister Maklakoff did his best to hinder the work. He insisted that all orders should be transmitted through the medium of the governors. The public felt slighted and the work was hampered. Simultaneously Maklakoff issued the famous order prohibiting the transport of supplies from one province to another. This completely disorganized and cramped the plan for utilizing the products and possibilities of the various provinces. A few days later I received a letter from Maklakoff informing the President of the Duma that the latter's scheme for summoning a conference was disapproved of by the Council of Ministers, and that the task of supplying boots for the army was entrusted to the head of the War Commissariat, Shuvaeff, whose business it was to get in touch with the Zemstvos and municipalities. The very next day Shuvaeff came to see me and declared frankly that he was unable to take up the business, and was of opinion that the Zemstvos did not trust the Commissariat and would probably refuse to deal with it direct. Shuvaeff asked for our help. I replied that as the Council of Ministers considered I could not be trusted with the task, there was nothing left for me but to refuse to take any part in it.

Soon after this Goremykin called on me to discuss the summoning of the Duma. I reminded him of his promise to support the proposal in favour of a Zemstvo conference.

"What conference?" asked Goremykin in astonishment. "We never discussed anything of the kind in the Council of Ministers."

I showed Goremykin Maklakoff's letter. He read it with great surprise, repeated that no such

question had been discussed in the Council of Ministers, and, referring to Maklakoff, remarked: "*Il a menti comme toujours.*"

In spite of opposition from the Government the Zemstvos continued to work. Shuvaeff received consignments of boots, while Maklakoff's orders were treated with contempt and indignation. The prohibition to transport produce from one province to another was particularly irritating. Owing to this there was a superfluity of produce in some provinces and a shortage in others, and sometimes it happened that landowners who possessed estates in different provinces were unable to transport their own seeds for sowing their fields.

When I reported all these matters to the Emperor he listened to me, but did not pay particular attention. I asked the Emperor his opinion of my visits to the Stavka, whether he did not consider them inopportune. The Emperor replied that he knew the Grand Duke thought highly of me, and that he personally would be pleased if I went there oftener. This time the Emperor behaved most graciously towards me. I asked that the Duma should be summoned as soon as possible, and recounted to the Emperor the contents of Maklakoff's letter and his unfounded suspicion of the Zemstvos.

The Duma was summoned to debate the Budget Estimates, but the very first sitting developed into a patriotic demonstration, as in the early days of the war. Only the Extreme Left took no part in the manifestation, and the Balts and other Duma Germans maintained a strange silence. It was discovered that they had been conducting an anti-war propaganda, and documents were found proving one of them to have openly written that Germany's victory would benefit Russia. The Social Democratic Party intended to present an interpellation to the Government on the subject.

Had this been done, the atmosphere of unanimity of the sitting would be broken, and the whole business would have made an unfavourable impression. An interpellation (to be valid) needed thirty signatures; the Left wing did not number as many members, and the motion depended on whether the Cadets would add their signature, as they had done on many previous occasions. This time, however, they refused, and everything passed off well. Miliukoff delivered an excellent and patriotic speech, mentioning a member of their party, Koliubakin, who had just been killed at the front, and said it with such feeling that not only the whole House, but members of the Government, rose to do honour to his memory.

The speech of the President of the Duma was followed by speeches from Goremykin and Sazonoff. They both pointed out that the hopes of victory were merging into certainty, that we stood firm in Galicia, and that from a military point of view we were well prepared for war. Goremykin mentioned that many new problems of internal policy had arisen out of the current events, which, however, would have to be dealt with after the war. The Minister for War, Sukhomlinoff, stated that the army was fully provided for, and that by March there would be more munitions and rifles than were actually required. As news was coming from the front of a shortage of munitions, the War Minister's words and categorical assertions had a calming effect on many people.

Soon after this sitting, in February, there appeared the Commander-in-Chief's statement that Colonel Miasoiedoff and his accomplices had been hanged. Colonel Miasoiedoff's friendship and frequent intercourse with the War Minister were common knowledge. After this episode many people became inclined to attribute our first defeat

at Soldau to Miasoiedoff's activities. Confidence in Sukhomlinoff was being finally undermined; even rumours of treason became current. Faith in the generalissimo, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch, alone remained unshaken. In connection with Miasoiedoff's execution, many recalled the disclosures made by Gutchkoff as long ago as the time of the third Duma, when he had made charges against Sukhomlinoff and Miasoiedoff. Gutchkoff had then pointed out the undoubted connection between Sukhomlinoff and Miasoiedoff and a certain Altshuller, who, with Miasoiedoff, stood at the head of a firm which provided artillery supplies for the army through the medium of Sukhomlinoff. The activities of Altshuller and Miasoiedoff were exposed by General N. I. Ivanoff. At that time Gutchkoff charged Sukhomlinoff with having organized a secret surveillance over the officers' corps, which he had entrusted to Miasoiedoff. In spite of the growing public indignation against Sukhomlinoff, the Emperor continued to hold him in high favour.

At the front, during the winter, we continued our advance in Galicia. Amid untold hardships the troops pushed on over the Carpathians and descended into the plains of Hungary. Przmysl, on the 9th March, fell almost without resistance. Selivanoff, despairing of ever taking Przmysl, was on the point of raising the siege, when almost on the day fixed for the withdrawal the fortress surrendered. We captured 117,000 prisoners. After the fall of Przmysl, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch received a diamond sword with the inscription: "For the conquest of Chervonnaia Russ."*

* "Chervonnaia (or Red) Russia" was the name of that part of Galicia which had of old formed part of the Russian dominions.

In order to test the accuracy of various reports which had reached members of the Duma from the front, I made a journey to Galicia at the beginning of April. I was able to visit the front up to the river Dunajetz along the lines occupied by the armies of Radko Dmitrieff, Letchitsky and Brusiloff. Everywhere I heard the same thing: the armies lacked munitions. General Russky had complained of this as far back as the autumn of 1914. When I repeated my conversation with Russky to the Grand Duke at the Stavka, the latter assured me that it was only a temporary hitch, and that quantities of munitions would be forthcoming in a fortnight. Now the same complaints were repeated from all sides. The generals were in despair and implored our help. I was accompanied on this trip by my wife, her sister, and J. V. Glinka, who took down notes during our tour of the front. The Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna travelled on the same train with us.

At the railway station at Lvoff (Lemberg) we caught sight of a group of civilians, who appeared to be expecting someone. The Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch, who was meeting his wife, was also standing near them. We alighted from the carriage, and when the group of civilians approached us, we naturally made way for the Grand Duke and his wife, thinking it was they who were being met. A slight delay ensued. Then an old gentleman left the group of civilians and approached me with a greeting. It appeared that these were Galician public men, with Dudykevitch at their head, who had come to welcome the President of the Russian Imperial Duma. (I mention this episode because the Minister N. A. Maklakoff contrived to give the Emperor a totally erroneous account of this modest demonstration and of my whole stay in Galicia.)

Beautiful, gay Lvoff, all in green, made a most pleasing impression. The clean streets, the lively crowds, Russian soldiers, and even policemen at the street corners—there was nothing to remind one of a conquered city. One might suppose we were at home in the midst of friends, with no trace of hostilities; even the peasants, by their dress and manner of speech, reminded one of our Little Russians.

On our return to Lvoff after a visit to Przmysl, we learned that the Emperor and the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch were expected to arrive in two days' time. Preparations were afoot for a triumphant welcome; arches were being built and the town decorated with garlands, flags and bunting I did not consider this visit very opportune, and in my heart of hearts criticized the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch.

On the day of the Emperor's arrival everyone assembled in the temporary cathedral. Troops were lined up in the streets, crowded with people, and the "hurrahs" rolled and swelled as the Imperial cortege drew nearer. After a Te Deum Archbishop Eulogius gave a moving address; everyone was affected and believed in our final victory. That same day there was a big dinner. The Emperor came up to me after dinner and said:

"Did you ever think we should meet at Lvoff?"

"No, your Majesty, I did not; and under the circumstances, Sire, I greatly regret that you have decided to pay this visit to Galicia."

"Why?"

"Because in three weeks' time Lvoff will probably be retaken by the Germans, and our army forced to abandon the positions it now holds."

"You always try to frighten me, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, and tell me unpleasant things."

"Your Majesty, I should not dare to tell an un-

truth. I have been to the front, and I am surprised that the Commander-in-Chief has allowed you to come here under existing conditions. The soil on which the Russian monarch has once set foot cannot be lightly surrendered: torrents of blood will be shed upon it, but nevertheless we shall not be able to hold it."

After dinner the Emperor stepped out on the balcony and spoke to the people, mentioning the ancient Russian territories. The crowd cheered; ladies waved their handkerchiefs. Next day the Emperor, with the Grand Duke, left for Przmysl.

A week later my wife and her sister returned to Petrograd, and I and my son went to the front to inspect the Red Cross organizations. We only just had time to return to Lvoff before our catastrophic retreat began. The warnings of my son and all serious military experts were realized; all our victories and the blood so freely shed were brought to nought by the shortage of munitions.

My son Nicholas, whose unit was attached to Korniloff's division, was surrounded, but thanks to his knowledge of the country managed to escape and brought safely back to the river San, not only his unit and the wounded, but part of the baggage and munitions. For this he received the order of St. Vladimir with swords. General Korniloff refused to abandon his division, which was spread over twenty-five miles. He insisted that the medical unit should depart, while he himself returned to the regiments which lagged in the rear. He was wounded, surrounded and made prisoner, with part of his division.

CHAPTER IX

The Stavka after the Retreat—Scheme of a Special Council of Defence—The Industrialists' Congress—Nicholas II and N. A. Maklakoff—The Port of Archangel—The Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch.

On my return from Galicia I called at the Stavka to recount my impressions to the Commander-in-Chief. The Grand Duke seemed greatly altered. During his tour he had appeared so gratified by the spirit of the troops, the organization of the rear and the medical conditions and supplies, and by the general confidence in victory, but now he was oppressed by the incompetence of the commanding staff, the want of talent in General Ivanoff's plan of campaign, and particularly by the deficiency in ammunition, rifles and shells. The atmosphere at the Stavka was depressing. The Grand Duke realized that Ivanoff's plans in the Carpathians had failed. Radko Dmitrieff was placed in an impossible situation. No fortified posts had been prepared along his line of retreat, and the refusal to send him reinforcements (general opinion laid the blame for this on Vladimir Dragomiroff, who was at loggerheads with Radko), together with the long drawn-out front line occupied by his army, too weak numerically and lacking the necessary amount of munitions, rendered his position desperate. The Third Army was forced to retreat beyond the San and abandon the whole of Western Galicia, which had been conquered at the cost of such heavy sacrifices.

This was not a time to stand on ceremony, and I considered it my duty to tell the Grand Duke the whole truth:

"Your Highness, you are sacrificing the men in vain, you must demand from the Artillery Department an absolutely precise account of what they have in readiness and the exact amount of the artillery supplies they are able to deliver. So far they have not kept their promises."

To this the Grand Duke replied:

"I cannot get anything out of the Artillery Department. My position in general is very difficult; the Emperor is being influenced against me."

The Grand Duke complained of the Minister Maklakoff, through whose influence he was prevented from finding out what the State munition factories were doing. The Grand Duke had persuaded the Emperor to appoint Litvinoff-Falinsky (the head of the Department of Industry and senior factory inspector) to carry out an investigation of all the factories working for the army. The Emperor, when at the Stavka, had given his consent and signed the appointment, but on returning to Petrograd, had changed his mind. Litvinoff-Falinsky was dismissed without any explanations.

My interview with the Grand Duke lasted some time. I insisted that in view of the existing conditions at the front it was impossible to be silent and to give way to compromise; that he must speak out and tell the Emperor the truth, and insist on his proposals being accepted. Who but the Commander-in-Chief had the right, not only to speak, but to demand?

To this the Grand Duke remarked:

"Oho, you express yourself pretty strongly."

"Not too strongly, your Highness," I replied; "the whole nation is fighting, and the whole people will revolt in the event of an unsuccessful war, if once they see that all their sacrifices and the blood they shed were in vain. The nation has shown itself worthy of its great mother country, but the

Tsarist Government is utterly unworthy of Russia. First of all, it is absolutely necessary to insist on the resignation of Maklakoff and of the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch; the thieving gang operating under cover of the Grand Duke's name must be got rid of."

In speaking of his powerlessness to cope with the Artillery Department, the Commander-in-Chief mentioned that he was aware of the part taken, and the influence exercised, in questions of artillery supplies by the dancer Kshesinskaia, who acted as an intermediary for the placing of orders with different firms. When I suggested that it was high time Sukhomlinoff was removed, the Grand Duke replied:

"Here, too, I am powerless: Sukhomlinoff of late has enjoyed particular favour with the Emperor."

This conversation left an extremely painful impression. The Grand Duke did not possess sufficient energy.

As I took my leave, the Grand Duke asked me what could be done to save the situation. I proposed my old scheme, which I had long kept in my mind—to form a committee of members of the Duma, delegates from the various industries, from the Artillery and other military departments, with wide powers to deal with all matters of war supplies. The Grand Duke joyfully caught hold of the idea and promised to speak to the Emperor, who was expected at the Stavka. After my interview with the Grand Duke I had a long talk with his chief subordinates at Headquarters, Yanushkevitch and Daniloff. They both left an impression of mournful helplessness; both realized the horror of the situation and repeated over and over again, "You alone can save the situation." Yanushkevitch even spoke with tears in his eyes of the mental

tortures he was going through, not being able to obtain the necessary supplies from the Artillery Department, and knowing in what dishonest hands it was.

On my return to Petrograd I invited Litvinoff-Falinsky to my house, and together with the deputies Savitch, Protopopoff and Dmitriukoff, we discussed the forming of a committee. Litvinoff and Savitch informed us of numerous cases when the Artillery Department had refused offers of factories to take orders for shells, shrapnel and so forth. The department refused to deal with private firms, while the output of the State factories, owing to their atrocious organization, amounted to about one-fifth of the normal. The dishonesty and cupidity of the Artillery Department was a common topic of conversation in Petrograd. Their methods struck the eye of even the man in the street. The munitions factory on the Liteiny was not even guarded; it was the same at all the other factories, and the explosion at the powder factory destroyed the last remnant of public confidence in those in control of the Department. German subjects still remained at the head of many State factories. They enjoyed the patronage of the Minister Maklakoff, several Grand Duchesses and a clique of courtiers, and it was impossible to obtain an order for their deportation. Treason was in the air. No other explanation could be found for the stupendous phenomena happening under the very eyes of the public. The climax was reached by the publication of the Miasoiedoff case.

After collecting detailed data I sent a letter to the Grand Duke at the Stavka in which I reiterated all my former statements, supported by references to facts and documents. I also recounted the horrors which were taking place in the army as a result of the lack of munitions and the inefficiency

of the higher military authorities, particularly of Sukhomlinoff. The Emperor arrived at the Stavka, and I received the following telegram from the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch: "Your scheme must wait."

Next day, however, another telegram arrived summoning me to the Stavka, and bidding me bring those whom I considered useful. Litvinoff-Falinsky, Vyshnegradsky, and Putiloff accompanied me. At the Stavka I was received by the Emperor, and with perfect frankness urged him to recognize the necessity of convening a special committee in which public workers should participate. I told him of the general unrest in the rear, of the army's distrust in the military authorities at home, and of the inevitable increase of this lack of confidence while the army continued its retreat.

The Emperor looked extremely pale and worried; his hands trembled. He seemed particularly impressed when, myself deeply affected and scarcely able to restrain my tears, I spoke to him of the troops' unswerving devotion and love for their Tsar and Motherland, their readiness to sacrifice themselves, and their simple unaffected response to the call of duty. After describing the situation at the front and at home, I entreated the Emperor to remove Maklakoff, Sabler, Stcheglovitoff* and Sukhomlinoff. When the blood of so many men was being shed so freely, it was impossible to tolerate at the head of affairs the presence of persons who irritated public opinion —"which, after all, your Majesty should reckon with," I added.

The Emperor seemed pleased with my idea of creating a Special Council, and the outlines of the organization were immediately drafted. The Council was to include representatives from the

* Minister of Justice.

banks which subsidized the war industries, delegates from the industries themselves, public men, members of the legislative chambers and representatives from the Ministry for War. The first to be summoned were Litvinoff-Falinsky, Putiloff, Vyshnegradsky, the banker Utine, Gutchkoff, and others. The Emperor asked:

"Who will preside over the Special Council?"

I replied that the chairman ought to be the Minister for War, as the Council would deal with war supplies. There was no other alternative, as, were another chairman appointed, Sukhomlinoff would at every turn endeavour to impede the work of the Council.

When rumours of the projected Council, which had not yet received official sanction, reached the War Ministry, they created great consternation. Attempts were made to persuade the Emperor that the Council was illegal, that it was actually a new Ministry, the formation of which necessitated a new law and the execution of a whole series of formalities which demanded a certain lapse of time. Fortunately these intrigues failed; the Emperor disagreed with the arguments put forward. Attempts were next made to prove that during the interim between the sessions of the legislative chambers the President of the Duma did not exist, and his presence in the Council would be illegal. The Emperor paid no heed to this either. The appointment of the Special Council was to be passed by the Council of Ministers and presented to the Emperor for sanction on the strength of Clause 87 of the Fundamental Code of Laws. The Ministers Maklakoff and Stcheglovitoff were particularly opposed to this Council. The former approached all the Emperor's entourage in order to obtain an audience, but the Emperor refused to see him. Before the meeting, when the question

of the Council was to be decided, the Emperor summoned Sukhomlinoff and said to him:

"Tell the Council of Ministers that I greatly approve of the formation of this Special Council, and welcome the idea of the participation of the members of the legislative chambers."

Sukhomlinoff delivered the Emperor's message during the debates, and Goremykin took advantage of it to say: "I think that this is not an occasion for prolonged debate: we have but to conform to the will of our gracious Sovereign."

When it came to the vote, Sabler and Stcheglovitoff, after a private consultation, voted for the scheme; Maklakoff alone voted against it. (This, it was said, displeased the Emperor very much.) The scheme received the Imperial sanction, and the Council began its work.

Before the final settlement of the Council question by legislation, I considered it my duty to acquaint the members of the Duma with the whole scheme. At the end of May I assembled the Senioren-Convent and laid before them the whole course of events which brought about the idea of this Council. The attitude of the various parties was characteristic. As might be expected, the members of the Right maintained a stony silence, the Nationalists and Octobrists fervently approved of all the steps I had taken. The Cadets, through their leader P. N. Miliukoff, quite unexpectedly declared themselves against my idea on the plea that all co-operation and intercourse with the Ministry for War under Sukhomlinoff would discredit the Duma, and that therefore they, the Cadets, would not on any account take part in the newly-formed Council.

To my still greater astonishment this view was hotly challenged by Kerensky. With his customary verve and impetuosity he attacked Miliukoff in an

impassioned speech, proving the absurdity of his standpoint. "The Cadets," said he, "always take theoretical considerations as their starting point, and diverge into the abstract, repudiating everything, however useful in itself, which does not tally with their theory. I am a political opponent of the President of the Imperial Duma, but I see that he is suffering from our continual discords and is painfully seeking a remedy for the appalling defects of our military organization. We Labourists fully sympathize with his endeavours, approve of them and assure him of our support."

After hearing the opinion of my fellow-deputies I moved a vote of confidence which was carried unanimously. It was with great difficulty that the Cadets were subsequently persuaded to take part in the Council. The Extreme Left wing refused to participate, the sole motive of their refusal being that as members of the Left they would be treated with prejudice and suspicion by the representatives of the Government.

In the same month of May, 1915, a congress of industrialists was held in Petrograd. I heard from all sides that feeling ran very high amongst all the delegates and that revolutionary speeches might be expected. This would exactly suit Maklakoff; he was on the look-out for something to justify his constant denunciations to the Emperor, and would not miss an opportunity of closing the congress and arresting its chief promoters. Well-informed persons said that the Moscow business men had drafted a resolution for the Petrograd congress containing a demand for a Constituent Assembly.

On the morning of the opening day Prince G. E. Lvoff and the member of the Duma, B. Maklakoff (not to be confused with the Minister), called at my flat. Both were exceedingly perturbed and excited; they spoke of what might be expected at the con-

gress, particularly of the Moscow resolution. They advised me not to attend the congress, and tried to intimidate me by pointing out the responsibility I would incur in the event of revolutionary speeches. "Think of the responsibility you are taking on yourself," they said.

"If one was afraid of responsibility," I said, "one could never do anything. I am determined to go to the congress; it must be saved, and calm restored."

They then endeavoured to persuade my wife to exert her influence on me and prevent my going. My wife replied that she could not interfere in my affairs, but was sure everything would turn out well.

I went to the congress with Protopopoff, was greeted with applause, and made an impromptu speech, in which I welcomed the delegates and appealed to them to unite their efforts, irrespective of party views and dissensions, to those of the Imperial Duma and other public bodies, in order to ensure to our gallant armies all that was necessary for victory. "Our troops," I said, "who are willingly sacrificing their lives for their country, must rest assured that the people at home are at one with them in the fulfilment of our common duty."

When the congress learnt that the Government's attitude towards the public was one of confidence and that something might still be done to improve the situation, the irritation against the Government subsided, and the members turned to a business discussion of the agenda. At the very first sitting a resolution was carried, differing totally from the one originally drafted.

Towards the end of May I sent in a request for an audience to the Emperor. No reply was forthcoming for four or five days. Instead, I learnt that the Minister Maklakoff was prejudicing the

Emperor against the Duma and assuring him that the President of the Duma was going to present extraordinary demands, almost an ultimatum. These rumours spread to Moscow, and young Yusupoff, who had just arrived from that city, repeated stories current there according to which the President of the Duma had placed himself at the head of the revolutionary movement and had formed, against the Government's wish, a Special Committee, *Comité du Salut public*, on the model of the French Revolution (such, apparently, was the interpretation given to the Special Council).

At last the Emperor fixed a day for my audience; it was May 30. On entering the study I found the Emperor looking very pale and upset, and the stories I had heard of Maklakoff's intrigues came involuntarily to my mind. It was necessary at once to dispel all suspicions.

"Your Majesty," I began, "I have not come to you with any demands or an ultimatum . . . "

"Why do you speak of an ultimatum? . . What ultimatum?"

"Your Majesty, I am told that I have been described to you as a very dangerous man; you were told I should come not with a report, but with demands. You were even advised not to receive me at all."

"Who told you that, and whom are you hinting at as having prejudiced me against you?"

"Your Majesty, all this may be gossip, but these rumours are well-founded and emanate from such trustworthy sources that I made up my mind to lay them before you. The Minister of the Interior Maklakoff spoke against me to you. Sire, I have no report to make to you about the Duma. I have come to speak on general matters, to confess to you as a son to his father, to tell you the whole truth, as I know it. Do you command me to speak?"

"Speak."

The Emperor turned towards me, and all through my report looked me straight in the eyes, evidently testing my sincerity. I, too, never took my eyes off his face. I spoke of all the painful and harassing details of the past weeks; of the state of the Artillery Department; of the insignificant output of the munition factories; of the fact that Germans stood at the head of most of them; of the Moscow disorders; of the troops, dying heroically at the front and betrayed in the rear by those who managed the supplies; of the baseness and intrigues of the Minister Maklakoff, and of much else. I said how, in connection with the Miasoiedoff affair, public indignation was growing against Sukhomlinoff, who was hated both at the front and in the rear and looked upon as Miasoiedoff's accomplice. I endeavoured to explain and prove that Sukhomlinoff, Maklakoff, Sabler and Stcheglovitoff could no longer be endured, that the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch ought to resign, as otherwise the resentment against the Artillery Department would fall on the head of a member of the Imperial Family, and indirectly on the Imperial Family itself: in a word, I spoke of all that I knew and that should be known by the Emperor.

My report lasted for over an hour, and all this time the Emperor did not smoke a single cigarette, which with him was always a sign of attention. At the end he leaned his elbows on the table and sat with his face buried in his hands. I finished, but he still sat in the same posture. At last I rose.

"Why did you get up?"

"Your Majesty, I have finished, I have told you all."

The Emperor also rose, took my hand in both his, and looking me straight in the face with his kind, moist eyes, held my hand tightly and said:

"Thank you for your straightforward, frank and courageous report."

I bowed low and felt the tears welling up in my throat. The Emperor, too, was visibly affected and, after uttering his last words, pressed my hand once more and passed quickly out through another door, unable to conceal his emotion.

