DIPLOMATIC REMINISCENCES

BEFORE AND DURING THE WORLD WAR, 1911-1917

A. NEKLUDOFF

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BEFORE AND DURING THE WORLD WAR, 1911—1917

BY A. NEKLUDOFF

FORMERLY RUSSIAN MINISTER AT SOFIA AND AT STOCKHOLM
AND AMBASSADOR AT MADRID

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY ALEXANDRA PAGET

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PREFACE

My Diplomatic Reminiscences include the period between February, 1911, when I was appointed Russian Minister to Sofia, and September, 1917, when I put an end to my ephemeral term of office in Madrid by refusing my further services to M. Kerensky's Government.

The first fourteen chapters deal with my work in Bulgaria and with the two Balkan Wars, that of 1912 and that of 1913, which form the prelude to the catastrophe of 1914. The succeeding chapters have to do with Sweden, with the World-War and with the Russian Revolution as I saw them from my post in Stockholm.

In my Reminiscences I describe what came under my notice, not disdaining small touches; I note what I was able to gather; but as by virtue of my diplomatic position my range of vision and my information were limited, I in no way aspire to explain the whole of the great drama which has just been performed. Moreover, circumstances have obliged me to compile my work far away from sources at which I might have refreshed and verified my impressions,[1] and consequently there are a few inevitable gaps in the narrative, probably also a few inexactitudes and some errors in dates. I tender my apologies beforehand to the reader for these involuntary errata, and I leave them to become the prey of those who might wish to profit by them to invalidate my testimony when this testimony does not suit them.

[1] My Reminiscences were written at Nice between June, 1918, and July, 1919.

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Nevertheless I venture to cherish the hope that the faithful description of what I have been enabled to see, to hear and to know, and even the judgments that I pass—in all sincerity—on men and matters, will form a contribution to the study of those events which have destroyed an entire world, and which are inaugurating a new and unknown order of things.

This order of things is greeted by some with ecstasy; others view it with terror; others again hope to exploit it to their own advantage or to that of their old moral and political conceptions which they are striving to disguise as best they can.

I prefer to confess at once that—although sincerely deploring the disappearance of a world to which I was bound by my former habits, my mentality and my work—I do not suffer from any illusion as to the possible return of this old world, of this ancient order of things. And more especially must I realise this where it is a question of Russia and of her future destinies.

All of us who have taken an active part in the tremendous events which have just occurred, belong to an irrevocable past, and history is already preparing to engrave our final sentence on its tables of bronze.

That is why—contrary to established custom—I have allowed myself, in the course of these Reminiscences, to judge my contemporaries with complete frankness, and to say all I think about them and the part they have played, when I have observed them, heard them or seen them act. And the dead—I bury my dead as my conscience dictates: To some—the pomp of a national funeral, the mournful chants of Melpomene, the fumes of incense and of smouldering torches; to others—the modest procession of relatives and a few friends; to others again—the felon's end.

A. N.

Feb. 16, 1920.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

MY APPOINTMENT TO SOFIA

PAGES

My former relations with M. Sazonoff—Scheme for a Russo-Bulgarian military convention—Question of relations with King Ferdinand—Audience of the Emperor; H.I.M. gives me his instructions—Serious illness of M. Sazonoff—I leave for Sofia 1–6

CHAPTER II

KING FERDINAND OF BULGARIA

His youth; his sudden rise to power—First years of his reign—His reconciliation with Russia—Relations between the King and the people; the King's janizaries—Moral and political portrait of Ferdinand; his distrust; his irresolution 7–15

CHAPTER III

BULGARIA IN 1911

My audience of the King—Fall of the Malinov Cabinet; its antecedents—The Turkish Revolution of 1908—The crisis of the annexation of Bosnia; complete independence of Bulgaria; we favour the new Kingdom in the settlement of the crisis—Ulterior Bulgarian ambitions dictate the formation of a new Nationalist and essentially Russophile Cabinet 16–24

CHAPTER IV

RUSSIAN AND BULGARIAN RELATIONS

M. John Gueshov—M. Todorov—M. Danev; my first conversation with him—My relations with Gueshov—The *Great Sobranjè* of Tirnova in June, 1911—Visit to Russia of the Crown-Prince Boris; matrimonial schemes—Death of M. Stolypin; his characteristics; influence of his disappearance on the foreign policy of Russia—Visit of the Russian Squadron to Varna—Outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war . . 25–37