I learned much later what had been the real cause of the Emperor's emotion during this audience. After the Revolution I was summoned to give evidence before the Supreme Commission which at all costs was endeavouring to discover criminal intention in the acts of the ex-Emperor. I spoke for five hours at a stretch, trying to prove the absence of a criminal element in the Emperor's acts, which were dictated by a mistaken policy fatal to the country's interests but in no way by a premeditated desire to harm the country.

After I had finished, Senator Tagantzeff came up to me and said: "Now that you have finished, read this document."

The document was dated May, 1915 (I forget the exact date), and corresponded to the time when I was summoned to the Stavka after the Lvoff celebrations. It was a report from the Minister Maklakoff, who wrote:

"I have the honour most loyally to report to your Imperial Majesty that I have more than once had the pleasure to point out to your Majesty that the Imperial Duma and its President, wherever possible, to increase their power and importance within the State, and in their pursuit of popularity, are seeking to degrade the powers of your Imperial Majesty. I have the honour to draw your attention to the behaviour of the President of the Duma after your departure from the city of

Lvoff. The President of the Duma accepted a festival organized in his honour by the Galicians, and, taking advantage of your Majesty's departure, comported himself as if he were the head of the Russian State.

"In drawing your Majesty's attention to the above, I beg to remind you of my not infrequent reports to your Majesty on the necessity of limiting the powers of the Imperial Duma and of reducing it to the status of a consultative institution." (I am quoting from memory, not verbatim.)

After reading the document, I handed it to Tagantzeff with the words:

"What is there surprising in that? Only the Minister of the Interior's usual libel."

"Read what is written overleaf," said Tagantzeff.

On the back of the sheet stood the following words written in the Emperor's own hand:

"It is indeed high time to reduce the powers of the Imperial Duma. It will be interesting to see how Messrs. Rodzianko & Co. will take it."

The date of this annotation coincided with the time when the Emperor seemed favourably inclined towards the Duma, and was discussing with me the scheme for creating a Special Council of Defence.

Soon after my report Maklakoff was dismissed. This step met with general satisfaction. His successor was Prince N. B. Scherbatoff, an absolutely straight and honest man.

In addition to my report I sent the Emperor a letter in which once again I emphasized the necessity of removing Sukhomlinoff and accelerating the summoning of the Duma. I did not conceal that the debates would be tempestuous and criticism of the Government scathing, but it

would be better for this to take place within the walls of the Duma than out in the streets.

It may have been this letter, or it may have been something else, that was the final straw, but at last Sukhomlinoff was removed and soon afterwards replaced by General Polivanoff, who enjoyed popularity in the Duma and among the general public. Shortly after Sukhomlinoff's dismissal, a Supreme Commission of Inquiry was set up, presided over by Petroff, a member of the Council of the Empire, and including two members of the Duma (Bobrinsky and Varun-Secret) and two members of the Council of the Empire.

After months of investigation and inquiry the Commission found Sukhomlinoff guilty of peculation and of State treason. In spite of this, Sukhomlinoff was not brought to trial for a long time, and not only did he remain at liberty, but he continued to wear his adjutant-general's epaulettes and retained the right of attending the sittings of the Council of the Empire.

The Emperor left for the Stavka on June 11, and on the 14th all the Ministers, except Sabler and Stcheglovitoff, were summoned thither. Of the new Ministers, Polivanoff and Scherbatoff were also present. The summoning of the Duma and the organization of war supplies were the questions discussed. The result was an Imperial rescript addressed to Goremykin, in which the Emperor for the first time publicly announced the summoning of a Special Council, and spoke of appealing to the public and to the industrialists, and promised that the Duma should be speedily summoned. The rescript made a favourable impression: the statement of confidence in the nation was clear and precise, and there was reason to hope that this attitude would remain unaltered. After this conference at the Stavka, Sabler and Stcheglovitoff

were dismissed, and A. D. Samarin was appointed High Procurator of the Synod. He accepted this post on the condition that Rasputin should be banished. Stories (attributed to Goremykin himself) were current in society that the Empress had demanded that he should oppose Sabler's dismissal and Samarin's appointment, but that Goremykin had refused to interfere in the matter and said that the Emperor's will must be obeyed. The Empress would not submit, and spared no effort to regain her influence over the Emperor's decisions. Unfortunately she succeeded, and Rasputin, who had been banished to Siberia, soon returned to Petrograd.

The Special Commission was already at work. At its first sittings it began to investigate the affairs of the Artillery Department and discovered many dishonest transactions. Senior officials had to be dismissed one after another, and General Manikovsky was placed at the head of the Department. I called personally on the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch and told him frankly that it would be better for him to resign on the plea of ill-health; so far the accusations were directed against his subordinates, but as they might also be levelled against the Grand Duke himself, this would reflect on the Imperial Family. The Grand Duke soon resigned his post as head of the Artillery Department, but was simultaneously appointed inspector-general at the Stavka.

Scandalous abuses were discovered by the Council in the port of Archangel. As far back as the beginning of the war, the Duma had received information that the transport of supplies from Archangel over the narrow-gauge railway was very difficult, and that the port was crammed with stores.

Supplies from America, England and France were piled up mountain high and could not be transported to the interior. At the very outset of the war Litvinoff-Falinsky had warned the Government of the appalling state of Archangel harbour. A large consignment of British coal was expected for the Petrograd factories, but there was no room even to store it.* In spite of the fact that Archangel was the only military port which linked us up with our Allies, no special attention was paid to its proper equipment. The subject was raised at one of the very first meetings of the Special Council, and the question was put to the Government what they intended to do. The Government, in the person of the Ministers Sukhomlinoff, Rukhloff, and Shakhovsky, either wrote non-committal answers or made verbal promises which came to nothing. Towards the end, the accumulation of goods was such that packing cases lying on the ground were literally sinking into the soil owing to the sheer weight of the stores piled up on top of them.

The Artillery Department declared to the Council that it was impossible to increase the output of shells, as there was no plant for the manufacture of time fuses. Members of the Duma urged that plant could be provided, if there was the will to look for it. The Council got into touch with technical and craft schools, some members undertook a tour of Russia, and soon telegrams began to pour in to the effect that thousands of apparatus had been found in various places. Factory plant evacuated from districts in enemy occupation could also be utilized, but here, too, no one wished to take the trouble to do it. The Special Council stirred up dormant energies. Textile and other factory directors, on being questioned by the Council, offered their premises for munition work; they added that they had already offered their services

to the Artillery Department, but had received a reply that the State factories would suffice. Members of the Council made a tour of the State and private factories, and discovered at the Petrograd arsenal a million and a half time fuses, alleged to be of an obsolete pattern. As a matter of fact, they turned out to be perfectly adaptable to the new shells, and when tested gave 90 per cent. of bursts. After a discovery like this the output of shells could be immediately increased without waiting for new plant. From the very first month of the Council's work, the supply of munitions at the front was doubled, and continued to increase progressively.

That summer a congress of the War Industries Committee met in Moscow. Public workers and business men responded heartily to the appeal addressed to them and fell to work with a will. Similar committees, with the help of the Zemstvos and municipalities, began to be formed throughout Russia, mainly composed of Zemstvo workers and factory managers. All kinds of factories, workshops and craft schools were adapted by them for production of war material. We knew in May that according to approximate estimates a sufficient quantity of munitions would be available in three months to arrest any further advance of the enemy. The enlistment of public services in war work and the creation of the Special Council was welcomed by the nation; a sigh of relief swept over the front, and the gall of recent defeats was mitigated by the hope of a brighter future. The possibility of working for the army and taking an active part in preparing its future successes helped people to bear the bad news from the front, where our retreat still continued.

I must here go back a little. The Duma met on July 19. The atmosphere was tense, and a storm was brewing. The Cadets and Left wing intended to move a series of interpellations. The Octobrists were opposed to this, saying this was no time for argument, when all energy should be concentrated on productive work. A number of Cadets proposed to raise the question of a Government responsible to the Duma. It required a good deal of persuasion to make them desist. P. N. Miliukoff supported the Octobrists on all questions, even against the Progressive party. In the House all efforts were directed towards the formation of a solid majority. This was crowned with a success which exceeded our expectations: we managed not only to unite several parties within the Duma, but also to reach an agreement with the Centre of the Council of the Empire. While the Left wing insisted on a responsible Cabinet, and the Right declared that this subject should not be broached, the Centre agreed that mention of a responsible Cabinet should be made not in the form of a demand but as a wish, and that at present "such persons should be called to power as enjoyed the confidence of the nation." Such a Government could work excellently with the Duma, as the war, contrary to all expectations, had smoothed away all petty controversies among the separate Centre parties, and an agreement had been reached which yielded a majority, united in the so-called Progressive *bloc*, which gave the Government firm support.

At a secret sitting on July 20 it was decided to call to account all persons who were to blame for the inadequacies in the equipment of the army. A law was passed providing for the formation of special committees attached to the Ministers for War, Transport, Commerce and Industry, Agri-

culture and the Interior, and including members of the Duma and the Council of the Empire, and representatives of trade and industry. The Cadets wanted to move a motion for the organization of a special Ministry of Supplies; the Government, on the other hand, sought to make the Special Council subordinate to the Cabinet. Fortunately, both these schemes were rejected and the Special Council Bill was passed in its already existing form, i.e., it was subordinate to the Crown alone, and the Minister for War was responsible for its acts.

CHAPTER X

The Emperor as Commander-in-Chief — Increasing Influence of the Empress—Goremykin dissolves the Duma—A. D. Samarin's Dismissal—The Putiloff Works—The British and our Mercantile Marine.

OUR troops in the meantime continued their retreat, which seemed as if it would never end. We abandoned Przmysl and Lvoff, and held out against furious attacks on the line Lublin-Kholm, thus covering our troops in the Warsaw region and escaping from the grip of iron in which the Germans threatened to hold us. The fortress of Novo-Georgievsk, while holding up the enemy's advance, was doomed. It held out heroically, was taken by assault, and few of its defenders escaped alive. Our other fortresses, Kovno, Ossovets and Brest Litovsk, offered scarcely any resistance and surrendered almost without fighting. Here, too, the treason and criminal negligence of the higher command staff and the War Ministry were fully revealed. The fortresses were badly built, the brick forts good for nothing, and the commandants of the fortresses totally incompetent. General Grigorieff, whether from stupidity or purposely, surrendered the fortress of Kovno almost without fighting. And it was of this fortress that Savitch, a member of the Duma, said in the Defence Commission that "it was a nut the Germans would find hard to crack." The "nut" proved to be a pack of cards.

As early as the end of April the Germans, simultaneously with their advance in Galicia, began to press on the Baltic front and, though with some difficulty it is true, succeeded in occupying Shavly,

Libau and Mitau, and endeavoured to break through towards Riga. Vilna, too, was in the enemy's hands, and repeated attacks were made on Dvinsk. In the south we had a success near Tarnopol and warded off an advance on Kieff. There was panic in Kieff, the evacuation of the place was begun, and the population, preparing to flee, retarded the sowing of the winter crops. Trenches were being dug in the province of Podolsk, and the people were only awaiting orders from the Government to retreat into the interior of the country.

Confidence in the Grand Duke began to waver. The inefficiency of the higher command, the absence of plan, the retreat, bordering on flight—all tended to prove the incompetence of the Chief of the Staff, General Yanushkevitch The Grand Duke ought long ago to have replaced him by Alexeieff, who had been Chief of the Staff to General Ivanoff during our advance in Galicia, and was now Commander-in-Chief on the Western front. Literally everyone advocated that name. I wrote of this to the Grand Duke, urging him to remove Yanushkevitch and appoint Alexeieff in his place.

In the meantime, rumours of the Emperor's intention to dismiss the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch and assume the supreme command himself became more persistent. This, it was said, was the desire of the Empress, who detested the Grand Duke, and wished to remove the Emperor from the direction of internal affairs in order to govern herself while he was at the Stavka. The desire to remove the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch from the supreme command was regarded as a great mistake by the Duma and the

general public. The consequences of this insane plan could easily be imagined. Already our series of misfortunes had given rise to endless rumours, in which the truth was closely intermingled with the most fantastic lies, and in which the name of the Empress recurred more and more often. Something had to be done to avert the approaching calamity. Goremykin obviously knew of the Emperor's decision, but kept silence, neither daring nor wishing to oppose the intrigues hatched in the Palace.

It should be mentioned here that after my visit to Tsarskoe Selo and the Stavka someone spread the rumour of my coming appointment to the Premiership. My relations with Goremykin became, in consequence, more strained. It was not the time, however, for personal differences, and I determined to persuade Goremykin and the President of the Council of the Empire to wait on the Emperor and urge him to abandon his decision and leave the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch at his post. Before doing so I wished to speak to Krivoshein, and telephoned to him at his villa on Elagin. He replied rather brusquely that he was busy and unable to see me. I insisted that time was precious, that I had to see the Prime Minister and him, Krivoshein, and would come to Elagin immediately. Krivoshein greeted me with an ill-concealed sneer, which betrayed his apprehension.

"I suppose you have come to preside over us," he said.

"No," I answered, "over you I will never preside."

My proposal that the Emperor's decision should be opposed was, of course, rejected. Goremykin spoke in the same strain as Krivoshein, talked of the sacred will of the Sovereign, said he could not interfere in military questions, and so on. I called

on the President of the Council of the Empire, Kulomsin, and repeated all my arguments, but he also refused and, in the course of our conversation, tried to remember the name of the courtier who on his bended knees implored the Emperor Alexander I in 1812 not to assume the supreme command of the army but to appoint Kutuzoff. There remained but one chance—to solicit an audience and entreat the Emperor myself.

Princess Z. N. Yusupoff called on the Dowager Empress and entreated her to use her influence over her son when he came to inform her of his decision.

During the audience at Tsarskoe I spoke to the Emperor of the unanimous desire to see General Alexeieff in Yanushkevitch's post. To my horror I received the following reply:

"I have irrevocably decided to dismiss the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch and place myself at the head of the troops."

"Sire, against whom are you raising your hand? You are the supreme arbiter, and who is to judge you in the event of failure? How can you place yourself in such a position and forsake the capital at such a time? In case of misfortune, you yourself, Sire, and the whole dynasty may be in danger."

The Emperor would not listen to any arguments, and declared firmly: "I know; I may perish, but I will save Russia."*

After the audience I sent a letter to the Emperor, once again repeating all my arguments and entreating him to revoke his decision.

On August 21 the joint Special Councils held their first sitting at the Palace, the first sitting after

* M. V. Rodzianko often recounted this scene, and his own feelings. He returned from Tsarskoe feeling quite ill and overpowered by the Emperor's insistence. He had a heart attack in consequence.

the Bill was passed by the Duma. The Emperor, who presided, delivered a very good speech. I replied on behalf of the Duma. On August 23 an Imperial order was published to the Army and Navy announcing the Emperor's decision to assume the supreme command. Many people were terrified by this act. Princess Z. N. Yusupoff came to us in tears and said to my wife: "This is dreadful. I feel it is the beginning of the end: it will bring us to revolution." Contrary to the general fears and expectations this change produced no particular impression in the Army. Perhaps it was mitigated by the fact that munitions were arriving in plenty and the army had a feeling of greater security.

The formation of the Progressive *bloc* in the Duma and the Council of the Empire, as well as the occasional speeches criticizing the policy of the Government, displeased Goremykin, and he began to impress the Emperor with the necessity of dissolving the Duma. Relations between the Duma and the Government became particularly strained after the Duma had accepted the bill for the creation of Special Councils attached to the ministries, widening its scope by its amendments, and passed to the bill for combating German aggression. This bill, as proposed by the Government, appeared to have been drafted with the purpose of discrediting the Duma. It was presented in such a form that the Duma was bound to reject it and consequently could be declared to be pro-German. To pass the bill as drafted by the Government was likewise impossible, since it was aimed mainly against the German settlers, i.e., small landowners, whom it was undesirable to irritate in war-time. Besides, the deportation of so large a number of settlers

would lead to a reduction of the area under cultivation in South Russia. Finally, no mention was made in the bill of engineers, factory directors and staff, important traders, bankers and other more influential Germans.

The Emperor left for the army, and the direction of internal affairs passed into the hands of the Empress. Ministers, particularly I. L. Goremykin, waited on her with reports, and an impression arose that she had secretly been made Regent. Soon after the Emperor's departure Goremykin went to the Stavka and secured the Emperor's consent to dissolve the Duma.

At a Cabinet meeting on August 27 Goremykin spoke of the necessity of dissolving the Duma, on the plea that it unsettled the public and impeded the work of government. The Duma meanwhile was busy debating a number of urgent questions directly bearing on the war, such as the Refugees Bill, German Aggression Bill, and others. The Cabinet disagreed with Goremykin, who was supported only by the Minister for Justice, Khvostoff. When Goremykin announced that he had already obtained the Emperor's provisional sanction to a dissolution, the Ministers proposed, in order not to cause too much irritation in the country, that a compromise should be arrived at; they should come to an agreement with the President of the Duma by which the latter would himself break off the sittings on the pretext that it was necessary for members to take part in the elections of the Zemstvo members of the Council of the Empire. But Goremykin refused any kind of compromise and, without warning, went to the Stavka again and brought back an ukase for the dissolution of the Duma. When he announced at the next meeting of

the Cabinet that he had in his possession an ukase for the dissolution of the Duma, the Ministers were indignant and rebuked him sharply for going to the Stavka on such an important matter without previously consulting them. Goremykin attempted to close the debate and end the sitting, and, failing to do this, he left the meeting and went away without taking leave of anyone. The Ministers, left without a president, decided to present their resignation in a body; Polivanoff and Scherbatoff offered to wait on the Emperor and transmit the written resignations of their colleagues, stating they all declined to serve with Goremykin.

In those days Goremykin almost daily sought inspiration at Tsarskoe from the Empress, who, with her entourage, was again wholly under Rasputin's influence. Goremykin's wife became an open follower of Rasputin and was not ashamed to avow it. On receiving the Ministers at the Stavka the Emperor took the petitions brought by Polivanoff and Scherbatoff, tore them in pieces and said: "This is childishness. I do not accept your resignations. As for Ivan Loginovitch,* I have confidence in him."

Scherbatoff and Polivanoff left the Stavka without having achieved anything, and Goremykin acquired greater power than before. On September 2 Goremykin telephoned me in the evening saying he had important business to discuss, but was too tired to come himself. That evening a good many members of the Duma had assembled at my flat, and were discussing the persistent rumours of Goremykin's intention to dissolve the Duma. This appeared so impossible and improbable that, on learning of our telephone conversation, the deputies expressed the belief that the Premier had probably asked me to call for the

* Goremykin.

purpose of refuting this rumour. Goremykin, however, at once staggered me by handing me the Imperial ukase.

"Here is the ukase for the prorogation of the session of the Duma," was his greeting: "you will read it to-morrow."

Feeling very angry, I retorted sharply:

"I am surprised that you should disturb me to transmit such unpleasant news; it could easily have been done by telephone."

Nothing more was said. Obviously Goremykin had purposely hurried on the prorogation of the Duma so as not to allow the members to come to an understanding, and to take advantage of the sharp and heated debates which might possibly take place to dissolve the Duma altogether. The deputies who awaited my return at my house were astounded and indignant. We decided to warn the party leaders at once and request their presence at the Duma at nine o'clock next morning instead of eleven.

I was at the Duma at eight in the morning. The Senioren-Convent was immediately called, at which full vent was given to the general indignation. Feeling ran very high, and some of the speeches were almost of a revolutionary character. Some went so far as to refuse to submit to the prorogation and demanded that we should proclaim ourselves a Constituent Assembly. It needed a great deal of eloquence and calmness to persuade the hotheads to curb their anger and not to ruin the Duma and the country by playing into Goremykin's hands. I was greatly helped by Dmitriukoff; the poor fellow actually fainted.* Fortunately, Miliukoff shared my view and promised to persuade his party to abtain from sharp utterances. I purposely retarded the opening of the plenary sitting

* Dmitriukoff shot himself shortly after the Revolution.

to let the indignation cool down in party discussions. I, myself, on learning of the ukase the evening before, had passed through a similar state of anger and indignation.

When I took the chair at eleven o'clock, there was such a hubbub in the hall as had never been heard there before; it was like a huge hive that had been disturbed. The excitement of the deputies had spread to the public in the gallery, where it was apparently expected that the Duma would lose its self-control, and sensational developments were anticipated. Officers in the gallery sat pale and anxious. It seemed as if the Duma could not but respond to the challenge and the insulting prorogation of its work at a time when it was occupied with important bills relating to the war.

The effect of perfect calm on the opening of the assembly was all the more impressive; the hubbub ceased, and in the midst of the tense silence the approach of a moment of tremendous import could plainly be felt. The reading of the ukase took place amid complete silence, and when, according to custom, I proclaimed "His Imperial Majesty—Hurrah!" the deputies cheered as loudly and loyally as ever and began slowly to disperse. The public, too, dispersed in silence; everyone suddenly seemed to feel a kind of assurance and realized that this has been the right course of action, and that the Government's petty desire to provoke agitation had failed because the Duma had shown itself to be above such provocation and given proof of statesmanship and wisdom.

Public bodies throughout the country behaved in a similar manner. The Lord Mayor of Moscow issued an appeal to factory workers urging them calmly to proceed with their work, so vitally necessary for the war. Zemstvos and Assemblies of the Nobility throughout Russia passed resolu-

tions appealing to the Emperor to listen to the voice of the nation and appoint a Cabinet endowed with firm authority and enjoying the country's confidence.

The key was set by the Assembly of Nobles of Moscow, which determined to send a delegation to the Stavka to wait on the Sovereign. Unfortunately the Emperor refused to receive them. It seemed as if all Russia was imploring the Emperor for one and the same thing, and that it was impossible not to understand and ignore the appeal of the suffering country. I sent a report to the Stavka in which I endeavoured to prove the necessity of removing Goremykin and listening to the voice of the nation, which had sacrificed so much and deserved to be heard.

Persons were found, however, who hastened to weaken the impression produced by this unanimous impulse. The president of the United Nobility, Strukoff, wrote to the Emperor a letter, in the name of what purported to be the whole nobility, alleging that the situation was not as bad as was represented by certain groups, affirming the nation's confidence in the Government and the whole nobility's readiness to lay down their lives and devote their energies to fulfilling the will of those whom the Emperor had entrusted with authority. For some time this letter remained unknown to the public, and when at last it was circulated and the Assemblies of Nobles began to discuss it and censured Strukoff's action, it was already too late. The resolution of loyal subjects petitioning for a firm Government composed of persons enjoying public confidence was represented by Strukoff as a revolutionary act, and subsequent explanations of the nobles that Strukoff had acted without authority were disregarded.

Instead of persons enjoying the confidence of the

nation being summoned to form a Government, the two popular Ministers, Samarin and Scherbatoff, were compelled to resign, while the next session of the Duma was repeatedly adjourned. Samarin's resignation was due to the following incident. Barnabas, Bishop of Tobolsk, had discovered in his diocese the relics of a certain John, and without waiting for him to be canonized by the Synod, held services in his honour as a saint. On Samarin's motion the Synod inquired into the case and resolved that Bishop Barnabas should be summoned to Petrograd to explain himself. Barnabas arrived and attended the sitting of the Synod, but declined to give explanations, saying tersely: "I've nothing to tell you." He quitted the assembly forthwith and disappeared, so that for a long time nothing was known of his whereabouts. During that time Barnabas lived at the flat of Prince Andronikoff, one of Rasputin's friends.

Samarin wanted to raise a fresh point concerning the bishop's disobedience to the Synod and deprive him of his rank, but the Synod was given to understand that Barnabas was to be left alone. The latter meanwhile produced an autograph letter from the Emperor authorizing the offering of special prayers to Saint John and the holding of services in his honour—a proceeding in direct contradiction to all canonical regulations. Samarin then waited on the Emperor at Tsarskoe Selo to present a detailed report on the case. As the written report was very long, Samarin asked whether the Emperor would not prefer a verbal summary. By way of an an answer the Emperor reminded him that he, Samarin, was due at a Cabinet meeting, and said he would keep the report to read at leisure. Samarin left and arrived at the meeting of the Cabinet, but before he had time to take part in it, was called aside by Goremykin, who handed him a

letter from the Emperor in which he was instructed to inform Samarin of his dismissal from the post of High Procurator of the Synod.

Samarin left for Moscow. There he was given a triumphant welcome at the Assembly of the Nobles then in session and universally acclaimed. The Minister of the Interior, Prince Scherbatoff, resigned of his own free will soon after Samarin. He frankly admitted that he was utterly sick of the everlasting intrigues which prevented any useful work.