CHAPTER V

SERBO-BULGARIAN RELATIONS

Serbo-Bulgarian relations; the Bulgarians enter on fresh parleyings with the Serbians—Historical statement of Russian action with regard to the Serbians and Bulgarians—My journey to Davos—An unexpected meeting—Conversation with M. Sazonoff—Return by Belgrade; conversation with M. Hartwig; characteristics of the latter . . 38–51

CHAPTER VI

THE SERBO-BULGARIAN TREATY

PAGES

Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations—Demarcation of the "spheres of influence" in Macedonia—Fixing boundaries—Conversations with the King—I warn St. Petersburg of the dangers which might result from a Serbo-Bulgarian alliance—The alliance is concluded with our approval—Festivities for the coming-of-age of Prince Boris—Personal service rendered to King Ferdinand by H.I.M. the Emperor—Audience of the King before my departure for St. Petersburg—Ferdinand's perplexities and suspicions 52-66

CHAPTER VII

RASPUTIN

Arrival in St. Petersburg; violent speech by M. Gutchkoff at the Duma—Rasputin; his peculiarities become a subject for scandal; his influence—Mlle. Tutcheff—Audience of H.I.M. the Emperor—The Empress Alexandra spends an afternoon in St. Petersburg—Conversation with General Jilinsky, the Chief of the General Staff—Conversations with MM. Kokovtzoff and Gutchkoff; drawing-room gossip—Reception at the Sazonoffs'; the "Rasputin crisis" is successfully settled—I return to Sofia 67-81

CHAPTER VIII

INTRIGUES AT SOFIA

Bulgarian "activist" party; M. Danev's journey to Russia—Colonel Merrone—Italian military circles know of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement—Intrigues directed against me; I fall into disfavour with Ferdinand; the King's candidates for my post; M. Rizov enters the arena—King Ferdinard's Policy—My reconciliation with the King—Rumours of my recall—Journey to Constantinople; conversations with M. de Giers and with General Holmsen; their opinion of the Turkish Army—Political ferment in Sofia and Belgrade; my telegram of the 4th July; my warning disregarded; Kotchana and Ishtib incidents—M. Gutchkoff in Sofia and Belgrade—Prince Alexander goes to inspect the army—The Schipka Veterans' Fête; "it is war!"—M. de Giers warns Bulgaria—Europe does not believe it—Jubilee for the twenty-five years' reign of Ferdinand—M. Sazonoff's apathy . . 82-107

CHAPTER IX

THE BALKAN WAR, 1912

Mobilisation of the Balkan allies; futile protests of the Cabinets; war breaks out—First decisive successes of the Allies—Lozengrad taken—Greco-Bulgarian incident at Salonika—Victory of Lule-Burgas; Bulgarians and Greeks at Salonika; torrential rains alone stop the Bulgarian advance—King Ferdinand's elation; his inordinate ambition; his dreams—Reverse of Chataldja—In St. Petersburg the question of the "prohibited area" in Thrace is raised; I succeed in causing this prohibition to be removed—Russian concessions—Ferdinand wishes to have Rodosto at any cost—General Radko-Dmitriev's mission to St. Petersburg—The Bulgarians allow the propitious moment for the conclusion of peace to escape 108-113

CHAPTER X

THE BALKAN WAR, 1912 (*continued*)

PAGES

The Serbians, having to renounce an outlet to the Adriatic, demand compensations in Macedonia—My conversations on the subject with my Serbian colleague—Serbian claims—Visit of M. Venizelos to Sofia; our conversation—My advice to Gueshov; his powerlessness—Two meetings with Ferdinand; the French Minister's audience of the King; The German Minister's audience—Bulgaro-Rumanian relations; the Dobrudja—Russo-Rumanian relations; M. Rosetti-Solesco; our representatives at Bukharest; succeeded by M. Nicolas Schebeko; jubilee of the annexation of Bessarabia; commencement of the Russo-Rumanian intimacy—Rectification of the Dobrudja frontier in favour of Rumania 132-153