Samarin was succeeded by Volgin, a man scarcely above the commonplace, while Khvostoff, an extremely conservative member of the Duma, was appointed in place of Scherbatoff. In an interview with the representatives of the Press he announced his desire to win public confidence, and launched a campaign against the high cost of living. He went to Moscow, organized the unloading of goods trucks with the help of the garrison, made a great fuss and got himself talked about, and at first appeared to have done something. He was exceedingly cordial to me, called frequently, and among other things alluded to his campaign against Rasputin. He urged that the latter should be fought with his own weapons, and for that object wished to introduce a monk named Mardary into the Palace. He thought the best way to render Rasputin harmless was continually to intoxicate him, for which purpose he, Khvostoff, had already advanced 5,000 roubles from his own private resources.

By this time a shortage of various commodities had begun to be felt in the towns, owing partly to the great number of refugees, but more often to the Government's inefficiency. To combat the high

cost of living fixed wholesale and retail prices were introduced, but as these were below market prices, the traders, to avoid losses, either concealed the goods or sold them surreptitiously. The disorder on the railways, particularly the abhorrent system of bribery, served to raise prices still higher. The overhead charges for transport frequently exceeded the value of the goods transported. A. F. Trepoff, who succeeded Rukhloff as Minister for Ways and Communications, only increased the muddle, because, as he owned himself, he had never had anything to do with transport.

As a result Petrograd was threatened with famine. The Government then decided to suspend all passenger traffic between Moscow and Petrograd for six days in order to rush goods trains to the capital. This measure, however, had little effect, as no one had thought of organizing an increased transport of supplies from other districts to Moscow. Passenger traffic was stopped, but the goods trucks returned from Moscow half empty. It might almost have been thought that instead of really doing something, the Ministers merely wanted to make a show of their zeal.

Meanwhile the Special Council was hard at work organizing the war supplies, and important results had already been achieved. Both the Zemstvos and the war industries committees rendered valuable assistance, and despite the Government's obstruction, the supply of munitions and other necessaries increased daily. An event occurred at that time in the Special Council which clearly revealed the disastrous influence of irresponsible persons even in the matter of war supplies. One of the largest munition factories was the Putiloff works in Petrograd. The chief shareholder, Putiloff, who was also manager of the Russo-Asiatic Bank, wishing to obtain a State subsidy of

36,000,000 roubles, resorted to the following manœuvre. The Russo-Asiatic Bank refused further credits to the Putiloff works. The board then applied to the Government asking for a subsidy and threatening to close the works if it did not get it. As the works were producing munitions and other war material, it was reasonable to expect that the subsidy would be granted, even to the amount of 36,000,000 roubles. The whole intrigue was perfectly clear to all well-informed persons.

Instead of a subsidy being granted, I proposed that the works should be commandeered. A resolution to that effect was passed almost unanimously by the Special Council, but, quite unexpectedly, an Imperial order was received to revise the case. This was done with the help of Rasputin, with whom Putiloff was on good terms. At the next Council meeting, all the members of the Government voted against the commandeering, one of them, Admiral Giers, openly saying, "I was ordered to vote against it." The votes of the members of the Duma and the Council of the Empire were divided. The best and firmest among them were unfortunately absent "for worthy reasons." The proposal that the works should be commandeered was rejected. I found myself almost alone; the power of gold was against me.

The case of the Putiloff works was not unique. The Special Council was continually in collision with the influence of irresponsible persons, who put obstacles in its way.

At the beginning of the war a special committee was formed in London to deal with all orders for war supplies abroad. This committee included a number of business men, both British and Russian, and was at first presided over by the Grand Duke Mikhail Mikhailovitch and later by General Hermonius. Before the Special Council was created

this committee's activities were controlled by no one. At the time of its formation the British Government had stipulated that all our orders for war supplies abroad should be given through that committee, thus preventing us from being masters of the situation and making us dependent on the arbitrary discretion of British business men. Orders placed in America were never punctually executed, which gave rise to continual and unexpected complications and negotiations. The ships which carried the supplies to Archangel had to be convoyed by British cruisers as a safeguard against the attacks of German submarines. The next step was that the British proposed to take over our entire mercantile marine on the pretext of convenience and unity of command. Had this been agreed to, we should have renounced our mercantile marine and placed ourselves in heavy bondage to the British. General Headquarters had agreed to such an arrangement. I raised the question at the meeting of the Special Council on January 2, 1916, proving that an agreement of the kind could not be concluded without the knowledge of the Special Council. My motion was seconded only by Gurko, the rest of the members stood aloof, probably because the motion would be contrary to the wishes of the Emperor.

After the meeting I was visited by the British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, and the Military Attaché, General Knox. I told them frankly that the British were taking advantage of our difficulties and forcing the Emperor's consent to a transaction obviously detrimental to Russian interests. "This is blackmail," I said; "it is unworthy of a great nation and an Ally. The Russian people will not tolerate such a humiliation, and it will have to be spoken of from the tribune of the Duma." I repeated these arguments at my

next audience with the Emperor. The British ceased their insistence, and the matter sank into oblivion. At the same time, Grigorovitch, foreseeing complications with England, had entered into negotiations with Japan. These were crowned with success, and on the payment of their expenses for repairs the Japanese Government returned to us the warships *Variag*, *Peresviet* and *Poltava*, sunk during the Japanese war. After a long voyage round Africa, which was kept strictly secret, these ships reached Archangel, and we obtained our own convoys for our merchant ships.

The ukase which prorogued the Duma had mentioned November as the latest date for the re-opening of the session; Goremykin's attitude, however, lent colour to the persistent rumours that the date of its meeting was quite problematic. As a matter of fact November was nearly over, and nothing as yet heard of the re-opening. The work of the Budget Commission was in full swing. Deputies were restless and asked me to make the actual situation clear. At my audience with the Emperor I spoke again of Goremykin, of how he handicapped all work, impeded activity in the rear; I mentioned the activities of the bankers in the matter of war supplies from the factories. When I asked that the summoning of the Duma should be accelerated. The Emperor replied: "Yes, all right, I will speak of it to Ivan Loginovitch."

Not half an hour after my return from Tsarskoe Selo, I received an Imperial rescript. In this document, addressed to the President of the Duma, mention was made of the efficient work of the Budget Commission, and it was stated that on the termination of this work a report would be made by the President of the Duma and the legislative

chambers would be convened. This letter placed me in an absolute quandary. The work of the Budget Commission always proceeded parallel to that of the plenary sitting of the Duma, and the re-opening of the session in no way depended on the termination of the work of the Commission. The Imperial letter had followed on my audience with the Emperor, and the impression it made was as if some compromise had been reached. As a matter of fact it was another ruse on the part of Goremykin, who wanted to lower the prestige of the President of the Duma in the eyes of the representatives of the people. The deputies were, of course, surprised, but it is doubtful whether anyone believed that the postponement of the session had taken place with my consent. At the same time rumours were circulated that the President of the Duma was about to receive some high honour. These rumours were justified, and on December 6* I learnt I had received the Order of St. Anne, first class. It should be mentioned that prior to this the Minister of War, Polivanoff, had, without my knowledge, sent my name in for a decoration in view of my special services for the army, but his petition was refused. The present honour was obviously conferred to emphasize my supposed compliance in the question of the summoning of the Duma. In order to leave no doubt that the honour conferred did not concern my work in the Special Council, the ukase stated that the Order was conferred on the "Warden of the Novomoskovskaia Gymnasium for Boys," i.e., not on the President of the Duma.

* The feast of St. Nicholas—the Emperor's name day.

CHAPTER XI

Strikes—The Inventor Bratoliuboff and Mme. Brasova—Letter to Goremykin—The Maid of Honour M. A. Vasilchikova.

AFFAIRS in the country were going from bad to worse. Profiteering, bribery and other abuses were flourishing on an unprecedented scale. In the towns prices were soaring up owing to the disorganization of transport. Strikes began to occur at the munition factories, followed by arrests, mainly of those workmen who were in favour of order and opposed to the stoppages.

I visited the Putiloff works with some of the members of the Duma to see how orders were being executed and attempt to parley with the men. The workmen listened most attentively to what we said, were perfectly frank with us, and urged that the strike was not in the least a political one, but was entirely due to the discrepancy between the wages and the rise in the cost of living. After I had had a talk with the board of managers, the workmen's claims were satisfied, but soon afterwards the men who had spoken with us were arrested. These arrests led to further unrest, and it was only after insistent pressure on our part that the workmen were released.

The Bratoliuboff affair came to light about December of the same year. A certain Bratoliuboff approached the Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch, alleging that he had invented an apparatus for throwing inflammable liquid from a long distance. In order to construct this apparatus special plant was needed, which, he alleged, had to be brought over from America. For this purpose the

inventor claimed a subsidy of 30,000,000 roubles. Having secured the patronage of Mme. Brasova (the Grand Duke's morganatic wife), Bratoliuboff succeeded in gaining an influence over Mikhail Alexandrovitch. The latter went to the Emperor and persuaded him to sign a rescript in the name of the Grand Duke, authorizing Bratoliuboff to draw the desired sum by instalments from the State Bank. Tests of the new apparatus were arranged at the Grand Duke's wish. The results proved highly unsatisfactory; the inflammable liquid could not be projected to any distance, but the five soldiers who manned the apparatus received fatal injuries.

Lukomsky, the Assistant Minister for War, reported this affair to Polivanoff. Polivanoff hastened to explain to the Grand Duke that all grants for war orders had to be passed through the Special Council and the Minister for War. The Grand Duke admitted his error, apologized with the greatest sincerity and called immediately on the Emperor, after which steps were taken to prevent Bratoliuboff from cashing the draft. It turned out, however, that this bold inventor had already called at the bank, and, when doubt was expressed there as to the validity of his claim, produced a photograph of the rescripts addressed to the Grand Duke. The bank then advanced about 2,000,000 roubles.

It transpired later that this Bratoliuboff was backed by a gang of profiteers who were aiming at enriching themselves at the expense of the State. Bratoliuboff was exposed, but Lukomsky was soon dismissed from the post of Assistant Minister for War. According to reliable information his discharge was due to his part in the Bratoliuboff affair.

Prince Lvoff, president of the All-Russian

Zemstvo Union, arrived in Petrograd at the beginning of December. He called on me and sat till three o'clock in the morning talking of affairs in Moscow, where public feeling was taking a distinctly revolutionary turn. The most well-intentioned people spoke openly of the Government's corruption and did not scruple to lay all the blame on the Emperor and Empress.

At this very time General Russky was recalled from the front and removed from active participation in the war. No one believed in his alleged illness, and all were certain that he owed his disgrace to the influence of the German party, which resented his stern measures in the Baltic provinces. General Plehve was appointed in his stead.

Public indignation was growing against Goremykin, who was held responsible for the general confusion and who, whenever he was asked any question in connection with the war, invariably replied: "The war does not concern me. It is the War Minister's business."

Petitions and persuasions addressed to the Emperor with the object of securing Goremykin's removal had no effect. After my interview with Prince Lvoff, and under the impression produced by instances of appalling disorder in the interior of the country quoted at a meeting of the Special Council, I determined to write personally to Goremykin. I wrote at once, during the meeting, as follows:

"DEAR IVAN LOGINOVITCH,

"I am writing under the impression of what I have just heard at to-day's meeting of the Special Council concerning the catastrophic state of the railway transport. This question had already been raised by the members of the first Special Council and a commission formed to deal with the matter, but its work was confined to talk, references and estimates, and the

catastrophe which was then merely foreshadowed has now become a reality.

"The President of the Special Council has doubtless informed you of conditions in the munition factories, where a stoppage is imminent, and also of the prospect of a famine with which the population of Petrograd is menaced, and which may lead to unrest and consequent disorders.

"Both I myself and the members of the Special Council are fully persuaded that our country is heading for ruin owing to the Government's apathy and complete lack of initiative in taking the steps necessary to avert the terrible calamities which are approaching. I consider it the bounden duty of the Council of Ministers, of which you are President, immediately to give proof of that solicitude for the destinies of Russia which, as a body of statesmen, it is its duty to show. A year ago the members of the Special Council had already foreseen what is happening now, and you, Ivan Loginovitch, cannot deny that I myself have warned you more than once. The only answer, however, that I ever got from you was that this was no concern of yours and that you could not interfere in matters concerning the war.

"Such answers are now inadmissible. The fatal end of the war is approaching, but a general disintegration in all branches of our national life, coupled with a lack of essential commodities, is growing in the rear of our national armies. The victorious spirit of the people and their faith in their own powers are being crushed by the inactivity of the Government.

"Your paramount duty is, without losing a moment, to manifest at last the greatest zeal to remove all obstacles from the path to victory.

"I beg definitely to state that we, the members of the Imperial Duma, possess a merely consultative voice, and cannot, therefore, be held responsible for the inevitable and imminent collapse.

"If the Council of Ministers fails to take such steps as may yet save our country from disgrace and humiliation, the entire responsibility will rest upon you. If you, Ivan Loginovitch, feel that you lack strength to bear this heavy burden, and to use all available means to help the country to emerge on to the high road to victory—have the courage to own this and make way for younger and more energetic men.

> "The decisive hour has struck; events, stern and inexorable, are drawing near, pregnant with consequences which may prove fatal to Russia's honour and dignity. Do not tarry, I earnestly beg of you—the Fatherland is in danger."

I read this letter, before sending it, to members of the Duma, who approved of its contents, and it was despatched to the Prime Minister. One of the members, without my knowledge, made a copy of it, which was circulated in Petrograd, and people spoke of it to me everywhere. On receipt of the letter Goremykin read it to the members of the Cabinet, and resenting its "harsh tone," declared that he would inform the Emperor of its contents.

After receiving the name-day honours I solicited an audience from the Emperor, but he replied that he was leaving for the southern front and would see me in three weeks' time. The audience took place at the end of December. The work of the Budget Commission was terminated, and the deputies insisted on the Duma being convened. In spite of the approaching Christmas holidays I despatched a report on the work of the Commission and again solicited an audience. This time my request was gratified. I proffered my thanks for the honours received, urged the necessity of immediately convening the Duma, spoke of the depressing effect produced by the recent congress of the ultra-Conservatives and, wishing to avoid misrepresentations, showed the letter I had written to Goremykin.

To all this no definite reply was vouchsafed.

In addition to all the disquieting events which caused unrest to spread among the people, persistent rumours began to be circulated of Germany's offer of a separate peace and of alleged

secret parleys to that effect. This appeared all the more probable seeing that early in September I received from M. A. Vasilchikova, maid of honour to the Empresses, then in Austria, a very strange letter urging me to promote the cause of peace between the belligerent countries. The letter was written in incorrect Russian and made the impression of having been translated from the German. The envelope bore neither stamp nor postmark, and had been delivered by some stranger. Similar letters—seven in all—had been sent to the Emperor, the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth,* A. D. Samarin, Prince A. M. Golitzyn and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sazonoff. I immediately communicated this letter to the last-named, who replied that he had received a similar one himself, as had also the Emperor. He advised me, as he had advised the Emperor, to throw it in the waste-paper basket. I could not but ask Sazonoff how he could tolerate that Mlle. Vasilchikova should retain her Court rank.

To everyone's surprise M. A. Vasilchikova made her appearance in Petrograd in December. At Tornea she was met by a special courier, and rooms were reserved for her at the Astoria Hotel. This I learnt from Sazonoff, who added that he thought all this was done by order from Tsarskoe Selo. In Petrograd, Mlle. Vasilchikova was boycotted by all her former friends. On the other hand she paid frequent visits to Tsarskoe, where she was received, though this fact was kept secret. When, in connection with current rumours, the question of a separate peace was raised in the Budget Commission, the Minister of the Interior, Khvostoff, stated that such rumours were actually being circulated by unknown persons, that the question had never been discussed by the Government, and

* Sister of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna.

that had the contrary been the case he would not have remained at his post for a moment. After this I thought it necessary to read Mlle. Vasilchikova's letter to the members of the Commission and mention the fact of her arrival in Petrograd. Khvostoff, looking extremely ill at ease, was obliged to own that she had actually stayed in Petrograd, but that by then she had been deported. Khvostoff told me privately after the sitting that the day after her arrival Mlle. Vasilchikova went to Tsarskoe (to see whom he did not say), and how he had himself searched her rooms at the Astoria. He found, among other things, a letter addressed to her from the Emperor Francis Joseph and other documents testifying to her having visited the Kaiser at Potsdam, received instructions from the Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, concerning her activities in Petrograd, and stayed for a month with the Duke of Hesse, from whom she brought two letters to his sisters—the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna and the Grand Duchess Elizabeth. The Grand Duchess returned hers unopened. This we learnt from her mistress of the household, Countess Olsufieff.

The Emperor, it was said, was seriously displeased by Mlle. Vasilchikova's sudden arrival, and ordered her to be banished to Solvychegodsk.* Instead of this Mlle. Vasilchikova lived unmolested on the estate of her sister, Mme. Miloradovitch, in the province of Tchernigoff.

* A remote town in north-eastern Russia.

CHAPTER XII

The Metropolitan Pitirim and Sturmer—The Emperor in the Duma—Bad Meat and Food Shortage—Arrival of MM. Viviani and Thomas—The Prime Minister's Dinner—Russian Parliamentary Delegation—A Dictatorship Scheme.

On January 14, 1916, Mgr. Pitirim, the newly-appointed Metropolitan of Petrograd, notified me by telephone of his desire to call on the President of the Duma. Pitirim, after occupying episcopal sees in various provinces, later became Exarch of Georgia and finally, through Rasputin, succeeded in gaining the confidence of the Empress and was appointed Metropolitan of Petrograd in succession to Mgr. Vladimir. He was a notorious intriguer, and very circumstantial rumours were current regarding his morality. He at once began to play a part in public life; Ministers visited him, his opinions were quoted, and his name recurred continually in the Press. He found time to visit the Emperor at the Stavka and, according to the papers, was there entrusted with a message to the President of the Duma concerning the date for the reopening of the House.

The Metropolitan arrived at my flat accompanied by the priest Nemertzaloff, a member of the Duma, whom he had obviously brought to be a witness of our interview, and launched at once into politics.

"I come to express my admiration of your Excellency's letter to the Prime Minister Goremykin. I must tell you that its contents are known at the Stavka."

"That is no news to me, Vladiko; I myself submitted a copy of it to his Majesty."

Pitirim here remarked soothingly:

"Ivan Loginovitch will not stay long; he is too old. His post will probably be filled by Sturmer."

"Yes, so I heard. But it is doubtful whether this will mean any change. Moreover, a German name has a noxious ring nowadays."

"He will change his name to Panin."

"Such a deception will satisfy no one. . . You remember, Vladiko, the saying about a 'baptized Jew,' and so on?"

Pitirim began talking about the Duma, and tried to convince me of his desire to come to an understanding and work shoulder to shoulder with the representatives of the people. This, I remarked, was hardly possible, as beyond the Budget Estimates of the Holy Synod there was no point of contact between the Duma and the Metropolitan.

The Metropolitan apparently felt rather ill at ease and kept glancing to Nemertzaloff. Our conversation drifted to Church reform, and I said frankly:

"Reform is absolutely necessary. If you, Vladiko, wish to earn the gratitude of the Russian people, you must spare no effort to purify the Orthodox Church from the pernicious influence of the *khlysty* and the interference of the enemies of Orthodoxy. Rasputin and men like him must be expelled, and your own name cleared from the opprobrium of being looked upon as a nominee of Rasputin."

"Who told you that?" asked Pitirim, turning pale; and, as if cross-examining me, he inquired whether I had ever spoken of Rasputin to the Emperor.

"Yes, many a time. . . As for you, Vladiko, your very looks betray you."

I could see by his face that the Metropolitan

disbelieved me. Our conversation dropped at this point, and we parted.

Pitirim's words came true; Goremykin resigned and was succeeded by Sturmer, whose appointment roused universal indignation. Those who had known him before had no respect for him, while his German name, coupled with the rumours of a separate peace, made an unfavourable impression on the population generally. His appointment was regarded by all as further proof of Rasputin's influence over the Empress and as a direct challenge to public opinion.

The opening of the Duma was fixed for February 9. Rumours were current that members belonging to the Extreme Right intended to create a disturbance which would necessitate the sitting being brought to a close. Our relations with the new Ministers were still uncertain. Contrary to the custom by which newly-appointed Premiers paid a call on the presidents of the legislative chambers, Sturmer made an attempt to send for me by telephone, but was told that the President of the Duma was waiting for him at home. Sturmer called at once and bore himself obsequiously.

The glad news of the capture of Erzerum from the Turks was received on February 4. This splendid victory was entirely due to General Yudenitch, who, contrary to orders from G.H.Q., took the fortress by assault. This military success cleared the air and facilitated a reconciliation between the members of the Duma and the Government.

The Allied ambassadors and numerous foreigners engaged in providing war supplies plied me with questions, being anxious to know what truth there was in the rumours of a final dissolution of the Duma. These rumours had alarmed them exceedingly. Something had to be done to dissipate these

rumours, raise the moral of the nation and pacify public opinion. I thought it absolutely necessary that the Emperor should be persuaded to pay a visit to the Duma. The strained relations between the representatives of the people and the Government might lead to undesirable demonstrations from both Right and Left, which it would be difficult to avert, while the Emperor's presence in the Duma would disarm both factions.

But who could persuade the Tsar to take such a step? The first thing to be done was to approach Sturmer and extract from him a promise not to hinder or dissuade the Emperor. Sturmer, a true bureaucrat at heart, was horrified at the mere idea, but nevertheless promised not to interfere, particularly after I explained to him the personal advantage to himself: the public might think that the brilliant suggestion had come to the Emperor from the new Premier. I next decided to seek the aid of a certain Klopoff, an old patriot and idealist, whom the Emperor had known and been fond of for years, and who had access to his person. Klopoff also used to visit me. He consented to my request and wrote a letter to the Emperor setting forth the arguments in favour of a visit to the Duma. He soon received the following reply:

"Lord, give Thy blessing. Nicholas."

On February 9, half an hour before the opening of the Duma, Sturmer arrived with the announcement that the Emperor would come to the Duma direct from the Stavka. The Senioren-Convent was immediately assembled to hear the good news, which created joyful surprise among the members irrespective of parties, Everyone wished to take it as a good omen for the future. It was decided to treat this important event in the history of the Duma with all the solemnity due to the occasion. An intimation of the Imperial visit, together with an

invitation to attend the solemn Te Deum, was sent to the ambassadors of the Allied Powers. The news spread rapidly through the town, and people repeated joyfully: "The Emperor is in the Duma . . . Thank God, now there will be a change for the better." The Duma staff were besieged for permits to attend the sitting, and the gallery was packed with spectators as never before.

It is interesting to note that the evening before the priest Nemertzaloff came to my room with a message from the Metropolitan Pitirim informing me of his desire to celebrate the Te Deum at the opening of the Duma. He was told that there existed a Duma chaplain and assistant clergy who enjoyed universal respect, and that there was no reason to alter the customary procedure.

All the members of the Duma were in attendance. The representatives of the Allied Powers, members of the Council of the Empire and senators were assembled in the Catherine Hall. The President of the Duma, with his two deputies, met the Emperor in the porch. The Emperor arrived in a car with the Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch and Count Fredericks. After an exchange of greetings the Emperor passed into the Catherine Hall amid prolonged cheers. He was met by the officiating clergy and kissed the cross. The Emperor was deadly pale and his hands were trembling with agitation. The Te Deum was intoned; the choir sang beautifully, the whole atmosphere was imbued with reverence and solemnity. The members of the Duma and even spectators in the gallery joined in singing: "Lord, save Thy people." This impressive spectacle appeared to quiet the Emperor's agitation, and the strained look on his face gave way to one of calm satisfaction. When the deacon proclaimed: "May all who have laid down their lives on the

field of battle be in everlasting remembrance," the Sovereign knelt, followed by all the people.

After the Te Deum the Emperor came up to me, his eyes full of tears.

"Mikhail Vladimirovitch, I should like to say a few words to the members of the Duma. Shall I speak here, do you think, or in some other place?"

"I think this is the best place, your Majesty."

"Then order the lectern to be removed, please."

After conversing for a few minutes with the Allied ambassadors, the Emperor turned to the deputies who crowded around him. His speech, delivered in a firm, clear voice, made a good impression, and thundering "hurrahs" were the reply to the gracious words of the Sovereign.*

The national anthem was then sung by the assembly, and after a short address of welcome by the President of the Duma, the Emperor passed through a side door into the assembly hall. The deputies, entering through a door at the back, had by this time filled the hall, and the Emperor was again greeted with long and continuous cheers. He examined everything with interest, asked how the seats were allotted to the various parties, entered his name in the "golden" visitors' book lying in the semi-circular hall, and passed on.