CHAPTER XI

QUARRELS BETWEEN THE ALLIES

Capture of Adrianople—Quarrels with the Serbians—Bulgarian cruelties; the character of the Bulgarian people is a product of their history—I advocate the creation of a small autonomous State, embracing those parts of Macedonia which the Balkan Allies are contesting—Emperor Alexander II.'s letter to Prince Alexander—My suggestion rejected—Idea of an Anti-Bulgarian league; this idea is carried out owing to the Bulgarian faults; the Serbo-Greek alliance is concluded—The Press in St. Petersburg is against the Bulgarians—I am ordered to preach conciliation to them—Madame Karavelov; scene in the military hospital in Sofia—Peace signed in London—Interview between Gueshov and Pachitch—My Serbian colleague and I begin to hope—The Emperor of Russia offers himself as mediator; telegrams exchanged—Conflict in Sofia about the Russian proposal—King Ferdinand's telegram attributed falsely to me—Greece and Serbia continue to arm—Bulgaria suggests a time limit—Satisfactory outlook 154-175

CHAPTER XII

BULGARIA ATTACKS HER ALLIES

Danev's return spoils everything—Warlike preparations—An earthquake—Gueshov leaves the Cabinet; Danev remains alone at the head—The King holds a Council; our mediation is accepted; I entreat Danev to start at once for St. Petersburg—The Bulgarians treacherously attack the Serbians—The shameful underhand play—War begins—Soldiers refuse obedience—The Bulgarians beaten by the Greeks and by the Serbians; my advice to Danev; Mission of General Paprikov and Colonel Romanowski; the Rumanian Army enters Bulgaria and approaches Sofia; the Turks return to Adrianople—Fall of the Danev Ministry—Collapse of Bulgarian Army—The King summons the foreign representatives; a ridiculous conference—Russian influence—The Bulgarians forced to conclude the Peace of Bukharest . 176-202

CHAPTER XIII

THE PEACE OF BUKHAREST

Comparison of the conditions of the Peace of London (May, 1913) with those of the Peace of Bukharest (September, 1913)—The question of Mount Athos; the "Monte Santo" and its customs; the Russian cenobites—Nature of the Treaty—Sacrifices imposed on Bulgaria at

PAGES

Bukharest—The Turks keep Adrianople and Eastern Thrace; enormous signification of this restitution—Diplomatic influences—We do not insist on the autonomy of Mount Athos—Pan-Germans at work—Disquieting situation in Sofia—Why Ferdinand's power was not wrecked—Solemn reception of the Bulgarian troops on their return to Sofia—I am intended for the post of Stockholm . . . 203–219

CHAPTER XIV

MY TRANSFER TO STOCKHOLM

Departure from Sofia for Paris—Bad omen—Arrival in Paris; conversation with M. Sazonoff—The Grand-Duchess Marie's divorce—The Russians enjoy themselves wildly—M. Kokovtzoff in Paris—I go to the Crimea—General Dedulin's death—General Dumbadze—Rasputin again—Audience and luncheon at Livadia; I give the Emperor a detailed report—Journey to Sofia and farewell audience of the King and Queen—St. Petersburg in February, 1914; "balls and festivities"; very serious conversations during the parties—Count Witte—Prince Alexander of Serbia—M. Kokovtzoff out of office—M. Goremykin—Conversation with M. Zinovieff, our former Ambassador to Constantinople—The "young people" continue to be optimistic—I leave for Stockholm 220–245

CHAPTER XV

SWEDEN IN 1914

Three centuries of Swedish history—Gustaf III.—Struggles with Russia—Change of dynasty—New aspect of Sweden—Union with Norway—The people and their qualities—Sweden's prosperity—The Spaniards of the North—French influence replaced by German influence—Reasons for this change—The Bernadottes—King Oscar II. and German influences—Prince Max of Baden—German intrigues—Russian aspirations—The Anti-Russian current—Sven-Hedin—The *Bondestog*—Change of Ministry—Political situation in March, 1914 . . 246–267

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE EVE OF WAR

Solemn audience of King Gustaf V.—"Do not judge Sovereigns too harshly!"—Queen Victoria—The Royal Family—Interesting conversation with M. Wallenberg; I draw erroneous conclusions—My foreign colleagues—Mr. Howard—M. Thiébaud—Baltic exhibition at Malmö—The Riksdag "of national defence"—Alarming symptoms everywhere—Our incomprehensible calmness—M. Sverbeieff in Berlin—Our Ambassadors in Berlin and Vienna—Count Osten-Sacken's warnings—M. Schebeko in Vienna—Precarious situation in Russia—The assassination at Serajevo—Another trip to Malmö; Count Brockdorf-Rantzau—Delightful expedition; a bad fairy overhears me—The Austrian ultimatum to Serbia 268–288

CHAPTER XVII

THE TRAGIC WEEK

PAGES

The tragic week—President Poincaré's arrival—Banquet at the Palace—M. Poincaré's advice—"The torch of Bellona"—Germans determined on war—Last conversation with my German colleague, Reichenau; "the war will kill the monarchical principle"—Duties of a monarch—Colonel Kandauroff's tidings—The Emperor Nicolas wishes to avoid war at all costs—Deep emotion in Sweden—I suggest, if necessary, energetic action in Bulgaria—War is declared—"Let us drain the cup to the dregs" 289-305

CHAPTER XVIII

SWEDISH NEUTRALITY

What will Sweden do?—Audience of the King; reassuring words of H.M.—France and England offer guarantees to Sweden—We associate ourselves with this declaration—Neutrality of Sweden; pacificist sentiments of most of the country—England's decision—Russians fleeing from Germany inundate Stockholm; tragico-comic scenes—Refugees of note—Our Ambassador arrives from Berlin—Generous hospitality of the Swedes—Tales of German brutality—First events of the war; Russian reverses; the luck turns; the Marne victory; German propaganda—Our advance in Galicia—Grand-Duke Nicolas' Manifesto on the subject of Poland—Decisive hour for the Empire of the Hapsburgs—Aims of Russian diplomacy—Neither Austria nor Russia profit by this hour—Our mistakes in Galicia—Turkey enters the war—In spite of the agitation of Germanophiles and Activists, the absolute-neutrality party gains ground in Sweden—Interview of the three Scandinavian Monarchs 306-331

CHAPTER XIX

SWEDEN IN 1915

Economic situation of Sweden duriug the war—Temporary prosperity—The hold over Sweden possessed by the Entente Powers on one side (the grip of the Entente) and by Germany on the other—Causes of the economic influence of Germany—A strange tangle—Perfect co-operation of the Entente representatives in Stockholm—Baron von Lucius; intrigues of the German Legation—My official attitude—Decrease in Swedish hostility to Russia; the Murman railway; the Straits; the case of M. Perrichon—I wish to build for the future—Finland for Sweden—Russian reverses in 1915 encourage Sven-Hedin afresh—German peace proposals—The *Yul-Klappor* and Swedish indignation—Prince Gortchakoff and M. de Giers—The understanding between the three Scandinavian countries counter-balances the efforts of the Activists—The question of the Aland Islands 332-357

CHAPTER XX

WAR SUFFERERS

The Russians in Sweden during the war—The Russian committee of benevolence—Prisoners' correspondence—The Duke of Amalfi and the splendid work of the Spanish Legation—The Y.M.C.A.—Treatment of prisoners of war in Germany—Conference of the Red Cross representatives in Stockholm, and improvement resulting from it—The ambulance trains—Humanity of the Swedes—Touching scenes; a

PAGES

strange people ; *odi et amo ;* an epic hero—An old acquaintance reappears—Ferreting out a secret—Russian official personages pass through Sweden—M. Peter Struve—The Poles—The Lithuanians and Lithuania—M. Itchas—Other typically Russian silhouettes . 358-384

CHAPTER XXI

A VISIT TO PETROGRAD

I go to Petrograd—Conversation with Sazonoff—General Polivanoff's opinion as to Rumanian help—Rumania's difficult position—I see my successor in Sofia again ; M. Savinsky on Balkan affairs ; what he tells me and what he does not tell me—M. Stürmer appointed President of the Council—The Emperor present at the Duma—Prince N. Galitzyn—Prince Alexander of Oldenburg—M. Alexis Neidhart and the "Moderates"—Audience of the Emperor—The Grand-Duke Paul and his family—Audiences of the Empress Alexandra and the Dowager Empress—The Grand-Duke Nicolas Mikhaïlovitch—Impressions of my visit—Misgivings in political and Government circles—In popular circles—Mutterings of revolution—German machinations—The Germans increase their efforts to bring about a revolution in Russia . 385-410