I took advantage of our being alone at some distance from the rest to draw the Emperor's attention to the enthusiasm displayed by the members of the Duma.

"Your Majesty," I said, "do make the most of this joyous occasion and proclaim here, at once, your will to grant a responsible Ministry. You cannot fathom the full magnitude of an act which will have the beneficent effect of pacifying the country and bringing the war to a victorious end.

* This speech was completely distorted by the Court censorship.

By doing so you will write a page of gold in the history of your reign."

After a short silence the Emperor said:

"I will think it over."

We were passing the doors leading to the Ministerial pavilion.

"What is that?" the Emperor asked.

"The Ministers' rooms, your Majesty, and the further you keep away from them the better."

The Emperor did not enter the pavilion.

After addressing a few cordial words to the members of the Duma staff, the Emperor, surrounded by a crowd of deputies, moved towards the doors. Before leaving he repeatedly thanked the deputies for their welcome, and, turning to me, said:

"This has all been very pleasant. This is a day I shall never forget."

Everyone flocked to the porch, and the Imperial car drove off amid thundering cheers from the deputies, which were taken up by the crowds who lined the street and greeted the Emperor with enthusiasm.

The Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch remained in the Imperial box till the Duma rose for the day. The same evening the Emperor drove to the Council of the Empire. There everything passed off in an atmosphere of cold officialdom, and the enthusiasm and solemnity which attended the reception at the Duma were entirely lacking. The contrast was so marked that it excited general comment.

The Government statement, read out by Sturmer after the Emperor's departure, was a most depressing document. His rendering of it was very indistinct, and the long-winded and incoherent phrases contained no indication of the Government's intentions. The Prime Minister left the tribune amid dead silence, and only a few members

on the Extreme Right wing tried to applaud. From the very outset Sturmer revealed himself as an utter nonentity, and soon became the object of Purishkevitch's witticisms and raillery. It was then that he launched his famous bon-mot on the "Ministers' leap-frog," and nicknamed Sturmer a "*Kivatch** of eloquence," comparing him with Tchichikoff, the hero of Gogol's novel *Dead Sòuls*, who, after calling on all the dignitaries of the town, sat long in his gig pondering whom else to visit. The comparison was most appropriate, as from the time of his appointment Sturmer had been making a ceaseless round of the Ministries and delivering speeches.

The Minister for War, Polivanoff, received an ovation, and his businesslike and comprehensive speech was attentively listened to. An equally cordial reception was vouchsafed by the Duma to Sazonoff and Grigorovitch. The sitting closed with a resolution read out on behalf of the Progressive *bloc*, expressing the desire for the appointment of a Government enjoying the confidence of the nation, which would assist in organizing the country for decisive victory, re-establish order at home, and arraign all those who were to blame for our misfortunes at the front. This statement was couched in firm language, such as would compel the Government to listen to the voice of the nation.

The debates that followed were carried on in a similar strain; many speeches contained demands for Sukhomlinoff's prosecution. The most forcible were those of V. Bobrinsky, Maklakoff and Polovtzeff. The latter, after speaking of Miasoiedoff and the Minister for War and saying that the former had obtained his due, ended his speech with the following words: "But where is the criminal who deceived us all by his false assurances of our seem-

* A waterfall in Northern Russia.

ing preparedness for this terrible war; who by so doing has torn the laurels from the brow of our gallant army and trampled them in the mire of treachery and spoliation; who placed himself between the avenging sword of justice and the traitor Miasoiedoff? It was he, the Minister for War, who staked his head on Miasoiedoff's innocence. Miasoiedoff was executed, but where is the head of his patron? On shoulders adorned with the Imperial insignia."*

Our Allies took due note of the importance of the Emperor's visit to the Duma, and telegrams of congratulation were received from the British House of Commons and the French Chamber of Deputies, testifying that the Imperial visit was interpreted as a token of the Tsar's union with his people and as a menace to Germany, which had been building hopes on our internal dissensions. The whole of the Imperial Family approved of the Emperor's act. The Empress alone was displeased; prompted by her evil genius, she had harshly protested against her consort's decision.

A few days before the reopening of the Duma, a rumour was spread that Rasputin had been murdered at the restaurant "Villa Rode." Everyone rejoiced, but it turned out that he had only been badly mauled. It became known later that Sturmer had ordered Rasputin to be guarded as if he were a member of the Imperial Family, and, without Polivanoff's knowledge, placed four military cars at his disposal. Khvostoff boasted that he had arranged that Rasputin should be systematically poisoned with drink; but already the feeling was in the air that Khvostoff's days were numbered, that the Empress and Sturmer were giving him the cold shoulder and wished to replace him by his

* The A.D.C.'s to the Emperor wore his initials on their shoulder straps.

Assistant Minister Bieletsky, who was on intimate terms with Rasputin and directly responsible for his safety. To avoid the humiliation of a dismissal Khvostoff, as he admitted, handed in his resignation. The Emperor refused to accept it. But after Rasputin's adventure at the "Villa Rode," and the exposure of a tangled affair concerning the mission of a certain Rzhevsky, who was sent to purchase documents from Iliodor, both Khvostoff and Bieletsky were dismissed.

I heard later from M. Bakhmetieff, an engineer back from America, of what had appeared in the American Press concerning Iliodor, who had sold to the *American Magazine* the letters of the Empress he had wrested from Rasputin.

Our ambassador had endeavoured to repurchase these documents but failed, and lost 10,000 roubles he had paid out.

The Government by its actions did its best to dispel the favourable impression made by the Emperor's visit to the Duma. It continued the old policy, or rather the old disintegration. Within the Duma itself the members of the Extreme Right raised their heads. Markoff II permitted himself coarse sallies against public organizations, which he accused of spreading unrest and profiteering. Such accusations were of course flung at random, unsupported by facts or evidence, and with the sole object of sowing dissension and mistrust of these bodies. These members were dissatisfied with the congress held by the ultra-Conservatives at Nizhni-Novgorod, and started preparations for another one, for which they intended to enlist the help of the clergy and peasants. The chief promoter of this scheme was Stcheglovitoff, late Minister for Justice, and the necessary funds were liberally pro-

vided for by the Government. At the same time rumours of a forthcoming dissolution of the Duma and of fresh changes in the Government still persisted.

Taking advantage of the Emperor's arrival at Tsarskoe Selo, I asked for an audience and was received on February 24, 1916. The audience lasted an hour and a half. I spoke of everything with complete frankness, of the intrigues of the Ministers, who, aided by Rasputin, ousted one another; of the continuous absence of a firm policy, of the widespread abuse and contempt of public opinion and the nation's feelings. There would come a limit to all patience, I added. I mentioned the exploits of D. Rubinstein, Manus and other heroes of the rear, their connection with Rasputin, the orgies and debauchery of Rasputin himself. His proximity to the Emperor and the Imperial family, and the influence he exercised on important affairs of State were, I said, the despair of all honest men. Rasputin's role as a German agent was now also no longer open to doubt.

"Had your Majesty's Ministers," I said, "been men of independent views, whose sole aim was the good of the country, Rasputin's presence would not have really mattered. The evil lies in the fact that the members of the Government owe their posts to him and involve him in their mutual intrigues. I find myself once again obliged to submit to your Majesty that this cannot go on much longer. No one tries to open your eyes with regard to the part played by this disreputable *starets*. His presence at the Imperial Court undermines the nation's confidence in the Crown; it may have fatal consequences for the fate of the dynasty, and turn the hearts of your subjects against their Sovereign."

All these unpleasant home truths were heard by the Emperor in silence, with occasional marks of surprise. His demeanour, however, remained gracious and affable throughout. When I interrupted my report, he turned to me with the question:

"What, do you think, will be the end of the war? Shall we win?"

I replied that the army and the people could be fully trusted, but that the war was being protracted and victory delayed through the incompetence of the higher command and the bad policy pursued at home.

This report apparently made some impression: on February 27 an order was issued for Rasputin's deportation to Tobolsk.

A few days later, on the demand of the Empress, the order was countermanded.

On March 1 Imperial sanction was obtained for the bringing of Sukhomlinoff's case before the First Department of the Senate with a view to deciding the question of his criminal prosecution. On signing the warrant the Emperor remarked: "The sacrifice has to be made."

Three weeks later, the First Department issued a resolution ordering a preliminary inquiry into the case to be held, and personal detention to be applied to General Sukhomlinoff, in conformity with the act of indictment. This decision was reported by the chief criminal investigator to the Minister for Justice, who gave his consent to Sukhomlinoff's arrest. The ex-Minister for War was imprisoned in the Alexeievsky ravelin in the fortress of Peter and Paul. His wife, who had played such an important part in all his voluntary and involuntary connections with persons convicted of espionage, not only remained at liberty but was allowed interviews with her husband. She obtained,

through Rasputin, an audience of the Empress, and thenceforward enjoyed her patronage.

On March 3, the Minister of the Interior, Khvostoff, who had broken his neck in combating Rasputin's clique, was dismissed from his post.

Strikes went on at the factories, causing great apprehension both at home and at the front. General Alexeieff wrote me that the arrival of supplies for the army was disorganized. Again there was a shortage of boots, and a complete stoppage in the supply of munitions also was feared. The troops on the northern front, nearest to the capital, were suffering from scurvy, due to malnutrition.

The question concerning the commandeering of the Putiloff works was at last dealt with by the Special Council. Not an audience passed with the Emperor but I reminded him of the necessity for revising the incorrect decision. As soon as the works were commandeered, the old members of the board were removed and replaced by competent and trustworthy men. The workers, who were made military conscripts, were thus deprived of the right to strike.

On March 15, the Minister for War, Polivanoff, was dismissed from his post without an Imperial rescript.* He had just returned from the Stavka, where he had been graciously received by the Emperor; the intimation that he was relieved of his office came as a complete surprise both to himself and to everyone else. The explanation was sought in the commandeering of the Putiloff factory, or in the charge brought against Polivanoff of having inspired the alleged political resolutions of the war industries' committee. Polivanoff's own explanation was far simpler: he had ordered the four military cars given to Rasputin by Sturmer to be

* A sign of disgrace.

taken away. The Empress, who had always mistrusted him, heard of this and insisted on his dismissal. Shortly before this Polivanoff had said: "I now see how to bring order into our military affairs after the Sukhomlinoff chaos and win the war."

The news of Polivanoff's downfall was received with profound consternation. The Press was lavish in its praises of the late Minister, and enumerated the beneficent effects of his work during his comparatively short term of office. In the Duma and in society people spoke everywhere of irresponsible influences, of the Ministerial leap-frog, the enemy's gradual penetration and concerted attacks on all those who were useful to Russia and dangerous to the Germans.

All eyes were turned to the representatives of the people, who at the time enjoyed the popularity and confidence of the nation. But the Duma already realized that with Rasputin's presence at the Court and the ever-increasing influence of the Empress, success at the front and order at home were becoming impossible.

Polivanoff's successor was General Shuvaeff, a good and honest man, but inadequately equipped to fill such a post at such a time. His manner of presiding over the meetings of the Special Council rendered them tedious and confused. After Polivanoff's resignation the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch launched an intrigue against the Special Council, and tried to persuade the Emperor to abolish it. Continual disputes arose in the Council under Shuvaeff's chairmanship, and it seemed as if he was purposely provoking a clash to obtain a pretext for closing it altogether.

The chaos in the country was becoming appalling. A meat shortage was beginning to make itself felt in Petrograd; nevertheless, cartloads of rotting

carcases being conveyed to soap factories could be met in the streets. These carts were seen by the population in broad daylight, and the sight aroused general indignation: at a time when no meat was to be found on the market, rotting carcases were being openly conveyed practically to the rubbish heap.

Members of the Special Council inspected the municipal cold storage warehouses, beyond the Baltic railway station. The refrigerators were in order and the meat in good condition, but mounds of rotting carcases were piled up all around. This was the meat intended for the use of the army. There was nowhere to store it. When the purveyors asked permission to build new refrigerators, they obtained neither permission nor the necessary funds. As usual, the different Ministers were unable to agree: the Commissariat placed the orders for meat and the railway companies carried it, but there was nowhere to store it, and it was not allowed to be placed on the market. All this was as stupid as many other things. Everybody seemed to conspire to bring about Russia's ruin.

The members of the Special Council reported to the meeting on all they had seen, and I wrote to Alexeieff, and then only did the meat question receive attention. Hundreds of tons had, of course, already perished. It was the same with the meat supply from Siberia: but here thousands of tons instead of hundreds were lost, owing to the inadequacy and disorganization of the transport arrangements. Those responsible for this were, of course, never discovered; each laid the blame on someone else, and all together on the general state of chaos.

Polivanoff believed the meat scandal to be due neither to chance nor to disorganization, but to

deliberate action in pursuance of a German programme.

General Russky returned from Kislovodsk in the middle of April. He went to the Stavka to ask for an appointment at the front, but obtained no definite answer, and languished in Petrograd doing nothing. In the meantime operations on the northern front under Kuropatkin were taking a turn for the worse, and we sustained needlessly heavy casualties near Riga.

The question of increasing the output of hand grenades and special guns for destroying barbed wire entanglements was raised in the Special Council. Such guns were extensively used on the French front, and General Joffre, on learning that we had none, despatched an expert engineer to Russia, under whose supervision one of the munition factories was adapted for their construction. At the front everyone was delighted with these guns; I myself saw some of them in action on the northern front with excellent effect.

Nevertheless, the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch ordered their manufacture to be stopped. I heard of this from the French Military Attaché, the Marquis de la Guiche, whose statement was confirmed by General Manikovsky, the head of the Artillery Department. Once more the whole matter had to be raised in the Special Council, advantages proved which one might think would be patent to all, and the influence of irresponsible persons combated.

A short paragraph appeared in the Press concerning the appointment of a certain official as acting secretary to a special committee composed of five Ministers under the presidency of Trepoff. No one had any idea that this Committee existed, who

were the five Ministers concerned, or upon what questions they conferred. I asked for an explanation from Sturmer concerning the nature and legal status of this institution, which had sprung into being without the knowledge of the Duma.

No answer was vouchsafed. A few days later, at a banquet in honour of the French Ministers, Sturmer drew me aside and said he was unable to answer my letter, because the Committee had been set up secretly by the Emperor's desire.

The details of the affair were as follows. After the creation of the Special Council of Defence composed of public workers, the authority of the Minister for War, as chairman, extended practically to all Government departments, where matters directly concerned with the war were involved. The Council made a decision, the Minister for War confirmed it, and the departments were bound to carry it out. The Cabinet remained, at it were, in the background. Such procedure, notwithstanding its excellent results, could not fail to displease certain Ministers and officials; so they persuaded the Emperor to appoint a kind of committee of five Ministers. They had not the courage to do it while Polivanoff was still in office, because he stood for law and order and the public good; he lost his post for that very reason.

The setting up of a Ministerial Committee, the lack of confidence in, and the secret control over the Special Council of public workers, aroused profound indignation among the members of the Council. They entrusted me with the mission of telling Sturmer that if the committee of five were not abolished, all the members of the Special Council of Defence would resign publicly, explaining the motives for their resignation—a step which would be pregnant with consequences. Sturmer hastened to declare that he, too, considered the

committee of five to be illegal, and would report in that sense to the Emperor.

MM. Viviani and Thomas, representing the French Government, arrived at Petrograd at the beginning of May. The Duma gave a banquet in their honour. There was an exchange of speeches, with mutual assurances of friendship and readiness to fight together to a finish.

Next day Thomas expressed the wish to have a long talk on the organization of war supplies. He spent the evening at my house, and amazed a member of the Special Council, S. I. Timasheff, by his minute knowledge of the state of affairs in Russia. After speaking of the defects of our war supplies system and enumerating all our weak points, he concluded with the following significant witticism: "*La Russie doit être bien riche pour se permettre le luxe d'un gouvernement comme le vôtre, car le premier ministre—c'est un désastre, et le ministre de la guerre—une catastrophe. . . .*"

On bidding farewell to the French statesmen next day, I asked one of them: "*Dites-moi, Monsieur, sincèrement votre opinion, qu'est ce qui vous manque en Russie?*"

The Frenchman replied: "*Ce qui nous manque? C'est l'autocratie de votre gouvernement, car si j'ose vous dire encore, M. le président, la Russie doit être bien forte moralement pour supporter, pendant le temps sérieux que nous passons, cet état de douce anarchie qui règne dans votre pays et se jette aux yeux.*"

On May 12 Sturmer gave a big dinner to which all the Ministers, several members of the Council of the Empire and a few ultra-Conservative members of the Duma were invited. I accepted the invitation in order to take advantage of the intimate

surroundings to give free vent to my feelings of anxiety and indignation. After dinner, when coffee was served in the drawing room, I addressed the company somewhat as follows:

"Just think of what is taking place . . . In these momentous days, when the spirit of the nation and the gallantry of our army stand revealed in all their beauty, when torrents of blood are being freely shed—the Government reveal themselves as incapable of leadership and, in pursuit of their own interests, never get farther than a petty control over public organizations. You, the representatives of the Government, see nothing, realize nothing, and clinging to your powers and privileges, remain the passive spectators of the great patriotic upheaval which sweeps the country irrespective of parties and nationalities. . . . When the people long for work in order to ensure final victory, and ask for a firm and wise Government, you spend your time in trying to discover an imaginary revolution. . . . You organize Monarchist congresses, persecute public organizations, provoke endless inter-departmental disputes and intrigues, which paralyze the work of administration, and deliver the country into the hands of self-seekers. . . . Bribery, extortion, plunder are growing on all sides, and nothing is being done to prevent it. Persons who deserve the gallows continue to remain in high favour, and instead of patriotism, personal patronage and vested interests are the moving springs of the Government's actions. . . ."

I reminded them of Maklakoff and the case of the army boot supplies, and of Goremykin who, during the retreat of 1915, kept repeating that the war "did not concern him."

"The whole nation," I said, "has rallied to the motto: 'Everything for the war,' but the Government pursues its course of petty officialdom,

completely out of touch with the great events of the moment. . . ." I pointed out the Government's utter incompetence to foresee or deal with the stupendous problems of reconstruction with which the nation would be faced after the end of the war, and which were already engaging the attention of the more advanced Allied statesmen. "You should realize," I said, "that you are neither beloved nor trusted by the nation. . . . In your senseless search for a bogey revolution, you are murdering the living soul of the people and creating unrest and discontent which sooner or later may breed an actual revolution. . . . The time will come when you will be called upon to render an account of your deeds. . . ."

Prince V. M. Volkonsky told me afterwards that my words had produced on the Ministers the effect of a thunderbolt.

Shortly after this Sturmer went to the Stavka, and the committee of the five Ministers was abolished. (A few months later, however, a similar committee was appointed, consisting of six Ministers.)

The Imperial ukase for the reopening of the Duma was issued on May 16. April 27 being the tenth anniversary of the summoning of the first Duma, I had to mark the event in my inaugural address. I said that despite the errors committed by the first two Dumas, the principle of national representation as a component factor of Russia's body politic had become profoundly engrained in the public consciousness. I emphasized the merit of the Emperor Nicholas II, who had granted a constitution to Russia. The Cabinet in a body was conspicuous for its absence, owing, it was said, to the expectation of violent anti-Government speeches.

The session proved dull and colourless;

attendance was irregular and insufficient for voting. Members of the Extreme Right made inopportune sallies in the hope of provoking adjournments, and the whole atmosphere was so full of uncertainty as to render work practically impossible. The state of perpetual conflict came to nothing, the Government refused to hear reason, disorder was increasing, and the country rapidly going to ruin. All hopes were centred in the Duma, but unfortunately it was unable to do anything. We all suffered acutely from the general depression which pervaded the country.

A fresh success was achieved on the Caucasian front, but simultaneously the news arrived of the terrible hardships endured by the troops, whose strength there was insufficient. Appeals for reinforcements were disregarded by the Stavka.

In General Polivanoff's opinion we ought to have exercised our main pressure on the Caucasian front and advanced on Constantinople, which could have been captured with the aid of our Allies at Salonica. This plan was also spoken of in the French Press. A different view, however, prevailed at the Stavka, where jealousy of the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch was the guiding principle. He had only to express an opinion, for an exactly contrary decision to be made by the Stavka. None of his requests were ever carried out. This ill-feeling being entirely mutual, anyone who was dismissed from the Stavka was sure to obtain a post in the Caucasus.

General Brusiloff started his successful offensive on our western front, where his armies took 480,000 prisoners. Our success was of immense importance to the Allies. For the second time we relieved the enemy's pressure on Verdun, where,

for months past, both the French and Germans were exhausting their forces in the fruitless attempts of the latter to capture the fortress. Italy, too, was saved by our advance, and large Austrian contingents were transferred from the Italian front to ours.

Officers who took part in Brusiloff's offensive attributed our success to the fact that operations were started thirty-six hours before they were timed to do so by the Stavka. Rumours of espionage at the Stavka were current in the army, the enemy appearing to be always aware of our movements beforehand. These suspicions unfortunately received frequent confirmation.

Our parliamentary delegation made a tour of the Allied countries during May and June, and was everywhere welcomed with great enthusiasm and honours. Before they started, I warned Protopopoff, who was senior member of the delegation, that it might be treated with insufficient courtesy by members of our foreign Embassies. This, I regret to say, proved correct. Our Ambassador in London, Count Benckendorff, neither came himself nor sent any of his secretaries to welcome the delegates on their arrival. The delegates were particularly struck by this behaviour, because they received a most courteous welcome from the British; the King placed his special train at their disposal and many high officials met them at the terminus. When Protopopoff called at the Embassy, Benckendorff was barely civil to him, and explained the absence of members of the Embassy by his not having received any instructions from Petrograd. Nevertheless, in all their public speeches and private conversations, our Allies never omitted to emphasize their particular

confidence in the Russian Duma. Protopopoff, judging by the report he presented and by Miliukoff's account of his behaviour, bore himself as head of the delegation with tact and dignity. Our delegates were particularly impressed by the ideal organization of the rear in all the Allied countries, and by the united efforts of the peoples for the carrying on of the war.

The only discordant note of the tour was Protopopoff's tactless interview with a German agent. On the return journey Protopopoff was delayed at Stockholm, and after the departure of the rest of the mission he, in a private capacity, had an interview with Herr Warburg, an emissary of Herr von Lucius, German Minister at Stockholm.

The incident was taken up by the Press, and I was obliged to request Protopopoff to explain his conduct before the Duma. Protopopoff did not deny having had an interview with the First Secretary of the German Legation, to whom he emphasized the impossibility of Russia's making peace before the complete victory of the Allies. When Herr Warburg attempted to exculpate Germany and lay the blame for the war on Great Britain, Protopopoff had cut him short, saying he could not permit any incrimination of the Allies in his presence.

The Duma expressed itself satisfied by this statement, and I wrote an explanatory letter on the Stockholm incident to the Press.

The fact that our offensive was confined to the south-western front under General Brusiloff, and was unsupported in all the other sectors, caused general bewilderment at the front. Meanwhile, the break-through near Baranovitchy failed, and the advance appeared to be checked.

As a counter-balance to Brusiloff's successes, affairs in the Special Council for Defence were once more entering a critical stage, and misunderstandings between the members and the Minister Shuvaeff were becoming more acute. His incompetence to fill a responsible post became increasingly obvious; he was completely under Court influence and blindly obedient to orders emanating from Tsarskoe Selo. In spite of his undoubted honesty and probity, he was bewildered by all the conflicting currents of opinion and incapable of smoothing over difficulties. When, under the influence of the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch, a campaign was started at the Stavka against General Manikovsky, the energetic head of the Artillery Department, Shuvaeff failed to support him, and Manikovsky was only saved by the intervention of members of the Duma and of the Council of the Empire.

On June 24 I went to the Stavka to report to the Emperor. Before the audience I called on General Alexeieff. Rumours were current in Petrograd that Alexeieff was drafting a scheme for the establishment of a dictatorship in the rear to deal with all matters concerning internal government and war supplies. Shortly before my visit to the Stavka, I learnt from General Manikovsky that the scheme had already been drafted and a report on it presented to the Emperor by General Alexeieff. To confirm his statement Manikovsky gave me a copy of this report. It amounted virtually to the establishment of a dictatorship for restoring order in the rear, and with the right to cancel the orders of the Ministers and of the Special Council. The effects of such a step may easily be imagined, especially when one realized that the idea of a dictatorship emanated from the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch, who obviously reserved

the important and responsible post of dictator for himself.

I asked General Alexeieff whether what I had heard of the scheme was true, and produced the copy of the report. Alexeieff owned to having submitted a similar document to the Emperor, and insisted on learning the source from which I had obtained such confidential information. He added that he could not carry on the war with any chance of success when there was neither system nor co-ordination in the Government and when operations at the front were paralyzed by the chaos in the rear.

I agreed with Alexeieff on the justice of his complaints, but pointed out that were the necessary powers given to the Prime Minister, a dictatorship could be avoided. On the other hand, the appointment of a man like the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch would be tantamount to the ruin of the whole war supply organization. He would again be surrounded by his former associates and collaborators, and nothing but ill would come of this to the army and the whole country.

"Tell the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch from me," I said to Alexeieff, "that if he does not cease intriguing in the sphere of munitions supplies, I, as President of the Duma, will expose his activities from the tribune of the Duma. I have more than sufficient evidence concerning them in my possession."

Our talk having then drifted to conditions at the front, I told Alexeieff of the troops' desire to see Russky reinstated as commander. Alexeieff agreed with me on some points, disapproved of Evert and Kuropatkin, but said with regard to Russky that he could not appoint him anywhere.

This was my first meeting with Alexeieff; so far we had only corresponded. He produced the impression of being a clever and highly expert

officer, but lacking in determination and broad political outlook.

The Emperor as usual accorded me a gracious reception, and heard all my unpleasant news of disorder in the rear without murmur or contradiction. In reporting on the work of the Duma I pointed to the desire of the ultra-Conservatives to create a conflict over the question of German aggression. The bill as drafted by the Government was rejected, as it did not secure the real object; to combat German aggression in the rear was certainly necessary, but to raise the whole question of land tenure during the war was a dangerous proceeding. Some sort of system was imperative; the taking of land from one group of owners for distribution among disabled soldiers, however, was a great risk which might lead to agrarian disorders.

The Emperor here interposed by saying that the distribution of land among the soldiers was his own idea.

"Nevertheless, your Majesty, permit me to disagree with you, and most humbly to beg that this bill may be revised."

Our conversation having touched on Poland, I reminded the Emperor that its future status was still unsettled, and that the Poles were becoming increasingly anxious, as they saw the Government's growing oblivion of the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch's proclamation.

The Poles had told me, before I left for the Stavka, how the Empress had said in the course of a conversation with Count Zamoisky: "*L'idée de l'autonomie de la Pologne est insensée; on ne peut le faire sans donner les mêmes droits aux provinces Baltiques.*"

I then passed on to the question of a dictatorship, and said I felt obliged to warn the Emperor against taking such a step. To my surprise the

Emperor appeared to have completely forgotten Alexeieff's scheme.

"What dictatorship?" he asked.

I handed him the copy of the report. The Emperor glanced at it carelessly and said:

"Yes, I have a copy of this among my papers."

My opinion, in short, was that a dictatorship would not attain the object in view, while detracting from the authority of the Sovereign. The Emperor listened attentively and asked:

"What steps would you advise for restoring order in the rear?"

"Your Majesty, I have but one solution to recommend, which is the same as I proposed before: grant a responsible Ministry. By doing so you will merely extend the rights you have given already in granting the Constitution, but your own authority will remain immutable. Only the responsibility will no longer rest with you but with the Government, and you will continue as before to ratify the laws, dissolve the legislative bodies, and determine questions of war and peace."

The Emperor replied: "Very well, I will think it over." He added, "Whom would you recommend as Prime Minister?"

"You will be surprised, your Majesty, but the man I would recommend is Admiral Grigorovitch. In a short time he put his own department in excellent order."

"That is true, but that is a different sphere of action, and he would be out of place as Prime Minister."

"Believe me, Sire, he would be better than Sturmer."

Speaking of the disorder in the Ministries of Ways and Communications and of Commerce, the Emperor again asked:

"And who are your candidates for these posts?"

I named the engineer Voskresensky and Protopopoff, deputy-president of the Duma.

The Emperor made no objections and, as was his custom, made notes in his pocket book.

At the close of my report I mentioned two other items: the Ministerial defence of the so-called Kuznetsk enterprise, in which Trepoff—a brother of the Minister—had an interest, and the relief of disabled soldiers. The shareholders of the Kuznetsk works, who enjoyed the patronage of the Ministers Trepoff and Prince Shakhovskoy, were trying to obtain huge allotments of State lands, rich in mineral ore, in the Urals, and for their exploitation asked for a subsidy of twenty million roubles, which they promised to repay in five years without interest. The Imperial Duma refused a grant for what appeared to be a purely speculative concern.

The problem of the care of disabled soldiers had not yet been worked out. The Emperor requested that a detailed scheme should be submitted to him which could then be laid before the legislative chambers.

After the audience I was invited to dine at the Imperial table. Notwithstanding this gracious act of courtesy, I realized that my report had failed to produce the desired impression: a kind of indifference or weariness was noticeable in the Emperor's attitude towards everything that was taking place.

In the interval between the audience and dinner I spoke of this with M. P. Kaufman,* who said to me: "I would advise you to wait on the Empress and try to make her hear reason by explaining to her the true state of affairs. Perhaps you may achieve something in that quarter."

* Red Cross delegate at the Stavka and member of the Council of the Empire.

CHAPTER XIII

Dismissal of Sazonoff—Sturmer as Dictator—The Guards on the Stokhod—Aircraft from Abroad.

THE Ministerial leap-frog still continued. Sazonoff, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was summarily dismissed and Sturmer appointed in his stead while retaining the Premiership. Khvostoff, Minister for Justice, received the post of Minister of the Interior, and Makaroff that vacated by Khvostoff. No one could explain the cause of Sazonoff's disgrace. One of the Foreign Ministry officials told me it was due to Sazonoff's report on Poland, in which he insisted on the settlement of the Polish question, and the removal of the chief opponent of Poland's autonomy—Sturmer. But in my opinion the real cause lay deeper.

With regard to the Minister for Justice, Khvostoff, it was said that he had suffered on account of Sukhomlinoff, because he had refused to suspend the investigation into his case. Khvostoff had been summoned to the Empress, who for two hours had urged him to release Sukhomlinoff. At first she persisted in asserting his innocence, and finally, raising her voice, demanded that he should be released from the fortress, repeating incessantly: "*Je veux, j'exige qu'il soit libéré.*"

Khvostoff replied that he was unable to do so, and on the Empress asking him, "*Pourquoi pas, si je vous l'ordonne?*" said, "*Ma conscience, Madame, me défend de vous obéir et de libérer un trâitre.*"

Khvostoff, after this interview, realized that his days were numbered, and his transference to the post of Minister of the Interior was but an inter-

lude in order to save appearances. The Empress appointed Makaroff in his stead in the hope of finding him more pliant, but such, fortunately, did not prove to be the case.

On my return from the Stavka I had an interview with Sturmer concerning the dictatorship scheme. He professed complete ignorance on the subject. A week later he departed for the Stavka bearing a letter from the Empress.

It was revealed at a meeting of the Special Council that the despatch of several artillery supply columns ordered by the Council had been countermanded by Sturmer. This Council, at the time of its formation, had by Imperial ukase been placed above the Council of Ministers. The members demanded explanations from the Minister for War. The latter then produced a secret document—an Imperial ukase appointing Sturmer dictator with full powers. A delegation of members was immediately chosen to wait on Stufmer and express the Council's indignation to him. He ceased from that time to tamper with the work of the Special Council, but continued to interfere in all other branches of the administration.

The authorities arrested D. Rubinstein, the chairman of the board of a private bank, who was known to be on intimate terms with Rasputin, also Rubinstein's two brothers, Stembo, a journalist, and the lawyer Wolfson, solicitor to the Countess Kleinmichel—all of them on the charge of profiteering, gambling on the Stock Exchange with a view to lowering the value of Russian securities, and of acts of open treason, such as the sale to Germany of war supplies ordered by us abroad.

These events almost coincided with the resignation of the Minister for Agriculture, Naumoff, the last member of the Cabinet chosen from among public workers. With the assistance of the

Zemstvos he had drafted a scheme for organizing the food supply throughout the country. The scheme, which had been debated in and approved by the Duma, was nevertheless rejected by the Cabinet under pressure from Sturmer.

My wife and I left Petrograd on July 12 for the southern front, stopping at Kieff on our way. That city was now the residence of the Empress Marie Feodorovna, who had retired there from all the cares and trials which beset her at Petrograd and Tsarskoe. I visited her, and she detained me for two hours, talking of the work of the Red Cross. On my remarking that instead of spending only a week in Kieff as originally intended, she had prolonged her stay for months, the Empress replied: "Yes, it is so nice here; I am going to stay as long as I like" Afterwards she said: "*Vous ne pouvez pas vous imaginer quel contentement pour moi après cinquante ans que je devais cacher mes sentiments —c'est de pouvoir dire à tout le monde combien je déteste les allemands.*"

On July 16 I went to visit General Brusiloff at Berditcheff in company with V. A. Maklakoff and M. I. Tereschenko. Everything was going on well on his front, munitions were plentiful, and the Commander-in-Chief seemed to be full of confidence concerning the state of his armies. There was but a temporary shortage in the supply of heavy shells, due to a great outlay during the advance.

General Kaledin, in command of the Eighth Army, whom I visited at Lutsk, repeatedly expressed his astonishment at General Besobrasoff's* behaviour. The latter acted independently of everyone else and never co-ordinated his operations with those of his neighbours. Kaledin also strongly disapproved of the appointment of the

* Gen. Besobrasoff was in command of the so-called Imperial Guards joint contingent, consisting of two corps.

Grand Duke Paul* as a corps commander. The Grand Duke did not execute the orders even of his immediate superiors, and his presence merely tended to increase the already existing confusion.

Speaking of the Kovel operations, Kaledin remarked: "Had I the Guards at my disposal, I would have captured Kovel; it was not so strongly fortified as now, and the Austrians did not dispose of large forces at that point. The Stavka failed to carry out its original plan."

Kaledin was loud in praising the fresh contingents of young soldiers, who were well trained and all of them picked men.

From Lutsk we went to Torchin, where the Zemstvo Union hospital unit, attached to the "Iron Division," was at work. All along the road we met convoys of covered waggons carrying the wounded, and traces of the Austrians' recent occupation were to be found on all sides. At Torchin we saw huge quantities of war trophies: piles of hand grenades and shells, and rows of guns of various calibres. The heavy guns had been captured where they stood, turned about and fired after the retreating enemy. A flying unit had been despatched from the Zemstvos' dressing station for work within a mile of the line of battle. The casualties were very heavy, and doctors and nurses had been working for two days without respite. The corps commander, General Kashtalinsky, said that fresh attacks were expected and that the Austrians were already carrying out an artillery preparation. In fact, towards evening a bombardment began which reminded one of uninterrupted thunder-bursts, with occasional terrific explosions.

A continuous stream of peasants' carts filled with wounded plodded along the road from Rozhistche. Many of the seriously wounded were lying without

* Uncle of the Emperor Nicholas II, commanding the 1st Guards Corps.

even a straw litter, and groaned aloud. The Red Cross delegate to the Eighth Army, H. H. Lerche, had said to us at Lutsk: "Notice the evacuation of wounded from the Guards. God knows what's happening there."

At Rozhistche great numbers of the wounded could be seen lying about everywhere: in the houses and gardens, on the ground, in sheds. Many had been wounded in the place itself during enemy air raids and by the explosion of pyroxilene fuses stacked in the open beside the hospital. G. M. Khitrovo, the head of the Red Cross, was killed like this, as he rushed to rescue the wounded from a hut which had caught fire from the explosion. The Army Medical Service, under Professor Veliaminoff, was short of the most necessary drugs and surgical appliances. General Besobrasoff's staff was over-crowded with officers. Judging by his account of conditions at the front, complete chaos reigned in his sector.

On my return journey I again met General Kaledin at Lutsk. He did not conceal his indignation at the enormous casualties sustained by the Guards coupled with negligible results. "Such a senseless sacrifice of human lives cannot be justified, and such splendid men, too!" he said.

We arrived at Rozhistche hoping to see our son, whose regiment had taken part in all the fighting, where the Guards had lost 33,000 men killed and wounded. Besobrasoff gave us leave to send for our son by telephone, his regiment having been withdrawn to the second line. We had to wait till daybreak on the second day. We sat on a bench in the road till late at night, listening in anxious expectancy to the roar and din of the battle, after the harrowing experiences of the day. The night was very dark, and my wife went to get some rest in the hut of Mme. Mestcherinova, who, true to

herself, was never far behind the Preobrazhensky Regiment. Of her three sons who served there, one was already killed. Sleep was impossible. My wife soon rejoined me, and we visited three field hospitals—one bearing the name of Rodzianko, where my nephew's wife (an Englishwoman) was doing splendid work. The second was the British hospital run by Lady Muriel Paget, and the third belonged to the Kaufman Association. The staffs were everywhere working with the utmost self-denial, but it was impossible to admit all the wounded for want of room. The men all belonged to the Guards, splendid stalwart young fellows, from the latest "Polivanoff" drafts. They answered our questions cheerfully, but the "old men" complained that such heavy casualties were needless, as the men were sent to attack barbed wire entanglements without a preliminary bombardment. They treated me with complete confidence, and spoke gently and sadly of the bad staff work.

With Mme. Mestcherinova we were present at Khitrovo's funeral. He was laid in a temporary grave, and, after the ceremony, we stayed for the burial of some soldiers who had died in hospital. They were brought without coffins, stark naked, and laid in rows in a common grave. It was a harrowing sight. The priest gabbled carelessly through the burial service, and when we asked him not to hurry and ourselves began to sing, he looked at us in surprise and read the prayers properly. Before going away the priest thanked us, saying with a sigh: "We do nothing else but bury—it's pitiful to see," and made a despairing gesture.

Our son came straight to Lutsk and, after an hour's rest, began to narrate his experiences. Criminal incompetence, lack of co-operation in the higher command, and chaotic disaccord had resulted in a senseless slaughter of our crack

regiments. Not only officers but the men saw clearly that, notwithstanding the heroism of the Guards, victory under the existing conditions was impossible. The Grand Duke Paul, corps commander, disobeyed the order he received to encircle a given point by a flank manœuvre, and sent the Preobrazhensky and the Imperial Rifle Regiments to make a frontal attack on the Rai-Mesto heights. The troops found themselves in a swamp, where many men perished. While they were floundering through the bog, German aeroplanes hovered overhead and bombarded them at close quarters. My son sank up to the armpits and was with difficulty extricated by his men. The wounded could not be brought out, and all perished in the swamp. These marshes extended to the foot of the hill, which was covered with barbed wire. Our artillery fire was weak and failed to destroy the entanglements; the shells fell short of them, or dropped among our own men. General Rauch, in command of the cavalry division, instead of obeying orders from headquarters and attacking the enemy from the rear, withdrew his regiments. As a matter of fact, each commander acted on his own, and many men were sacrificed in vain. Nevertheless, the gallant Guards fulfilled their task and, though bled white, succeeded in capturing the heights, which they were then ordered to abandon.

My son, usually so calm and self-possessed, was terribly excited and kept repeating to me: "You must tell the Emperor. It is a crime to sacrifice these men for nothing. . . . The higher command is absolutely rotten. Everyone in the army feels that for no reason whatever matters are going from bad to worse. The men are splendid, guns and munitions plentiful, but the generals lack brains. The want of aeroplanes, too, is very bad. No one trusts either the Stavka or his own chiefs. All this

may end by creating resentment and disruption. We are willing to die for Russia, for our Mother country, but not for the caprice of the generals, who sit in safe places during the fighting; few of them are ever seen in the firing line, and it is we who die. Both men and officers think that if things are not changed, we shall never win. The eyes of people in high quarters must be opened."

Under the impression of all we had seen and heard, I wrote a detailed letter to Brusiloff, who, adding to mine a report of his own, despatched both to the Stavka. The result of this was that General Besobrasoff, his chief staff officer, Count Ignatieff, the Grand Duke Paul and Professor Veliaminoff were removed from their posts.

At the very next meeting of the Special Council I raised the question of our air force. Shuvaeff objected to this, fearing criticism of the activities of the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch.* When the members of the Council, nevertheless, determined to discuss the matter, Shuvaeff closed the meeting without further explanations. The Grand Duke's name was connected with many cases of abuse. Aeroplanes unfit for service were purchased, the receiving committee did not even trouble to open the cases on arrival, and machines were despatched to the front which could not be flown or were very dangerous. The Grand Duke's chief assistant, Colonel Fogel, enjoyed a very doubtful reputation. All orders were placed through him and he was practically at the head of our air force. When, in June, the question came up before the Special Council, information was asked for as to the exact number of aircraft actually

* Cousin of the Emperor and married to his sister the Grand Duchess Xenia. This grand duke was at the head of the Air force.

at the front as compared with those which should be there according to estimate. The reply took long in coming, and when at last it did arrive, it turned out that most of the aeroplanes were training ones and attached to the aviation schools.

The Special Council then proposed that the shortage should be made good by the purchase of aircraft from abroad. A long time elapsed; appeals for aeroplanes came repeatedly from the front, and still nothing was heard of the order. To the Special Council's reiterated inquiry the Aviation Department replied that the orders were placed in France and the machines were due to arrive shortly. A little later a statement came to the effect that France had refused to execute the order. In the meantime I received information that the alleged order had actually never been placed, and that the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch had caused all negotiations to be cancelled. I then determined to collect all the data concerning our air force organization. Valuable assistance was rendered me by two of our prominent flying officers, one of whom was at the head of the flying school and had received three Crosses of St. George* for distinguished war service. Moreover, I received numerous letters from members of the service at the front.

A conclusive report was drawn up containing precise figures of the orders given, with the dates of their execution, enumerating all the instances of abuse, casualties among the personnel, and so forth. The whole system of our air force administration stood revealed, together with the appalling state of the service. Copies of this report were sent by me to the Emperor, the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch, and all the members of the Special Council.

* The Russian V.C., which had four grades.

The whole matter was brought up again at the following meeting of the Special Council in the absence of Shuvaeff. I acquainted the assembly with the contents of my report, recounted all my experiences at the front, and added that such authorities as Brusiloff, Kaledin and Sakharoff had begged that most serious attention should be given to the state of our air force. While the Germans hovered over our lines like birds pelting us with bombs, we were powerless to prevent them. The enemy was perfectly aware of our dispositions, while our own aerial reconnaissance was practically non-existent.

I urged on the Council the impossibility of relying further on the Aviation Department and the Grand Duke, and proposed that we should take the initiative in ordering aircraft from abroad. The Council agreed to this, and in view of Shuvaeff's disinclination to negotiate the affair with the Allies, the task was entrusted to me. Shuvaeff gave me the war code cipher, and I telegraphed to General Joffre through the medium of our Military Attaché in Paris, Count Ignatieff. The reply was long in coming, and the French Military Attaché, the Marquis de La Guiche, told me that according to their secret information, Count Ignatieff had kept back my telegram and not delivered it to Joffre. I requested La Guiche to send a telegram in French cipher direct to Joffre and to the Minister of Supplies, Thomas. I also inquired of Shuvaeff by what right a Military Attaché had taken the liberty of censoring a telegram from the President of the Duma, sent with the knowledge of the Minister for War, and in war cipher. Ignatieff's reply was peculiar: he had been unwilling to agitate the Generalissimo by submitting to him the telegram of the President of the Duma. Meanwhile, a reply was soon received to La Guiche's telegram, inform-

ing us that the orders had already been placed and the aeroplanes would be delivered shortly. Joffre's reply made an excellent impression on the Special Council.

This episode, however, did not end here. I left Petrograd for a short holiday in the country. A few days later I received a telegram saying that the Budget Commission insisted on my pressing the Government for a speedy convocation of the Duma. The same telegram announced the arrival of my private secretary, V. Sadykoff. To my great surprise Sadykoff brought me, besides the report of the Budget Commission, a letter from General Alexeieff notifying me of the Emperor's desire that I should "abstain from direct interference in war matters which did not concern either the President of the Duma or a member of the Special Council."* My secretary drew my attention to the fact that the envelope containing the letter bore no seal and was not inscribed "confidential," although such seals and inscriptions were put on the most unimportant letters. Sadykoff said that on opening this envelope he decided at once to bring it me, in the country, without consulting anyone, as he knew I was due to go to the Stavka before returning to Petrograd, and, not knowing the contents of the letter, would find myself there in a very awkward position.

My conscience did not enable me to accede to the Emperor's desire. It would mean that I should have to remain silent during the Council's debates on war supplies, and in general behave, according to Goremykin's maxim, as if the war "did not concern me."

At my next audience I submitted my views to the Emperor and explained that in conformity with the law establishing the Special Council, it behoved me, as a member of it, to take an active part in

* See Appendix No. III.

all matters connected with army supplies and equipment, adding that he had obviously been misinformed with regard to my interference in the business.

The Emperor replied: "Yes, you were right, and the matter was not correctly represented to me."

The Emperor's reply gave me complete satisfaction.

CHAPTER XIV

Protopopoff becomes Minister—The President of the Duma states his Terms—A Greek Prince—Refusal of an Audience—A Visit to Sturmer.

AMONG Sturmer's particularly intimate associates was a certain Manusevitch-Manuiloff, a former collaborator of Ratchkovsky's and a journalist on a small scale connected with Rasputin's clique, to whose influence Sturmer partly owed his own promotion. He was with Sturmer in the capacity of private secretary. Taking advantage of his position, he levied blackmail on the banks, which propitiated him by bribery. Count Tatistcheff, manager of the Soedinenny (Union) Bank, together with the Minister A. A. Khvostoff, determined to catch Manuiloff out. A bribe was offered him, but each of the 500-rouble notes was marked by Ivan Khvostoff, the Minister's nephew. All this took place during Sturmer's absence at the Stavka. A search was made at Manuiloff's flat, and the 500-rouble notes found almost intact; only a part of them had disappeared. Manuiloff was arrested.

When Sturmer heard that Manuiloff had been arrested, he refused to believe it. Having ascertained the truth of it, he again left for the Stavka. What he said there no one ever knew, but he returned to Petrograd with Khvostoff's dismissal in his pocket. He summoned Khvostoff to the telephone and announced: "You brought me the unpleasant news of Manusevitch-Manuiloff's arrest; now I have news for you: you are no longer Minister of the Interior."

Khvostoff (senior) was succeeded as Minister of

the Interior by Protopopoff, Deputy-President of the Imperial Duma.

Since Protopopoff's return from abroad and the interview with the German emissary at Stockholm, his name had begun frequently to appear in the Press. A paragraph was inserted in one of the papers announcing Protopopoff's intention of editing, with the assistance of several banks, a newspaper called *Volia Rossii*. Litvinoff-Falinsky, Tereschenko, and many others warned me that Protopopoff was surrounded by shady characters, that his name was coupled with that of Rasputin, and that the latter's clique was supporting his candidature for the post of Minister of the Interior. Protopopoff's appointment might appear to be popular, because he had had a certain amount of success as head of the parliamentary delegation and was even a member of the Progressive *bloc*.

The actual appointment created general bewilderment, but in his very first interview with representatives of the Press, Protopopoff showed his hand by declaring that he entered the Cabinet as a member of Sturmer's Government and pursued no separate programme. Protopopoff had lately been avoiding me and did not show himself at the Duma. At last I got him on the telephone and insisted on his coming to lunch with me. I put the question to him point blank:

"Tell me frankly, Alexander Dmitrievitch, are the rumours of your appointment correct? You place me in a very awkward position—I must know what post my deputy is about to accept."

"Yes, I was offered the post of Minister of the Interior," replied Protopopoff, "and accepted it."

"Who offered it you?"

"Sturmer, at the desire of his Majesty the Emperor."

"What? . . . And you consent to become a member of Sturmer's Cabinet?"

"Why, you recommended me yourself."

"Yes, I recommended you as Minister for Commerce in Grigorovitch's Cabinet, but not as Sturmer's Minister of the Interior."

"I feel," Protopopoff said, "that you are angry with me."

"I am, very angry indeed. You have acted treacherously towards the Duma. You are going to serve in a Government which the Duma considers incompetent and detrimental to Russia's interests; and this you do after having signed the resolution of the Progressive *bloc*. Moreover, you openly confess that you have no other programme but that of the Prime Minister, Sturmer. You will be called upon to explain yourself before the Duma—let me tell you that."

"I hope," said Protopopoff, "that I shall succeed in bringing about some changes in the present state of affairs. Believe me, the Emperor is willing to do all that is good, but is being prevented."