CHAPTER XXII

EVIL OMENS IN PETROGRAD

Return to Stockholm—Audience of the King—Russian "parliamentarians" pass through Stockholm ; I make Protopopoff's acquaintance—The Swedish Activists raise the Aland question—Wallenberg's wise and clever policy—M. Branting—All is serene—Bad news from Petrograd ; Stürmer, Rasputin, the Empress Alexandra—The Empress at General Headquarters ; idyll and tragedy ; M. Odier ; prophetic verses—Brussiloff's offensive—M. Protopopoff and the Polaks—Protopopoff's talks with M. Warburg—M. Pokrovsky—The rest of the parliamentary delegation returns by Stockholm—M. Schingareff—Russo-Swedish banquet—Baron Rosen—Count S. Wielopolski—Operations in Galicia—Stürmer replaces Sazonoff—Sazonoff—A subaltern of the Guards has done his whole duty ; painful journey to Petrograd—Conversations with Sazonoff ; a band of malefactors—Count Wielopolski with Protopopoff—I call on Stürmer—Sazonoff's minute on the Polish question—The Rumanians come into the war—Odious impressions of Petrograd 411-443

CHAPTER XXIII

RUSSIA IN DECLINE

Return to Stockholm—Bad turn of affairs on the Rumanian front—Ferment and disorder in Russia—Protopopoff, Home Secretary ; his vagaries ; his madness—Prince Nicolas of Greece goes to Russia—I expect to leave my post—Fall of Stürmer ; succeeded by M. Trepoff—I retain my post—The Protopopoff-Warburg incident begins to agitate the Russian public—I emphatically contradict the Home Secretary—The Minister for Foreign Affairs has again a perfectly honest man in view—Intense agitation in all grades of Russian society—Murder of Rasputin—Protopopoff's increasing influence—The Trepoff Ministry is of short duration—The situation becomes worse—Protopopoff and an American spiritist—Rizov arrives from Berlin to talk to me ; his curious prophecy—"The Emperor must go" and a great illusion—The Revolution breaks out and triumphs—Every one is happy and content—I adhere to the Provisional Government 444-468

CHAPTER XXIV

REVOLUTION

PAGES

The Hindu fakir; a theory of suggestion—The Revolution relieves the conscience of our Allies and reassures them—Illusions—First alarming revelations—Report of a Danish eye-witness—The *Prikase No.* 1—The real origin of those March days; the real situation in Russia—A tragic dialogue—The Soviets supreme—Political exiles return to Russia—Prince Kropotkin—"Madam demands her whole paraphernalia"—A revolutionist of the old stamp—Early memories of Moscow—Bolsheviks—An Armenian throws off his mask—Some dancers—The army of treachery—Lenin and Trotsky pass into Russia—M. Keskula states the Esthonian case—I am appointed Ambassador to Madrid—Bad news from Petrograd—M. Kerensky, Dictator—His praiseworthy efforts—Increasing dissolution—I leave Stockholm with a heavy heart and scant hopes for the future 469-498

CHAPTER XXV

IN SPAIN AND IN EXILE

Journey from Stockholm to Paris—Brief revival of hopes and illusions—Solemn reception of an Ambassador in Madrid—Stately ceremonies—Generous step of King Alfonso XIII.—Two Queens—Reception by the Marquis de Lema and M. Dato—Sad reflections—My colleagues—Bird's-eye view of Spain—Grievous news from Russia—I reconsider my position—Journey to Paris; I am disgusted with all I see and hear—I return to San Sebastian and send in my resignation to Kerensky—Letter to M. Terestchenko—A well-advised counsellor—I go into exile 499-521

INDEX 523-541

DIPLOMATIC REMINISCENCES

CHAPTER I

MY APPOINTMENT TO SOFIA

I WAS on leave in St. Petersburg in January, 1911, when the news arrived there, first of the serious illness, and then of the death, of M. Sementovsky, Russian Minister in Sofia.