"So be it; but how will you be able to do anything against Sturmer and Rasputin? You will merely compromise both yourself and the Duma. You haven't sufficient strength for the fight, and will never dare speak outright to the Emperor."

After Protopopoff's appointment a rumour spread that the President of the Duma was to be offered the dual post of Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs. The story was soon confirmed. I received an unexpected visit from Protopopoff, who announced:

"Do you know, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, at the Stavka they want to appoint you Minister for Foreign Affairs."

"How can I be Minister for Foreign Affairs?" I asked with a smile.

"You will have assistants who know the technique of the business."

"Am I also expected to combine this office with the Premiership?"

"Yes, that too, of course."

It was time to put a stop to this farce.

"Look here," I said, "you are executing a commission; you have been sent to learn my views on the subject. In that case, tell the Emperor, here are my terms: I alone shall have power to choose the Ministers. I must be appointed for a term of not less than three years. The Empress must renounce all interference in affairs of State and remain at Livadia* till the end of the war. None of the Grand Dukes shall be permitted to take any active part in affairs or allowed at the front. The Emperor must be reconciled with all the Ministers whom he has unjustly offended. Polivanoff must be appointed the Emperor's assistant at the Stavka, and Lukomsky Minister for War. Weekly conferences on all matters connected with the war must be held at the Stavka, at which I shall be present, with the right of a casting vote on all questions not of a purely strategical character."

Protopopoff looked staggered at my words, and, unable to imagine how he would ever have the courage to transmit them, I came to his assistance.

"If the Emperor sends for me, I will tell him all this myself."

"Oh yes, I know you'll tell him," Protopopoff kept repeating, scratching his head.

I asked him to put my terms in writing, and he put them down in his note-book.

"Please add, that I will accept this post on con-

* The Imperial estate in the Crimea.

dition that all these terms are made public in the Duma. . . ."

Dining with me a few days later, Protopopoff spoke in very high terms of the Empress.

"She is an uncommonly strong-minded, authoritative and clever woman. You really ought to go and see her, Mikhail Vladimirovitch."

Instead of an answer, I felt his pulse and asked:

"Where did you dine yesterday?" (Shortly before this his special Ministerial secretary, Grevé, who had served under Stolypin, had informed me that the day before Protopopoff had dined at Tsarskoe Selo, presumably with Mme. Vyrubova, and spent the evening at Sturmer's.)

Protopopoff looked abashed.

"Now then, tell me, where did you dine last night?" I went on with my interrogation.

"Who told you?"

"That is my own business; my secret service is better than yours. . . . Well, my dear fellow, where did you dine?"

"You probably know already," replied Protopopoff.

"And you spent the evening with Sturmer."

"You know that, too?"

"I know everything, as you see. Tell me, why do you do such things? Why do you compromise yourself? Such things cannot be kept secret. You propose that I should go and see the Empress. I would not go and see her for worlds. You want people to say that I, too, am seeking her patronage, and perhaps also that of Vyrubova and Rasputin. I cannot follow that path."

The Empress's visits to the Stavka became increasingly frequent, and when at Tsarskoe, she received the Ministers, who presented their reports to her.

Under the influence of the Metropolitan Pitirim

and Rasputin, a certain Raeff, the principal of a Higher College for Women, was appointed Procurator of the Holy Synod. A delegation of the Synod, in which this Raeff took part, presented the Empress with an ikon and a "blessed *gramota*" (address) signed by the Metropolitan Pitirim and other ecclesiastical dignitaries who were members of the Synod, extolling the Empress's work of mercy among the wounded and invoking the blessing of God on her labours.

This address was published in the Press, but failed to produce the desired impression. The Empress never had been popular, and when Rasputin's influence over her, and her own interference in affairs of State, became more widely known, public resentment was aroused. The Empress was spoken of as "that German woman," and was looked upon as the moving spirit of the Emperor's unsuccessful and ill-fated policy.

Prince Nicholas of Greece, the husband of the Grand Duchess Helena Vladimirovna,* arrived at Petrograd via Vienna and Berlin on what was purported to be a secret mission. His visit lasted several months. He went to the Stavka, and Alexeieff complained that on coming one day to make his customary report to the Emperor, he found the Prince and the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna† in the study. The Emperor proposed that Alexeieff should report in their presence, but the latter refused to do so, and requested that the interview should be strictly private. Alexeieff considered the Prince's presence at the Stavka out of place, and was of opinion that he ought to be interned and not allowed to return, and more especially, prevented from again passing through Berlin and Vienna. On the demand of the military

* First cousin to the Emperor.
† The Prince's mother-in-law.

authorities Prince Nicholas eventually travelled not via Tornea to Sweden, but direct to England via Archangel. He arrived in Greece in the very thick of the disturbances. We saw a paragraph later in the papers stating that "at the Court of King Constantine the mission of Prince Nicholas was considered to have been most successfully accomplished."

On assuming office Protopopoff had declared that the organization of the food supply would be his main task. At a Cabinet meeting he proposed that matters relating to the food supply should be transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture to that of the Interior. This proposal was opposed by the Press and the Zemstvo delegates working in the supplies organizations, as they justly feared increased pressure on the part of governors, police officials and so forth in the event of the organizations passing into the hands of the Ministry of the Interior. The majority declined to work under the control of that body.

These apprehensions were soon justified. The following incident took place in the province of Ekaterinoslav. The governor sent a telephone message to the chairman of the Zemstvo Board, Herberg (who was also plenipotentiary of the Ministry of Agriculture for food supplies) requesting him to authorize the purchase by the agents of the Ministry of the Interior of a consignment of one and a half million poods of barley for the Kalashnikoff corn exchange in Petrograd. Fearing that the activities of inexperienced outside agents would inevitably lead to an increase in prices and abuse, Herberg offered to buy and despatch the barley himself; but the governor stood his ground and added that he was merely transmitting an order

of the Minister of the Interior, which, if disobeyed, would lead to reprisals. To this Herberg replied that, as chairman of the Zemstvo Board, he was not entitled to receive notifications from the governor on matters of food supply and that, as plenipotentiary, he was subordinate to the Ministry of Agriculture. Herberg's reply was transmitted to Protopopoff, and the latter determined to deport Herberg to Siberia on the pretext of his having a German name. This was averted by a mere chance. A certain Magdenko, justice of the peace of the Novo-Moskovsk district (in the province of Ekaterinoslav) and an old fellow-officer of Protopopoff's, paid a call on the Minister. Protopopoff spoke to him of Herberg and of his intention to deport him. Magdenko implored Protopopoff to desist, saying it would provoke an outburst of indignation throughout the province, where Herberg, who had recently celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his Zemstvo service, was exceedingly popular. It was only after insistent entreaties and persuasions that Protopopoff consented to cancel his decision, and, in Magdenko's presence, tore up the signed order of deportation.

Protopopoff's behaviour was in general becoming very peculiar, and at times he made the impression of not being quite normal. He arrived at a meeting of the Duma Budget Commission wearing the uniform of Chief of the Gendarmerie. He was received with marked coldness by the Duma, and his food supply scheme rejected. It was also condemned by the Unions of Towns and Zemstvos. Protopopoff pressed for an interview with his former fellow-members in the Duma and asked my assistance in the matter. He evidently hoped that an interview would be arranged solely with members belonging to the Zemstvo-Octobrist group, but I purposely invited the leaders of all parties

included in the Progressive *bloc*. Protopopoff's behaviour that evening was most extraordinary: he rolled his eyes, repeating in a kind of unnatural ecstacy, "I feel that I shall save Russia, I feel that I alone can save her." Shingareff, a doctor by profession, was of opinion that Protopopoff was simply suffering from creeping paralysis. Protopopoff remained with me till three o'clock in the morning, as if unable to leave, until finally I almost forced him to go home to bed.

In spite of Protopopoff's endeavours to assure everyone that he was the man who could save Russia, the deputies did not trust him, his scheme was condemned by the Budget Commission, and when in its final stage it was laid before the Council of Ministers, it was also rejected by the latter, and the food supply organization was left under control of the Ministry of Agriculture.

On October 27 the Anglo-Russian Flag Association held a formal meeting. This society had been founded a year before by M. M. Kovalevsky, who was also its first chairman. After his death I was elected in his place. The meeting was held in the Town Hall. Major Thornhill's speech produced an excellent effect. He drew a graphic and vivid sketch of the Russian soldier and spoke with much humour of Germany's efforts to provoke a quarrel between Great Britain and Russia. Great Britain, he said, was out to conquer not territory, but the noble heart of the Russian people; it was for him as an Englishman to say, he added, that such a conquest would also be to our advantage.

Shingareff, who narrated the impressions of his tour with the parliamentary delegation, laid stress on the wonderful solidarity and mutual confidence which existed in England between the Government and the people. This statement was greeted with applause, which grew louder when he added

that there was no room there for powers of darkness and irresponsible influences. When one of the speakers mentioned the name of the late Minister Sazonoff, also a member of the society, the assembly cheered again and called on him to give him an ovation, but he was not present in the hall.

I received the Emperor's reply to my request for an audience. The following note was written in his own hand on my petition: "I direct the Prime Minister to inform the President of the Duma that he may be received after the reopening of the session to present a report dealing with matters relating to the session only." There was no signature. The document was enclosed in an envelope addressed to me and sealed with the "small seal." Obviously the Emperor had by mistake placed a document intended for Sturmer in an envelope addressed to Rodzianko.

Next day Sturmer rang me up on the telephone. He had been at the Stavka the day before and there learnt that the Emperor had sent his reply to the wrong man by mistake.

"Mikhail Vladimirovitch, have you received a document from his Majesty in which he desires me to inform you that he is unable to receive you?"

"Yes, I received it."

"What do you intend to do?"

"That is my business."

"But what am I to do? I must transmit his Majesty's command to you."

"That is your own affair. I cannot take it upon myself to advise you in anything."

"Could we not consider that I have given you the message by telephone?"

"I do not think his Majesty's command ought to be transmitted by telephone."

"Then what am I to do?"

"I really don't know."

"Could you send me that document?"

"A copy, yes, but I will keep the original, as I have received it from the Emperor in an envelope addressed in my name and under seal."

"What do you intend to do with regard to this refusal?"

"I am not bound to give you an account of my actions."

Next day Sturmer, after all, sent me an official intimation of the Emperor's message. It was a repetition of the incident which had occurred a few years before during Kokovtzeff's Premiership.

That same day or the next, two members of the Duma met Verevkin, the Assistant Minister for Justice, who asked them: "Whom does the Duma propose to elect as President?" The deputies replied that the re-election of the present President was practically certain. Verevkin looked surprised. "What," said he, "after the Emperor's refusal to receive him?" The deputies, though unaware of this, replied that it would not prevent a re-election. They straightway came to see me and repeated the conversation.

I determined, in order not to strain further the already tense atmosphere of the Duma, to conceal from the members both General Alexeieff's letter concerning the aeroplanes and the Emperor's reply to my request for an audience. But when the Government itself began to circulate rumours to that effect, I sent for the leaders of the parties forming the Progressive *bloc* and acquainted them with all the facts.

The Duma was due to assemble on November 1. The members of the Progressive *bloc* held con-

tinual conferences, at which a resolution, in strong terms, was drafted, stating the need of forming a Government supported by a majority in the Imperial Duma. The Progressives insisted on demanding a responsible Ministry, but, thanks to Miliukoff, the final resolution was couched in more moderate language. The motive for this was that were the demands of the *bloc* rejected, the latter would either be compelled to work with the same Government, or have recourse to revolutionary methods. Two days before the opening of the Duma I received a visit from the Minister for Education, Count Ignatieff. It appeared that the Government was already in possession of a copy of the resolution of the *bloc*. The Ministers were exceedingly perturbed by the fact of its containing the word "treason."* The Cabinet, so Count Ignatieff informed me, had held a special meeting on account of it and decided to request the President of the Duma to erase that word, as otherwise the Duma would have to be dissolved. I could not give Count Ignatieff any definite promise.

A similar request was made to me by Sturmer, on the eve of the opening of the Duma. On the plea of illness he asked me to call on him. At first I decided not to go, and wrote Sturmer a letter. I thought better of it afterwards and resolved to have a personal explanation. I handed to him a resolution passed by the chairmen of the provincial Zemstvo Boards, in which they reiterated all that had many times been pointed out to the Government: its incapacity to make the most of the nation's patriotic enthusiasm, its perpetual conflict with the representatives of the people all through the war, its incompetence under present conditions

* It transpired after the Revolution that the Government was informed of all that went on in the Duma by the deputy P. N. Krupensky.

to bring the war to a victorious end, and the fact that the principal danger with which the country was menaced lay not outside but within.

"Such is the opinion of Russia's most conservative men," I told Sturmer, "the opinion of persons of ripe experience, that of the whole of Russia's Zemstvos. This resolution is similar to that of the Progressive *bloc*, and thus enables you to know the mind of all Russia. Co-operation with public workers is for you impossible, and without such co-operation the war cannot be won. Everyone feels that the Government is driving the country to ruin. One must speak nothing but the truth now, for we are living through terrible times."

Having read the resolution, Sturmer asked:

"What am I to do?"

"Resign."

"How do you mean—resign?"

"Just take a pen, write, and sign."

Sturmer was extremely annoyed.

"So that is the advice you give me!"

CHAPTER XV

The "Junge Zarin": Miliukoff's Speech and its Consequences—Sturmer and Protopopoff demand the Dissolution of the Duma——Markoff II makes a Scene—After Rasputin's Murder—Protopopoff as Spiritualist.

A FEW days before the opening of the Duma the German Governor-General of Warsaw issued a proclamation announcing the decision of the German and Austrian Emperors to create out of the Polish provinces annexed from Russia an independent State under an hereditary constitutional monarch. This was but another of Wilhelm's cunning moves. Poles living in neutral countries passed resolutions protesting against such a violation of international law and the settlement of the destiny of whole provinces before the end of the war and the conclusion of a general peace. They treated this act as a clever manœuvre for the conscription of a Polish army. The Russian Poles thought likewise. A statement was read out at the very first sitting of the Duma protesting, in the name of the Polish "Kolo,"* against the German act, and expressing their hope for the ultimate victory of the Allies, the unification of all Polish territory and the restoration of a free Poland.

Unfortunately, after Sazonoff's resignation, our own Government displayed absolute indifference with regard to the Polish question. More than this, it seemed purposely to be creating a feeling that Russia was not bound by the promise contained in the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch's manifesto, nor did it find the right word to say at this

* The Polish group in the Duma.

juncture. No statement was made in the Duma in reply to that read by Garusevitch on behalf of the "Kolo," while in the Council of the Empire. Protopopoff, as if suddenly remembering that he had something to say, asked leave to speak at the moment when members were already dispersing at the end of the sitting. They were asked to return to the hall, and Protopopoff, ascending the tribune, made a brief statement to the effect that with regard to the Polish question the Government still adhered to the principles enunciated in the manifesto of the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch and in a subsequent declaration made in the Duma by Goremykin. Such a statement, of course, failed to satisfy anyone, nor could it counteract the effect of the Kaiser's proclamation.

The Cabinet, including Sturmer, were present at the opening of the Duma. After listening to the presidential address Sturmer rose and, amid shouts from the Left wing of "Down with the traitor Sturmer," quitted the assembly, followed by the rest of the Ministers. They were all alleged to be hastening to the opening of the Council of the Empire, which was fixed for 2 p.m. instead of 8 p.m. as was the custom. Kulomsin, President of the Council of the Empire, was ill, and his deputy, Golubeff, had fixed this early hour at Sturmer's request, because Sturmer and Protopopoff, having no statements to make, were unwilling to listen to disagreeable home truths in the Duma.

I had caught a chill the day before, felt very unwell, and having with difficulty got through my inaugural address, gave up the chair to my deputy, Varun-Secret. This fact, trivial in itself, was pregnant with unpleasant consequences. Miliukoff, in the course of his speech, read out a passage from a German newspaper. Varun-Secret, who apparently had not heard what Miliukoff was read-

ing, and overlooked the fact that the use of foreign languages on the tribune of the Duma was prohibited by the order of procedure, did not call Miliukoff to order. Yet the passage quoted by Miliukoff contained a broad hint at the active part taken by the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna in Sturmer's appointment to the Premiership, while Sturmer himself was openly called a traitor. The passage read was as follows: "*Das ist der Sieg der Hofpartei, die sich um die junge Zarin gruppiert.*" ("This is a victory of the Court party, grouped around the young Tsaritsa.")

That same night, at 2 a.m., I received the following letter from Sturmer:

"DEAR MIKHAIL VLADIMIROVITCH,

"Information has reached me that at to-day's sitting of the Imperial Duma, Miliukoff, a member of the Duma, took the liberty of quoting a paragraph from a newspaper edited in one of the countries with which we are at war, in which paragraph mention was made of the august name of her Imperial Majesty the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna in an inadmissible juxtaposition with the names of certain other persons; and that no steps were taken by the presiding member for putting a stop to such proceedings.

"Attaching, as I do, exceptional importance to this event, hitherto unknown in the annals of the Imperial Duma, I entertain no doubt but that you will take decisive measures, and would be greatly obliged if you could let me know your decision on the matter."

Simultaneously Sturmer wrote me another letter asking for a copy of the stenographic report of the speech as actually delivered, uncensored by the President, and adding that "this speech may be the subject of a judicial investigation."

The head of the Duma secretariat, Glinka, told me that the ministers held a conference that night at Sturmer's house. The Premier urged the dissolution of the Duma, but eventually they decided to

send me the above letters, while the Minister for Justice, Makaroff, did not consider that Miliukoff's speech contained anything criminal and refused to bring him to justice.

After Sturmer's letters I also received one from Count Fredericks, Minister of the Imperial Court. He reminded me that I held the rank of Chamberlain, and asked to be informed of the steps I intended to take in connection with the mention of the Empress's name. To Sturmer I replied that the President of the Duma was not bound to render account of his actions to the Prime Minister, and forwarded him a verbatim copy of Miliukoff's speech in full. I wrote a similar official reply to Fredericks, but as he was a man whom I esteemed, I added a private letter in which I told him that in the stenographic reports intended for the Press the Empress's name was not mentioned.

At the next sitting of the Duma, Varun-Secret made a statement in which he explained his conduct of the day before by his ignorance of the German language and by the fact that in the stenographic report of Miliukoff's speech submitted to him the German quotation was omitted. Nevertheless, Varun-Secret admitted himself to be guilty of inattention to the words of the speaker and resigned his office of Deputy-President of the Duma.

That same day, I believe, I received a letter from the Chief Committee of the All-Russian Union of Towns. It reiterated still more forcibly all that had been said in the resolution of the chairmen of the provincial Zemstvo Boards. The letter ended with an entreaty that I should tell the Duma that in the opinion of the Committee the decisive hour had struck, and that it was urgently necessary to insist on obtaining a Government which would lead the nation to victory in union with the people.

On November 3 I was re-elected President by

232 votes against 58. The Right Wing voted against me, the Left abstained, as usual. On November 5 an event occurred which created a profound impression not only in the Duma, but throughout the country. In the course of Markoff's speech, in which he endeavoured diligently, but unsuccessfully, to parry Maklakoff's attacks on Sturmer, Shuvaeff and Grigorovitch, Ministers for War and Marine respectively, entered the assembly hall. They notified the President of their desire to make a statement. After Markoff II had finished speaking, Shuvaeff mounted the tribune and said, showing great emotion, that he, as an old soldier, trusted in the gallantry of the Russian army, and that owing to the unanimous support of the nation and the representatives of the people, the army was now properly equipped and supplied with all necessaries. He quoted figures showing the increase in munitions since the formation of the Special Council for Defence. His speech ended in an appeal for the Duma's continued support and confidence. Grigorovitch's brief statement was equally effective. The meaning attributed to their joint demonstration was as follows: "If the other Ministers choose to steer clear of the Duma, we, the representatives of the services, desire to make common cause with the nation."

When the Ministers descended from their box into the hall, they were at once surrounded by deputies, who shook hands with them. Shuvaeff found himself among the Cadets and, gripping Miliukoff's hand, repeatedly said: "I thank you." Involuntarily one asked oneself, whether Shuvaeff and Grigorovitch had acted on their own intitiative or had made sure of a permission from the Stavka. It is significant that even such an ordinary event as a Minister's cordial visit to the Duma produced an impression on the country;

telegrams of sympathy and joy addressed to the Duma and the Ministers themselves began to pour in from all sides. The Government, led by Sturmer, remained absolutely indifferent: Shuvaeff and Grigorovitch, it appeared, had not consulted the Stavka, and visited the Duma at their own risk.

After this Sturmer and Protopopoff pressed the Empress for the dissolution of the Duma.

On my re-election I solicited an audience of the Emperor. At the same time I forwarded to him a copy of the resolution of the Zemstvos and Towns as well as the full text of Miliukoff's speech, including the German quotation. The reply was long in coming.

Trepoff, the Minister for Ways and Communications, desired to make a statement on the Murmansk railway. The construction of this important strategic railway had just been completed, and Trepoff prided himself on its having begun to function during his tenure of office. He hoped to gain the approval of the Duma, and perhaps share the popularity of Grigorovitch and Shuvaeff. He was quite out of place as Minister for Communications, and not always unbiassed in the matter of the direction of new railway lines, in which private companies were interested.

Trepoff asked Shingareff, chairman of the Duma Commission for Defence, to fix a date for his statement and was invited by the latter to come next day. As soon as the members of the Commission learnt that Trepoff's report had been placed on the agenda, the majority declined to hear him, and announced their intention of making a disturbance in the event of his arrival. In the meantime Trepoff had already arrived and was waiting in the Ministerial pavilion. Shingareff was vainly trying

to persuade the members to give the Minister a hearing. At last, in despair, he asked me by telephone to come to the Duma. I had great trouble in proving to the deputies that once the chairman of a commission had invited a Minister to make a statement, members were not entitled to turn him out. Trepoff was kept waiting for two hours. When finally admitted before the Commission, he hurried through his statement, asked whether there would be any questions and, as no one replied, left the Duma.

On November 9 Sturmer and Grigorovitch left for the Stavka. Fresh changes were expected. Eventually Sturmer was dismissed and Trepoff appointed Premier. It was said that Sturmer received notice of his dismissal at Orsha before reaching the Stavka. As soon as the Empress heard of this she immediately started for Headquarters, accompanied by Protopopoff.

Trepoff called on me the day after his appointment and assured me of his desire to work in collaboration with the Duma, adding that he felt capable of overcoming the influence of Rasputin. I told him that the first thing for him to do was to dismiss Protopopoff, Shakhovskoy and A. Bobrinsky (Minister of Agriculture), as otherwise he would never be trusted.

The Duma recess was drawing to a close, but beyond Sturmer's dismissal no further changes had taken place. The reopening of the Duma was again deferred. It was generally believed that Trepoff would profit by the interval to remove several other Ministers and prepare a statement on the policy of the Government. Rumours were current that he had accepted the Premiership on condition of Protopopoff's resignation, but this unfortunately proved incorrect; the only minister to be dismissed was A. Bobrinsky, who, as Minister

for Agriculture, was succeeded by Rittich.

At last, on November 15, I was received in audience by his Majesty, to whom I presented a detailed report on the same subject as before. I remained with the Emperor for an hour and three-quarters.

The Duma reassembled on the 19th. Trepoff read out the Government statement, which contained no programme and took refuge in commonplaces. He made public our agreement with the Allies on the subject of our annexation of the Dardanelles after the war. Rittich was obliged to own that he had had no time to acquaint himself with the food supply organization during his short term of office, and was therefore unable to submit any scheme to the Duma. The deputies criticized both Trepoff and Rittich severely, and set themselves to work out a comprehensive system for improving the country's food supply. I was very sorry that for political reasons the Left wing had at once launched an open campaign against Rittich. I always looked on him as an eminently capable and hard-working man, having had occasion to collaborate with him when I was chairman of the Agrarian Commission. I had then learnt to appreciate him as a perfectly honest and experienced worker. His appointment unfortunately came too late, and he was in bad company.

A disturbance occurred in the Duma during the sitting of November 22. It had obviously been planned beforehand, because the serjeants-at-arms heard members of the Right asking each other in the gallery: "Has the row come off yet?"

Markoff II, having obtained leave to speak, intentionally used language calling for reprimand from the chair. I stopped him several times and finally ruled him out of order. On quitting the tribune, Markoff approached the presidential chair

and, waving his papers and shaking his fist in my face, uttered distinctly: "You scoundrel, scoundrel, scoundrel . . ."

At first I did not even realize what had happened. Then, having notified the Duma of the insult directed at its President, I gave up the chair to my senior deputy.

Count Bobrinsky, after making a statement on the incident, moved that the severest punishment allowed for by the procedure, i.e., suspension for fifteen sittings, be applied to Markoff. The motion was carried unanimously. Markoff asked for leave to make a statement and announced: "I re-affirm what I said before. I wished to insult your President, and in his person to insult you all, gentlemen. Insulting allusions to exalted personages were made in this place, which none of you resented, through the medium of your President, who is partial and not a gentleman. . . . I insult you all!"

On the way from the hall to my room I caught sight of Markoff's retreating figure. My first impulse was to overtake him, but luckily I was prevented from doing so by my confessor, the Duma chaplain. I regained my self-possession and together we entered my room. It was already crowded with deputies. Dmitriukoff, a highly-strung, nervous man, embraced me with tears in his eyes. Bobrinsky tried to soothe me, and Markoff I came up to me saying that though he was Markoff II's uncle he begged not to be "associated with his nephew." My son George, an officer in the Preobrazhensky Regiment, who was in the gallery with several brother officers, rushed downstairs to the telephone to ask his colonel's permission to challenge Markoff to a duel. As soon as I heard of it, I forbade him to do so. I sent for Panchulidzeff and D. Dashkoff, two of my

own old brother officers in the Chevaliers Gardes, and asked them to act as my seconds.

That same evening the Duma met for the election of the presidential body. I was re-elected by the majority against 26 votes. The Zemstvo-Octobrist group decided that the utterances of Markoff II were unworthy of notice and that he should not be shaken hands with. This resolution was endorsed by all the parties included in the Progressive *bloc*. The deputies Savitch and Kapnist arrived at my house with a copy of this resolution, which they handed me in the presence of my seconds, Panchulidzeff and Dashkoff. My seconds considered that under the circumstances Markoff II could not be regarded as a man enjoying the right to fight a duel.

After this unfortunate episode, in which Markoff II figured merely as somebody's mouthpiece, I began to receive numerous letters and telegrams from acquaintances and strangers, from assemblies of the Zemstvos and the Nobility assemblies, provincial and district Zemstvo Boards, municipalities and so forth. The Council of Professors of Petrograd University honoured me by electing me a member of the University *honoris causa*. The Ekaterinoslav Municipal Council sent me the following telegram: "Congratulations on brilliant victory over base sally of henchman of Ministerial lobby."

There could be no doubt but that Markoff's bout had been premeditated; clearly the desire existed to degrade the President of the Duma and trample him in the mud. It turned out otherwise.

A few days later the French Ambassador presented me, in the name of the President of the French Republic, with the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour.

At one of the next sittings a wonderfully powerful and inspiring speech was delivered by Purishke-

vitch. Disassociating himself from the Extreme Right, he spoke of the influence of the powers of darkness, and appealed to the Ministers present in the Duma. "You must," he said, "go at once to the Stavka, throw yourselves at the Emperor's feet, and implore him to credit the full horror of Rasputin's influence, the dire consequences of the present state of affairs, and to change his policy."

As all the stenographic reports of proceedings at the Duma were strictly censored, the members' speeches appeared in the Press with large blank spaces and reached the public in a completely distorted form. Evil-intentioned persons even began to fabricate certain speeches by inserting passages of their own, and sold separate copies for a few roubles.

A sharp change of front became manifest in the Council of the Empire. There, too, the members at last realized the impossibility of supporting such a Government. Eugene Trubetzkoy appealed to the members of the Synod to remember the cross which they wore on their breast, and taking up their cross, to go to the Tsar and implore him to deliver the Church and the Government from unclean influences. Like the Duma, the Council of the Empire passed a resolution declaring that it was the duty of the Government to listen to the voice of the nation and entrust power to men who enjoyed the confidence of the country. (How many times had all this been said already! . . .) A similar resolution was carried by the congress of the United Nobility.

All Russia thought alike and desired the same thing, yet the Government's policy remained unchanged. On the contrary, the acute divergency between Government and people appeared to be intentionally emphasized. The Pan-Zemstvo Congress in Moscow was prohibited at the last

moment, in spite of Protopopoff's assurances to the Press of his favourable attitude towards the Zemstvos and public workers in general. The delegates to the congress held meetings in private houses and handed over their rights to the committee presided over by Prince Lvoff.* In the papers blank columns appeared in place of the reports communicated by telephone from Moscow.

A notice appeared in the Press that Princess S. N. Vasilchikova, wife of a member of the Council of the Empire, was about to leave Petrograd for her estate in the province of Novgorod. The Princess's departure, as everyone understood, was not voluntary. Soon it became known that Princess Vasilchikova had written a letter to the Empress about Rasputin. Kaufman-Turkestansky, High Steward to the Imperial household, suffered in a similar fashion. He was Red Cross delegate at the Stavka. He had the courage to speak to the Emperor and entreat him to dismiss Protopopoff and appoint a man trusted by the nation. The Emperor agreed. The Empress arrived at the Stavka. Kaufman was due to leave for a time. He was bidden a most cordial farewell, but on reaching Petrograd he received from the Emperor an intimation that he was released from his duties as Red Cross representative at the Stavka.

A whole group of members of the Left had been suspended for from eight to fifteen sittings a few days before the Markoff episode. They had created a disturbance during the reading of the Government statement and had prevented Trepoff from speaking. After Markoff's suspension, the question was raised that the punishments meted out had been equal, while the offences were by no means equal. I intended to move in the Duma that the term of suspension of the deputies of the Left should be

* Prime Minister of the first Provisional Government in 1917.

reduced. At this juncture a delegation arrived from the Petrograd factory workers, announcing that they had come to "demand" a reprieve for the suspended deputies. I had a long talk with them about the state of the country, and, with regard to their claim, told them frankly what my intention had been, but that in view of the "demand" put forward by the workers I did not consider it possible to act under pressure from outside.

Quite unexpectedly and illegally Dobrovolsky, the Minister for Justice, dismissed the case of Manusevitch-Manuiloff, which had already been heard by Court and jury. This was a proceeding unheard of in Russian jurisprudence. It was done by Imperial command.

On December 16 the Duma rose for the Christmas recess.

An event occurred on the night of December 17 which may justly be considered as marking the beginning of the second Revolution—the murder of Rasputin. No doubt the perpetrators of this murder acted from patriotic motives. They saw that all legal methods of fighting the dangerous favourite led to nothing, and thought it their sacred duty to deliver the Imperial Family and Russia from the hypnotic power in which they were held enthralled. The result, however, was exactly contrary to the anticipation. The people saw that the fight for Russia's interests was only possible by means of terroristic acts, as legal methods failed to attain the desired aim. The knowledge that a Grand Duke, a member of the highest aristocracy, and members of the Duma had taken part in Rasputin's murder seemed to emphasize this fact.

At the same time, Rasputin's power and influence appeared to be confirmed by the extraordinary severity of the punishment meted out by the

Emperor to members of the Imperial Family. A number of Grand Dukes were banished from the capital to the army and other places. The papers were prohibited by the censor from writing of the *starets* Rasputin and of *startsy* in general. Editors, however, while paying heavy fines, published all the minutest details of the case. As if in defiance of public opinion, the policy of the Government became still more reactionary, and confidence was bestowed only on Rasputin's followers. The clamour roused by this terroristic act only served to make it generally popular, and the conviction steadily grew that since persons closely connected with the Imperial Family and members of the aristocracy had taken part in it—matters had indeed reached a climax.

Ever since the winter of 1913-14 society had talked of little else but of the influence exercised by the "powers of darkness." It was stated openly and definitely that the appointment of Ministers and other officials depended on these "powers of darkness," whose medium was Rasputin. The Court entourage either could or would not realize the fatal consequences such a state of affairs might have for the dynasty. Indignation was practically universal—but so were silence and submission. Such was the state of mind of Russian society when the world war broke out. The universal outburst of patriotic enthusiasm which swept the country relegated all internal troubles and apprehensions temporarily to the background. It seemed as if at the prospect of a cruel war, which claimed such heavy sacrifices from everyone, all differences had disappeared and the whole community, in singleness of purpose had rallied round the motto of "War to a victorious end."

The Rasputinites, however, did not rest. They soon resumed their intrigues, which aimed at

placing the Government in opposition to public opinion. In order to shake the Government's confidence in the nation, the legend of the growth of revolutionary tendencies was carefully and adroitly circulated. There were at the time absolutely no grounds for such fears, but the Russian public was immediately made suspect by the Government, and this policy of no confidence was continued right up to the outbreak of the Revolution. As most of the Ministers were Rasputin's nominees, I am justified in asserting that this policy of alienating the Government from the nation originated with his circle. Patriotic enthusiasm soon gave way to keen apprehension, and the fatal word "treason," first whispered secretly, soon sounded loudly and ominously throughout the country. Defeatists raised their heads, and the criminal, treacherous propaganda of their ideas soon became widespread, affecting all the weak and vacillating members of the community.

I here close the narrative of Rasputin's career and of the part played by him in the history of the Russian Empire. I can vouch for the truth of all the facts I have alleged. These facts adjust themselves into a definite and intricate pattern, showing the enormous influence this man exercised on the trend of public affairs through the medium of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. The case leaves no room for doubt. What always struck me, who closely observed these phenomena, was the strict correlation in all the acts of the Rasputinites. It seemed as if they were pursuing some well thought out and definite plan.

I am far from asserting that Rasputin himself was the inspirer and leader of the nefarious activities of his clique. Though clever and astute by nature, he was after all only an illiterate and uneducated peasant, with a limited outlook on life and

absolutely devoid of any political ideas—world politics were simply beyond his power of comprehension. He was, therefore, incapable of guiding the political opinions of the Imperial couple. Had he alone been an intimate of the Court, the whole affair would have been limited to donations, presents, perhaps to instances of patronage extended to a certain number of suppliants—nothing more. On the other hand, the wicked idea of "treason" on the part of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna must be rejected once and for all. This charge was absolutely repudiated by the commission under Muravieff which was appointed by the Provisional Government for the purpose of elucidating this matter in the light of documentary evidence.

That the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna may have thought a separate peace with Germany would serve Russia's interests better than a prolongation of the war on the side of the Allies, is certainly possible, but this was never actually established. Still less has anyone the right to speak of "treason" to the Allied cause on the part of the Emperor Nicholas II. He sealed his loyalty to his pledge by dying a martyr's death.

But at the same time it was perfectly clear that the whole internal policy of the Imperial Government from the outbreak of the war had inevitably and methodically led the country to revolution, to confusion in the minds of the citizens and to the complete political and economic collapse of the State.

One has but to recall the "Ministerial leap-frog." Five Ministers of the Interior had succeeded one another between the autumn of 1915 and that of 1916; Prince Scherbatoff was followed by A. N. Khvostoff, who was succeeded in turn by Makaroff, the elder Khvostoff, and lastly Proto-

popoff. Their average term of office was about two and a half months. How was any serious home policy possible under such circumstances? Three Ministers for War were changed during the same period—Polivanoff, Shuvaeff and Beliaeff, and four Ministers for Agriculture—Krivoshein, Naumoff, Count A. Bobrinsky and Rittich. The regular work of all State departments connected with the war was inevitably interrupted by these continual changes. No good could come of it: chaos, contradictory orders, general confusion, absence of guiding will power, lack of determination and firmness of purpose were not conducive to victory.

The people looked on, felt something was wrong, the conscience of the nation was stirred, and simple-minded folk drew the logically sound conclusion: a war is on, yet no one seems to care for our brothers, the soldiers in the ranks, who are being slain in their thousands, while there is chaos everywhere, due to the incompetence and carelessness of the Ministers and generals appointed by the Tsar.

All that happened during the war was not merely the result of bureaucratic negligence, caprice and unlimited power, or of incapacity to cope with the stupendous difficulties raised by the war. It was the outcome of a well thought out and systematic campaign for creating disruption in the rear of our army. And for those who were working consciously towards that end, Rasputin proved a most convenient tool.

For this reason I affirm that those who were in a position, and whose duty it was, to combat this evil phenomenon have sinned heavily against their Mother country, for not only did they not oppose Rasputin, but they used him as a means to attain their own selfish interests at the expense of Russia.

It is interesting to note that agents of the Okhrana who stood on duty near Rasputin's house and whom

he had dismissed before the arrival of Yusupoff's car on the fatal night, returned to their post next morning knowing nothing of the murder. Rumours of Rasputin's murder had spread long before it had actually taken place, and after the event the police rushed in all directions. Even my sons were suspected, and under the pretence of a burglary a search was made in my flat. The front door latch was forced, the contents of drawers and cupboards overhauled; none of the clothes were taken, but all the papers and letters scattered about.

It was hoped that the murder would have a salutary effect, the warning taken to heart at Tsarskoe Selo, and the Government brought to its senses, or at least frightened. Actually the reverse was the case. As if to spite the public, all Rasputin's adherents were promoted. Protopopoff's appointment as Minister of the Interior received Imperial confirmation, as if to emphasize the Emperor's approval of his policy; Trepoff resigned; Count Ignatieff, Makaroff and the Assistant Minister of the Interior, Prince Volkonsky, did likewise. Trepoff was succeeded by the old Prince N. D. Golitzyn. Ignatieff's and Volkonsky's resignations were temporarily not accepted, but a few days later they read in the papers of their dismissal. The Duma learnt of the peculiar role played at the Ministry of the Interior by General Kurloff, who held no official post and was looked upon as the organizer of Stolypin's assassination. In the absence of Protopopoff, who scarcely attended to his duties and was perpetually at Tsarskoe, Kurloff signed documents "p.p. Minister of the Interior." In the meantime, as no decree concerning his appointment had been published by the Senate, Government institutions declined to acknowledge such documents. Kurloff's appointment, it appeared, had been kept secret even from

the Senate. The Government had actually come to this. Exposure by the Duma had no effect, and Kurloff remained at his post.

On January 1, 1917, corresponding changes were made in the Council of the Empire. Kulomsin was relieved of the presidency and replaced by Stcheglovitoff, and a number of ultra-reactionary men nominated members of the Council. Nevertheless, the Government failed to alter the spirit of the Upper Chamber. The recent supporters of the Government, "right or wrong," now declared themselves against Protopopoff. When the rumour arose that Sturmer would be included in the list of newly-nominated members of the Council, the Conservatives announced that they would not admit him into their group. Trepoff was elected chairman of the Right group, as if to emphasize the members' approval of his stand against Protopopoff and the motives which led to his resignation from the Cabinet.

The whole policy of the Government during this period consisted of a series of inefficient reprisals coupled with inaction. After the Duma rose for the Christmas holidays rumours became current that it would not be summoned on January 9, which was the date fixed for its reopening. The Imperial warrant on the appointment of Prince Golitzyn contained a phrase recommending "friendly relations with the legislative chambers and the necessity of collaborating with them in their work." This, however, in no wise prevented Protopopoff from obtaining, without Golitzyn's knowledge, a postponement of the Duma session till January 14. Protopopoff not only continued to be an important personage at Tsarskoe, but apparently posed as Rasputin's successor. It was said that he held spiritualist *séances* and even evoked Rasputin's spirit.

CHAPTER XVI

Disruption in the Rear—Krymoff urges a Coup d'État —Luncheon with the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna —Visit of the Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch— Audience of January 7.

THE supply organization was going from bad to worse. The towns were short of food, the peasants could not buy boots; yet all felt that there was plenty of everything in Russia, and that the shortage was due to the chaos prevailing throughout the country. While Moscow and Petrograd had no meat, the papers wrote of large consignments of frozen meat which had accumulated at the railway stations in Siberia. All these stocks of over half a million poods were bound to be spoilt as soon as the thaw set in. All efforts on the part of Zemstvo organizations or private persons were wrecked by the criminal indifference or incompetence of the authorities. Each Minister or senior official laid the blame on someone else, and those actually guilty could never be discovered.

For the improvement of the food supply in the large centres the Government could think of nothing more effective than a temporary suspension of passenger traffic. This, too, proved a scandalous failure. After one of these stoppages the locomotives were found to be out of order: the water had not been let out, frost had set in and the pipes burst; instead of improving, the transport became still worse. The Zemstvos and trade organizations attempted to convene special food supply conferences, but these were prohibited by the Government. The local supply officials, who vainly sought to obtain instructions in the various Ministries, used

to come in despair to consult the President of the Duma, who, in the absence of the Duma itself, embodied the principle of national representation. Many of the Government's measures provided food for peculiar and melancholy reflections: it seemed as if the authorities were consciously working on behalf of Germany and against Russia. Closer investigation of the sources from which such measures emanated led inevitably to Protopopoff and through him to the Empress.

At the beginning of January (1917) General Krymoff arrived from the front and asked to be given an opportunity of unofficially acquainting the members of the Duma with the disastrous conditions at the front and the spirit of the army. A large number of members of the Duma, the Council of the Empire and the Special Council assembled at my flat. The gallant General's tale was listened to with profound emotion. His was a painful and grim confession. There could be no hope of victory, said Krymoff, until the Government had changed its course, or given way to another which the army could trust. The progress of the war was heavily handicapped and all temporary successes brought to nought by conditions in the rear. Krymoff wound up his statement more or less as follows:

"The spirit of the army is such that the news of a *coup d'état* would be welcomed with joy. A revolution is imminent, and we at the front feel it to be so. If you decide on such an extreme step, we will support you. Clearly there is no other way. You, as well as numbers of others, have tried everything, but the Emperor attaches more weight to his wife's nefarious influence than to all honest words of warning. There is no time to lose."

Krymoff ceased speaking, and for a few seconds an ominous and painful silence filled the room. It

was first broken by Shingareff.

"The General is right. A *coup d'état* is urgent. But who will have the courage to undertake it?"

Shidlovsky said fiercely:

"No need to pity or spare *him*, when he is driving Russia to ruin."

Many members of the Duma agreed with Shingareff and Shidlovsky; heated arguments arose on every side. Someone quoted Brusiloff's words: "If I had to choose between the Emperor and Russia, I follow Russia."

The most implacable of all proved to be Tereschenko. His words greatly agitated me, and I rebuked him.

"You do not take into account," I said, "what will follow on the Emperor's abdication. . . . I shall never countenance a revolution. . . . I have taken the oath of allegiance. . . . I desire you not to speak this way in my house. . . . If the army can insist on an abdication, let it do so through the medium of its leaders; as for me, I will continue to act, not by violence, but by persuasion, to the very last."

The conference lasted far into the night. One felt the gathering of the storm, and the future loomed dark and menacing: some fatal destiny seemed to be drawing the country into a fathomless abyss.

About the same time I had a peculiar interview with the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna.

One night, about 1 a.m., the Grand Duchess summoned me on the telephone.

"Mikhail Vladimirovitch, could you come and see me at once?"

"Your Highness, I really don't know whether it would be convenient at such a late hour. . . . To tell you the truth, I was just going to bed."

"I must see you on an urgent matter. I will send my car to fetch you. Do come, please."

I felt puzzled by such insistence, and asked if I might give my answer in a quarter of an hour. The President of the Duma calling on a Grand Duchess at one o'clock in the morning—it would savour too much of a conspiracy.

Exactly a quarter of an hour later the telephone bell rang again and Marie Pavlovna's voice was heard asking:

"Well, are you coming?"

"No, your Highness, I cannot come to you now."

"Then come to lunch to-morrow."

"At your service, thank you. I will come to-morrow."

On my arrival next day I found the Grand Duchess and her sons, as if assembled for a family council. They were all most cordial to me, and not a word was said about the "urgent matter." At last we passed into the Grand Duchess's boudoir, the conversation still revolving round trivial topics. Cyril Vladimirovitch, turning to his mother, said:

"Why don't you speak?"

The Grand Duchess then began to talk of the general state of affairs, of the Government's incompetence, of Protopopoff and of the Empress. On mentioning the latter's name she became more and more excited, dwelt on her nefarious influence and interference in everything, and said she was driving the country to destruction; that she was the cause of the danger which threatened the Emperor and the rest of the Imperial Family; that such conditions could no longer be tolerated; that things must be changed, something done, removed, destroyed. . . .

Wishing to understand more precisely what she was driving at, I asked:

"What do you mean by 'removed'?"

"Well, I don't know. . . . Some attempt must be made . . . . The Duma must do something. . . . She must be annihilated. . . ."

"Who?"

"The Empress."

"Your Highness," said I, "allow me to treat this conversation as if it had never taken place, because if you address me as the President of the Duma, my oath of allegiance compels me to wait at once on his Imperial Majesty and report to him that the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna has declared to me that the Empress must be annihilated."

The idea of the Emperor's compulsory abdication had been persistently circulated in Petrograd since the end of 1916. Persons belonging to the highest society frequently urged upon me that it was the duty of the Duma and of its President to make themselves responsible to the country and save the army. After Rasputin's death such talk became still more insistent. Many people were sincerely convinced that I was preparing a *coup d'état* with the support of officers of the Guard and the British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan. I was profoundly indignant at this, and whenever people hinted or spoke openly to me of a *coup d'état*, I invariably repeated the same denial:

"I will not be a party to any venture, both on principle and because it is impossible to involve the Duma in an inevitable collision. The legislative chambers cannot be concerned in palace revolutions, and I have neither the will nor the power to raise the people against their Tsar."

Resentment, indignation and complaints became universal, and found vent at political meetings, at drawing-room parties, in casual talks in the theatres, shops or even trams, but no one went beyond talk. Meanwhile, had all been united, had

the clergy, the men of science and of business, and representatives of the upper classes together presented a petition or even a demand to the Emperor to listen to the voice of the nation, perhaps something might have been attained. Instead of this, some cringed and fawned, others safeguarded their own interests or clung to their posts, some kept silent, confining themselves to grumbling, gossip, and underhand threats of a revolution.

Strange as it may appear, certain members of the Imperial Family also sought the aid of the President of the Duma, demanding that he should go, prove, and persuade.

The Emperor's immediate circle also realized the magnitude of the approaching danger, but they too, even the Emperor's own brother, were both irresolute and powerless.

One afternoon the Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch called unexpectedly at my flat.

"I should like to speak to you of what is going on, to ask your advice as to what is to be done. We realize the situation perfectly," said the Grand Duke.

"Yes, your Highness, the situation is so grave that there is not a moment to lose, and Russia must be saved at once."

"Do you think there will be a revolution?"

"The people realize that while the war is on, a revolution would be fatal to the army, but the danger lies elsewhere. The Government and the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna are driving the country to a separate peace and disgrace; they are delivering us into Germany's hands. This the nation will not tolerate. Should such rumours be confirmed, a most terrible revolution will break out, and will sweep away the Throne, the dynasty, all of you and us too. There is yet time to save

Russia. Even now your brother's reign may attain unsurpassed grandeur and glory, but if this is to happen, the entire policy of the Government must undergo a radical change. Ministers must be appointed whom the nation trusts, not men whose very presence in the Government is an insult to public feeling. I am sorry to have to tell you that this can only be done on condition that the Empress is removed. She exercises a deplorable influence on all appointments, even those in the army. She and the Emperor are surrounded by shady, incompetent, evil persons. Alexandra Feodorovna is fiercely and universally hated, and all circles are clamouring for her removal. While she remains in power, we shall continue on the road to ruin."

"Do you know," said Mikhail Alexandrovitch, "Buchanan told my brother exactly the same thing. The whole family realizes Alexandra Feodorovna's evil influence; she and my brother are surrounded by traitors. All the decent people have gone. . . . But, things being so, what is to be done?"

"Your Highness, you, as the Emperor's only brother, must tell him the whole truth, point out the pernicious results of the Empress's interference, seeing that the country looks on her as a pro-German, who is not concerned for Russia's interests."

"Do you think a responsible Ministry necessary?"

"The general demand is only for a strong Government, and no mention is made anywhere of a responsible Ministry. The country's desire is to see at the head of the Cabinet a man enjoying the confidence of the nation. Such a man would form a Ministry responsible to the Tsar."

"Only you, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, could be that man; everybody trusts you."

"If I were indispensable, I should be willing to devote all my energies to my country's service, but again on one condition: the removal of the Empress from all interference in affairs of State. She must go, for owing to the Emperor's unfortunate lack of will power it is quite useless to fight her. The Emperor's refusal to receive me is due to the influence of the Empress and Protopopoff. There are also grounds for belief that the Duma will be dissolved and fresh elections held. I am informed that owing to disruption in the rear, disaffection is spreading to the troops. The army is losing its self-control. . . . If all the sacrifices and suffering endured, and the blood shed, prove in vain—there will be a terrible reckoning."