Having been for more than six years Counsellor to the Embassy in Paris, I had an indisputable right to promotion, and having spent seventeen years as secretary in Sofia, Constantinople and Belgrade, my professional antecedents seemed to entitle me to one of the Balkan posts. My appointment was talked of all over the town and at the Foreign Office. I therefore was not surprised when a few days after M. Sementovsky's death, M. Sazonoff, who had only been Minister for Foreign Affairs for three months, sent for me, and informed me that my appointment to Sofia had just received the Emperor's approval, and that I was to prepare to take up my post almost immediately.

I had been acquainted with M. Sazonoff for some time, but it was only in Paris that I enjoyed the privilege of seeing him frequently and of discussing political affairs with him. In June, 1904, we had both been raised on the same day to the dignity of Counsellors : he to the Embassy in London and I to the Embassy in Paris. M. Sazonoff remained in London three years ; in 1907 he was appointed Minister to the Holy See, and in 1909 assistant to the Minister in St. Petersburg. During his

time in London he often came to Paris; times were strenuous and interesting: first the Japanese war and the Treaty of Portsmouth; followed immediately by the first Russian Revolution, with Dumas succeeding one another and ending in the Stolypin régime, which appeared to quell the great tumult; finally, the Russo-British Entente. All this gave rise to much interchange of opinions and ideas between two close colleagues. These meetings in Paris cemented a certain intellectual intimacy between us, and later on when M. Sazonoff became assistant to M. Isvolsky, I often had the satisfaction of noticing that he still took an interest in my opinions.

In announcing my appointment to me, M. Sazonoff said, amongst other things, that I was going to Sofia at a particularly interesting moment: King Ferdinand appeared to be directing his policy more and more towards Russian sympathies and designs, and his Government—composed of Radicals with Malinov at their head—proposed to us to conclude a military convention. This was a matter for mature deliberation, and the Minister was confident that my knowledge of Balkan affairs would enable me to study the proposal and to give my advice on the expediency of such negotiations. He advised me to try and be on good terms with Ferdinand, who had the reputation of being very distrustful and unreliable in his dealings with foreign representatives, especially the Russian ones. My predecessor had achieved notable success in this respect. In 1909, at the outset of M. Sementovsky's term of office, King Ferdinand, on arriving in St. Petersburg, had tried to get rid of the new Russian Minister, and to secure the appointment to Sofia of some person belonging to the smartest society in St. Petersburg. But the Ministry, in the offices of which Sementovsky had spent all his career, not being willing to part with him, Ferdinand made haste to be reconciled with a representative who he felt was well supported, and then tried

to attract him, to make him, if possible, the instrument of his political designs concerning Russia. It was just in the midst of these favours, always very uncertain, that the Russian Minister fell ill and died, furnishing the King with an opportunity of displaying his grief by spectacular funeral ceremonies, which were to serve as a proof of his Russophile sentiments.

Although I had no intention of having recourse to such extreme measures in order to collect proofs of royal good-will, yet I entirely shared the Minister's point of view as to the necessity of establishing—*inter vivos*—good personal relations with King Ferdinand. One may have had a lurking feeling of distrust for him, but it was all-important that this should not be perceived by the public of Sofia, which is strongly addicted to intrigue and feverishly busy with political tittle-tattle. I had been a witness at the outset of my career of the troubles and disappointments undergone by Russian policy through the attitude which we had taken up with regard to the first Prince of Bulgaria, Alexander of Battenberg. In the very midst of the reaction prevailing in Russia in the eighties, we had vehemently supported the grievances of the Bulgarian Radical party against the absolutist inclinations of the young Prince of Hesse; we ended by quarrelling completely with him and with the Bulgarian Radicals; we succeeded in bringing about the downfall of the Prince, but only in order to deliver the country over to the Stamboulovists, to give birth in Bulgaria to an entirely Russophobe party, and finally to end in the kingship of Ferdinand of Coburg! He was far more dangerous and a thousand times more crafty than Battenberg, and yet we began to flatter him, after having heaped insults and contempt upon him for years! Certainly, I should not allow myself to fall into the same mistakes again; I said as much quite frankly to M. Sazonoff, who agreed entirely with my point of view.