"Mikhail Vladimirovitch, you must see the Emperor and once again tell him the whole truth."

"I entreat you to persuade your august brother to receive me before the opening of the Duma. For God's sake, your Highness, use your influence to get the Duma summoned and Alexandra Feodorovna and her set put out of the way."

Our talk lasted for over an hour. The Grand Duke agreed to all I said and promised to help.

The Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch was not the only one to realize the menacing state of affairs; it was clearly understood by other members of the Imperial Family. The Grand Duke Nicolai Mikhailovitch had said to me long before, "Goodness knows what they are doing with their insane policy. They want to drive the whole Russian public to desperation."

I determined once more to solicit an audience and on January 5 wrote to the Emperor:

"I take the liberty of asking permission to wait on your Imperial Majesty. In the awful hour our Mother country is passing through, I deem it my duty as a loyal subject and President of the

Imperial Duma to lay before you in full the knowledge of the calamity which is threatening the Russian State. I implore you, Sire, to command my presence and hear me out."

The reply came next day, and on January 7 I was received by the Emperor.

Shortly before this the customary New Year's Day reception was held at the Palace. I knew I should meet Protopopoff and resolved not to shake hands with him. On entering I asked the Masters of the Ceremonies, Baron Korff and Tolstoy, to warn Protopopoff not to approach me. Either they did not tell him, or Protopopoff took no heed of the warning, but I noticed that he was following me with his eyes as if intending to approach me. To avoid a meeting I moved to another part of the hall and stood with my back towards Protopopoff's group. Notwithstanding this, Protopopoff showed a bold front and, approaching me with a cordial greeting, held out his hand. I replied:

"Nowhere and never."

Protopopoff seemed nonplussed, and, at a loss what to do, took me in a friendly manner by the elbow, saying:

"My dear fellow, surely we can come to an understanding."

I felt disgusted with him.

"Leave me alone; you are repellent to me," I said.

This incident, though not in full detail, appeared in the Press. Protopopoff, it was added, intended to challenge me to a duel. However, nothing happened.

My first act, on being received by the Emperor, was to apologize for my behaviour in the Palace to a guest of the Emperor's. To this the Emperor replied:

"Yes, it was not right—at the Palace. . . ."

I remarked that Protopopoff had not greatly felt the insult, as he had sent no challenge.

"What, hasn't he challenged you?" asked the Emperor, looking surprised.

"No, your Majesty. . . . As Protopopoff is unable to defend his honour, next time I will simply thrash him."

The Emperor laughed.

I then passed on to my report.

"Your Majesty was able to gather from my second report that I consider the state of the country to have become more critical and menacing than ever. The spirit of the people is such that the gravest upheavals may be expected. Parties exist no longer, and all Russia is unanimous in claiming a change of Government and the appointment of a responsible Premier invested with the confidence of the nation. It is necessary to organize, on the basis of mutual confidence between the Government, the legislative chambers and public bodies, the work for the attainment of victory over the enemy and order at home. To our shame, chaos reigns everywhere. There is no Government and no system, neither is there, up to the present, any co-ordination between the front and the rear. At every turn one is confronted with abuse and confusion. The nation realizes that you have banished from the Government all those in whom the Duma and the people trusted, and replaced them by unworthy and incompetent men. The constant changes of Ministers at first created confusion among the officials, which finally gave place to complete indifference. Think, your Majesty, of Polivanoff, Sazonoff, Count Ignatieff, Scherbatoff, Naumoff—all of them honest and loyal servants of yourself and of Russia, who were dismissed for no cause or any fault whatever. . . . Think of such venerable statesmen as Golubeff and Kulomsin.

They were removed for the sole reason that they refused to silence honest men in the Council of the Empire. As if purposely, everything is being done to the detriment of Russia and the advantage of her enemies. No wonder monstrous rumours are afloat of treason and espionage in the rear of the army. Sire, there is not a single honest or reliable man left in your entourage; all the best have either been eliminated or resigned, and only those who have bad reputations have remained. It is an open secret that the Empress issues orders without your knowledge, that Ministers report to her on matters of State, and that by her wish those whom she views with disfavour lose their posts and are replaced by incompetent and inexperienced persons. Indignation against and hatred of the Empress are growing throughout the country. She is looked upon as Germany's champion. Even the common people are speaking of it. . . ."

"Give me facts," said the Emperor, "there are no facts to confirm your statements."

"There are no facts, but the whole trend of policy directed by her Majesty gives ground for such ideas. To save your family your Majesty ought to find some way of preventing the Empress from exercising any influence on politics. The heart of the Russian people is tortured by the foreboding of awful calamities, the people are turning away from their Tsar because they see that after all their suffering and bloodshed fresh trials are in store for them."

Touching upon events at the front, I reminded the Emperor that as long ago as 1915 I had entreated him not to assume the supreme command; that now the entire responsibility for our reverses in Rumania was attributed to him.

"Your Majesty," I continued, "do not compel the people to choose between you and the good

of the country. So far, the ideas of Tsar and Motherland were indissoluble, but lately they have begun to be separated."

The Emperor pressed his head between his hands, then said:

"Is it possible that for twenty-two years I tried to act for the best, and that for twenty-two years it was all a mistake?"

It was a hard moment. With a great effort at self-control, I replied:

"Yes, your Majesty, for twenty-two years you followed a wrong course."

In spite of these frank words, which it could not be pleasant to hear, the Emperor bade me a kind farewell and manifested neither anger nor even displeasure.

My memory here involuntarily recalls another audience, in which the true nature of the Emperor Nicholas II stood revealed more clearly than at any other time. Those who considered him to be a false and callous man are mistaken. He was merely weak and easily led by another's stronger will.

I remember how tired the Emperor looked after hearing one of my reports.

"Have I wearied your Majesty?"

"Yes, I didn't have my sleep out last night. I went out woodcock shooting this morning. How lovely it was in the woods!"

The Emperor went up to the window. It was early spring. He stood silently looking out. I, too, stood respectfully at a distance. Then the Emperor turned to me:

"How is it, Mikhail Vladimirovitch? I was in the woods to-day. . . . It is so quiet there. . . , One forgets all these intrigues and paltry human restlessness. . . . My soul felt so peaceful. . . . One is nearer to Nature there, nearer to God. . . ."

A man who felt like this could not be callous and deceitful.

Shortly before my audience on January 3, I summoned Samarin from Moscow. He had just been elected President of the United Nobility. It should be noted that rumours of my impending arrest and banishment were persistently current at the time. They were confirmed to me by a member of the Government. I felt bound to impart this information to those of my associates who in my absence would take upon themselves the defence of Russia's dignity and honour and protect the representatives of the people from undeserved insult.

Samarin arrived, accompanied by two members of the Council of the Nobility—Karpoff and Prince Kurakin. He also had asked for an audience. He was determined to lay before the Emperor the resolution of the United Nobility and explain its full significance. He spoke with intense emotion of how he felt it to be his duty to tell the Emperor the plain truth. On the eve of his visit to Tsarskoe he sat with me till late at night; he never, to the last moment, abandoned his faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice, and his belief that, at last, we should be granted a hearing.

Samarin's visit to me was followed by those of Prince Lvoff, Tchelnokoff and Konovaloff. They all approved of my actions and upheld my view that it was time to speak the whole truth, however unpalatable it might be.

After my report and that of Samarin's rumours again arose that Trepoff would be invited to form a Cabinet of "confidence" chosen from among the members of the legislative chambers. These rumours were taken up by the Press, but they soon

died down. Protopopoff remained at his post, continued his frequent visits to Tsarskoe Selo, and everything went on as before. There was even some talk of the Duma being dissolved till the end of the war, after which fresh elections would take place. What seemed to be preparations for an election campaign were set on foot. As neither the clergy nor the nobility could be relied upon, Protopopoff conceived the idea of rallying the peasants to the Government. A bill was drafted providing for the distribution of land to peasants—Knights of the Order of St. George—in holdings amounting to 30 dessiatines (about 80 acres) to be compulsorily expropriated from private landowners.

The nobility of ancient Novgorod held its provincial assembly. The spirit which animated the members found expression in a resolution vividly reflecting their feelings of anguish and fear for the future of Russia. It was hoped that a direct appeal addressed to the Emperor by members of the ruling class would produce the desired effect. The marshal of the nobility of Novgorod, Budkevitch, was unanimously elected to lay the resolution personally before the Sovereign. Unfortunately, the Emperor did not find time to receive Budkevitch, and the resolution was handed in through Protopopoff. The result of this was that the Governor of Novgorod, Islavin, was summoned to Petrograd to give explanations, and was dismissed from his post.

CHAPTER XVII

Entente Delegates in Petrograd—Police and Machine Guns—The Last Audience—Labour Arrests—The Emperor agrees to a Responsible Ministry—His Sudden Departure—Adrift.

An Allied Mission arrived in Petrograd towards the end of January for the purpose of co-ordinating operations during the approaching spring campaign.

Joint conferences were held with the Allied delegates, at which the absolute ignorance of Beliaeff, the Minister for War, was fully revealed. He and also some of our other Ministers found themselves in an extremely awkward situation with reference to our Allies; they had failed on many points to reach a preliminary understanding among themselves, and were not up-to-date even concerning their own departments. This was particularly noticeable with regard to orders placed abroad. After listening for a long time in silence to our Ministers' arguments, Lord Milner finally asked: "What is the amount of the orders you intend to place?" He was told. "And how much tonnage do you require for the transport of the material?" On receiving the answer, he remarked: "Then let me tell you that you are asking for one-fifth of the tonnage required."

The Allied delegates expressed their regret that Russia's remoteness, and her independence of the united Allied command in the West, prevented their obtaining sufficient information concerning us. The Minister Pokrovsky then proposed that a special commissioner should be appointed who would represent Russia in the West and rank above

our ambassadors. Sazonoff, the newly-appointed Russian Ambassador in London, who was present at the conference, resented this, and an argument ensued between him and Pokrovsky. The foreign delegates saw clearly that we had no unity, no system, and no understanding of the seriousness of the situation. This made them most indignant. Lord Milner, a cool and collected man, could scarcely control his feelings. He kept throwing himself back in his chair and groaned audibly. Every time the chair cracked, and he was offered another.

The French delegates also seemed very nervous, and obviously dissatisfied with us. As far back as January, 1916, when the members of the French mission, Doumergue and Castelnau, had visited Tsarskoe Selo, they had seen there, to their amazement, the heavy guns sent from France to the Russian front.

I was informed that the Petrograd police were being trained in machine gun firing. Large quantities of machine guns, instead of being despatched to the front, were distributed to the police divisions. At the same time a very peculiar order was issued, on the strength of which the troops of the Petrograd military district were excluded from the command of the northern front field army, and made directly subordinate to the Government under the commander of the military district. Some secret purpose, it was said, underlay this strange proceeding. According to persistent rumour, the Empress desired a separate peace at all costs, and Protopopoff, who was her ally, conceived the idea of provoking food riots in Petrograd and Moscow in order to suppress them and thus obtain a lawful excuse for starting peace negotiations.

So persistent were these rumours that they created grave consternation not only among members of the Duma, but also among the representatives of the Allies. Members of the Special Council for Defence resolved to raise the question of the French artillery and machine guns at the earliest meeting of the Council. They asked Beliaeff, the Minister for War, by what right he had handed over, without sanction from the Special Council, such an enormous quantity of war material to the Minister of the Interior. Beliaeff promised to give a reply in the course of the meeting, but did not, and on the question being put to him a second time, tried to close the debate. My protest against the War Minister's action was seconded by Stishinsky, Gurko and Karpoff, members of the Council of the Empire, who urged that the Minister had no right to evade answering questions put to him by the Council.

Having failed to obtain the desired information, the members decided to resort to extreme measures and request the Emperor to preside over the next meeting. The resolution on that point was carried unanimously, especially as the Emperor had promised that he would preside over particularly important meetings. Beliaeff, however, held his ground and declined to submit the Council's resolution to the Emperor on the plea that it was inopportune to harass his Majesty with questions which were not of primary importance. The members then drew up a written petition, which I despatched with my customary report.

No answer was given. . . .

On February 10 I was received in audience by the Emperor. I started on my journey with a heavy heart. Beliaeff's evasiveness and delay in replying to important questions put by the Special Council,

the Emperor's unwillingness to preside—all this boded no good.

The unusual coldness with which I was received showed me that I could not even, as usual, frankly set forth my arguments in the course of conversation. I therefore proceeded to read my written report. The Emperor's attitude was not merely indifferent, but positively harsh. During the reading of the passage which dealt with the shortage of food supplies in the army and the towns, the arming of the police with machine guns, and the general political situation, the Emperor seemed absent-minded and finally interrupted me:

"Couldn't you get through with it quicker?" he said sharply: "the Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch is expecting me to tea."

When I mentioned the terrible conditions in which our prisoners of war were kept and the report on the subject made by the Red Cross nurses who had visited Germany and Austria, the Emperor said:

"This does not concern me at all. There is a special committee for this presided over by the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna."

Concerning the machine guns for the police, the Emperor remarked apathetically:

"Strange, I've heard nothing about it."

But when I mentioned Protopopoff, he said irritably:

"Protopopoff was your deputy-president in the Duma. Why do you dislike him now?"

I explained that since he became Minister, Protopopoff had positively gone mad.

In the course of our talk about Protopopoff and home policy in general, I alluded to Maklakoff.

"I very much regret Maklakoff," said the Emperor, "he at least was certainly not out of his mind."

"He had none to get out of, your Majesty," I could not refrain from saying.

On my speaking of the menacing state of the country and the prospect of a revolution, the Emperor again interposed:

"My information is directly contrary to yours. As to the spirit prevailing in the Duma—if the Duma permits itself such harsh utterances as last time, it will be dissolved."

I was obliged to conclude my report.

"I consider it my duty, Sire, to express to you my profound foreboding and my conviction that this will be my last report to you."

"Why?" the Emperor asked.

"Because the Duma will be dissolved, and the course the Government is taking bodes no good. There is still time; it is still possible to change everything and grant a responsible Ministry, That, apparently, is not to be. You, your Majesty, disagree with me, and everything will remain as it is. The consequence of this, in my opinion, will be revolution and a state of anarchy which no one will be able to control."

The Emperor said nothing and curtly bade me farewell.

The opening of the Duma was fixed for February 14. A few days earlier I learnt that a delegation of Petrograd workmen meant to attend the first meeting in order to put forward some demands. At the same time I heard that an unknown individual posing as Miliukoff was making a round of the factories and inciting the workmen to riot. Miliukoff wrote a letter to the Press denouncing the impostor and warning the workers against provocation. This letter was suppressed by the war censor, and it was only after repeated requests on my part that the commander of the Petrograd military district, General Khabaloff, realized the expediency

of allowing Miliukoff's statement to be published. He also issued an appeal to the workers on his own account, urging them to keep calm and threatening reprisals in case of riot.

Immediately before the opening of the Duma, members of the Labour group in the war industries committee were arrested. They were men of moderate views, and the Government's motives for arresting them seemed incomprehensible. Neither were all arrested; two members remained at liberty. They addressed an appeal to the workers, entreating them to keep calm whatever happened. This appeal, like Miliukoff's letter, was not allowed to appear in the Press.

The opening of the Duma passed off quietly. There were no signs of any Labour delegation, but large police forces had been mustered in the neighbouring courtyards. In order not to add more fuel to the already smouldering fire, I limited my inaugural speech to a mention of the army and its loyal fulfilment of its duty. Instead of dealing with the general political situation, the debates were diverted to the food supply, the Minister for Agriculture, Rittich, having intimated his desire to make a statement. He made a long speech, was supported by the Centre and severely criticized by the Cadets. It was clear from his speech that in the short space of time he had been in office he had been able to do very little, and that the food supply organization was in a state of chaos. Owing to the disorganization of transport the towns were threatened with famine, while large quantities of meat, butter and corn had accumulated in Siberia. The apportionment system for the provision of supplies from the different provinces was defective. The corn-growing districts supplied too little, while excessive charges were laid upon those which themselves lacked grain. The peasants, terrified by

various apportionments, registrations and rumours of requisitions, had begun to conceal their supplies of grain or hastened to sell them off to middlemen.

In the Duma spirits were at a low ebb. Even Purishkevitch's speech lacked verve. The Duma felt itself powerless, weary of the useless struggle, almost reduced, indeed, to the role of passive spectator. Yet, despite everything, the Duma clung to its old position and did not proceed to an open rupture with the Government. Its sole weapon was the spoken word—and this was emphasized by Miliukoff when he said that the Duma "would act with words, and with words only."

The Duma was in session for nearly a week. I learnt casually that the Emperor had summoned several of the Ministers, including Golitzyn, and expressed his desire to discuss the question of a responsible Ministry. The conference ended in the Emperor's decision to go to the Duma next day and proclaim his will to grant a responsible Ministry. Prince Golitzyn was overjoyed and came home in high spirits. That same evening he was again summoned to the Palace, where the Emperor announced to him his intention to leave for the Stavka.

"How is that, your Majesty?" asked Golitzyn, amazed. "What about a responsible Ministry? You intended to go to the Duma to-morrow."

"I have changed my mind. . . . I am leaving for the Stavka to-night. . . ."

Golitzyn explained this sudden departure by the Emperor's desire to avoid further reports, conferences and deliberations.

The Emperor left.

The Duma continued with the debate on food supplies. Outwardly everything appeared quite quiet. Suddenly something seemed to snap, and the State machine jumped off the rails. . . .

Something happened—that something which those at Court, though often warned, did not believe in, and which now, implacable and menacing, suddenly arose before us all. . . .

APPENDIX I

M. V. RODZIANKO'S SPEECH AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE TERCENTENARY ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOUSE OF ROMANOFF, 1913.

Three centuries ago, when it seemed as if the Russian State had come to an end, your august ancestor, Mikhail Feodorovitch Romanoff, was called to the throne by the will of Divine Providence, the blessing of God and the unanimous voice of the people.

Inspired by their unity with their crowned leader, and beneath the shelter of the Holy Orthodox Church, the Russian people defended their native land from the daring attacks of her foes. Great in those days was the service of the Tsar—great, too, is the solemn day we are now celebrating.

Three centuries of the glorious reign of the House of Romanoff testify that beneath the sceptre of the august successors of the first Tsar of the now reigning House, Holy Russia valiantly withstood all the trials with which she was afflicted, grew, gathered strength, expanded, and attained her present state of greatness.

The heart of the Russian Tsars, so filled with love, always palpitated with joy at all the joys and successes of the Fatherland, and was filled with profound sorrow in the year of troubles and misfortune. The good of the Russian Sovereign was the good of the people, his grief was the people's grief, and the Russian people now, as three hundred years ago, reverently venerate and unreservedly love their Tsar. O great Sovereign, manifold are your labours and your care for the good of the people, and unwearied your solicitude for them. Believing, as of yore, that the strength of the Motherland lies in close unity of Tsar and people, believing in their statesmanship and wisdom, you have summoned the men chosen by the nation to participate in legislative construction. And the members of the Imperial Duma, the chosen of the people, inspirited by the confidence of the Monarch, are infinitely rejoiced personally to lay at the feet of your Imperial Majesty their most loyal congratulations on the occasion of this supremely momentous festival of the Russian State.

Accept therefore, Sire, this holy ikon of Christ the Saviour as a blessing from the people, as a visible token of those heartfelt prayers which are offered to-day in all the remotest parts of Russia for the health and happiness of your Majesty and all the Reigning Family.

May the blessing of the All-Highest be upon you, may He guard His Anointed beneath His heavenly pall, for the happiness and joy of all the Russian nation.

APPENDIX II

M. V. RODZIANKO'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE IMPERIAL DUMA ON JULY 26 (O.S.), 1914.

His Majesty the Emperor has been most graciously pleased, in this hour of trial which has befallen the Fatherland, to summon the Imperial Duma in the name of the Russian Tsar's unity with his loyal people. The Imperial Duma has given its reply to its Sovereign at to-day's reception. We all know well that Russia did not want war, that the Russian people are alien to aspirations for conquest, but destiny itself has drawn us into war. The die is cast, and we are now fully confronted with the problem of safeguarding the integrity and unity of our State. It is good to see, in the midst of a tempestuous vortex of events unparalleled in the history of the world, the calm and dignified assurance which has possessed all without exception, and which has emphasized before the whole world the majestic strength of the Russian spirit. We are able to say, calmly and without challenge: "Hands off! Dare not touch our Holy Russia." Our people are gentle and peaceful, but terrible and powerful when forced to defend themselves. "See,"—so may we say—"you thought that we were torn by dissensions and antagonisms, and yet all the nationalities inhabiting Russia are united in one family when their common Fatherland is threatened with danger."

And the Russian paladin will not bow his head in discouragement whatever trials befall him. His powerful shoulders will bear any burden, however heavy; and once again will our Motherland, one and undivided, be glorified with peace and plenty in all the lustre of her indomitable greatness. Gentlemen, members of the Imperial Duma! At this hour, all our thoughts and wishes are directed to our frontiers, where our gallant army and glorious navy are fearlessly advancing to battle. Our thoughts are there, where our children and brothers, with the bravery inherent to them, are defending the greatness of the Fatherland. God the Almighty be with them, defend and strengthen them, while our own heartfelt wishes of success and glory will always be with these our heroes. We who stay at home must work without respite to

provide for the families left without their breadwinners; and those in the army know that in deed, and not merely in word, we shall look to it that they shall want for nothing.

APPENDIX III

LETTER FROM GENERAL ALEXEIEFF TO M. V. RODZIANKO.

DEAR MIKHAIL VLADIMIROVITCH*, You have addressed, through the intermediary of our attaché in France, a telegram to General Joffre and M. Albert Thomas concerning the supply of aeroplanes for the Russian army, and have determined, according to your own lights, both the type and quantity of the machines, without any relation to the general programme worked out by common agreement between ourselves and the French and British Governments. Copies of the correspondence conducted by you, though after the despatch of your telegram, were forwarded by you to the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch. On this correspondence being submitted to his Majesty the Emperor, his Majesty commanded me to notify you of his wish that you should abstain from direct interference in war matters which do not concern either the President of the Imperial Duma or a member of the Special Council. A business possessing several masters, each deeming himself to be independent of the others, equally competent and invested with full powers, is liable to come to ruin in a very short time.

I beg to assure you of my absolute respect and loyalty.

MIKHAIL ALEXEIEFF.

* In Russian official correspondence the customary address was: "Milostivy Gosudar" ("Gracious Sir"), followed by the name and patronymic.

APPENDIX IV

M. V. RODZIANKO'S SPEECH AT THE INDUSTRIALISTS' CONGRESS, 1915.

GENTLEMEN: On my way to attend this meeting, I encountered more than one unit of young recruits now being trained and preparing to fill the places of the fallen. I have travelled 2,000 versts, visited Galicia, been in close contact with the army, and can find no suitable words to express my profound emotion and my infinite reverence for these brave soldiers, for the indomitable spirit which I have everywhere witnessed, and with which the young men now in training are animated, knowing it to be their duty fearlessly to march into the field of battle. It is, therefore, the first and most important duty of citizens of the Russian State to give the army a complete and perfect assurance that perfect calm reigns in the rear; that the interior of our peaceful homeland, as yet untroubled by the effects of the war, is ready to devote all its strength to the task of assisting them, and working for their needs and their glory. We must, too, convey to them the certainty that here, in the rear, there is no room for parties or dissensions, but only one desire—for victory over the enemy.

I am happy, gentlemen, to testify that this is now the watchword firmly established among the members of the Imperial Duma. The representatives of the people realized this by instinct, and you can bear witness that the absence of parties, and complete unanimity, are a continuous feature of all our sittings. I may say that this unity, this absence of all party principles, are equally manifest in the small meetings we now frequently hold in connection with the business of the Imperial Duma. I am perfectly well aware that the industrial world, industrial circles, are a class and a sphere of immense importance to the State. You represent the masters and rulers of that vast sphere of the economic life of the State which in its future high grade of progress will enable us not only to defeat the enemy in the field, but will give us power to prove what Russia is capable of achieving. Henceforth all Russian citizens must have but one watchword: Everything for the army, everything for victory

over the enemy. Everything must be done in order to overthrow by our united efforts those who dare challenge Russia's greatness. I take the liberty of expressing a wish that henceforth there may be no party divisions, aspirations or ambitions, but one unanimous thought, directed towards productive work for assisting our army completely to enfranchise Russia from all assaults of alien influence. Allow me to greet you in these words and express the certainty that so it will be in deed.

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