A few days later I received an audience of H.I.M. the Emperor. My reception was a particularly gracious

one, and the Emperor enumerated with me the principal points of my programme of procedure in Bulgaria—a programme which had been previously drawn up in my conversations with M. Sazonoff: the question of relations to the King, the Macedonian question, that of the relations between the Bulgarians and the Serbians, which one would wish to improve above all things, and finally the question of the military convention proposed by the Bulgarians. I noticed, however, that the Emperor appeared to slur over this last point and not to attach so much importance to it as Sazonoff did.

Since my appointment to Paris, I had several times had business interviews with His Majesty, of course only on matters coming within my sphere. Each time I had carried away the impression of great kindness and extreme personal *politeness*, of a ready and subtle wit slightly tinged with sarcasm, and of a very quick though somewhat superficial mind. When I wished my august questioner to give an opinion on such and such a subject, I tried to bring the conversation round to it. In this case the Emperor would seize the opportunity—*if* he wished to—and pass in an almost imperceptible manner and as if on his own initiative to the subject in hand; if he did not wish to give an opinion, he allowed my allusion to pass unnoticed, showing plainly, however, that he had understood it, but that he did not intend to commit himself. On this, as on former occasions, the Emperor displayed the same qualities in our interview. He was obviously well prepared for the discussion, and finally gave me some general instructions which were fairly definite. He spoke in his usual urbane manner, and whilst giving instructions which were really *orders*, only appeared to be airing his opinions.

Once only in the course of the interview did the Emperor assume a solemn and dictatorial manner; after an intentional pause, stepping backwards and fixing me with a penetrating stare, he said: "Listen to me, Nekludoff: do not for one instant lose sight of the fact that we cannot go to war. I do not wish for war as

a rule; I shall do all in my power to preserve for my people the benefits of peace. But at this moment, of all moments, everything which might lead to war must be avoided. It would be out of the question for us to face a war for five or six years, in fact till 1917. . . . Though if the most vital interests and the honour of Russia were at stake, we might, if it were absolutely necessary, accept a challenge in 1915, but not a moment sooner—in any circumstances or under any pretext whatsoever! Do you quite understand me?"

I replied promptly that I had assimilated the royal instructions, that I understood the situation perfectly, and that during my time as Minister, I should not ignore for one instant the orders I had just received.

On this His Majesty resumed his light, good-natured manner, and dismissed me, after a short conversation.

A few days after my interview at Tsarskoe-Selo, M. Sazonoff was suddenly taken ill with septic inflammation of the throat which afterwards attacked his lungs. A fortnight later, as I was leaving for Sofia, the illness was already considered to be serious. During the month of March the Minister's condition became so bad that the doctors hastily dispatched him to Davos, and society in St Petersburg was already taking an inordinate interest in the question of a successor. However, no appointment was made. Stolypin, still fairly powerful, did not wish to abandon the hope that M. Sazonoff, his brother-in-law and friend, would recover and return to his post. This hope was realised. After a stay of a few months at Davos and a very serious operation, the invalid's state of health improved to such an extent that in December he was able to return to St. Petersburg to resume the direction of his Ministry which during his absence had been in the hands of his assistant, M. Neratoff, who had just been promoted to this important post. Such a prolonged absence of M. Sazonoff's—coming, too, at the time when he was assuming the direction of affairs—

could not but be prejudicial to the foreign policy of Russia.

At the end of February, I left St. Petersburg, *viâ* Vienna, and on the 17th of March, at a solemn audience, I presented my credentials to King Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

CHAPTER II

KING FERDINAND OF BULGARIA

Ferdinand of Coburg was then in the twenty-fourth year of his reign.

This scion of two races, the Coburgs and the Orleans, who had played a distinguished part in the great events of the eighteenth and of the first half of the nineteenth century, had begun life under circumstances which did not enable one to form any idea of his ultimate destiny. Son of a father who was almost a nonentity and of a mother who was as intelligent as she was ambitious (that famous ambition of the Orleans!), the young Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, youngest son and Benjamin of the family, very much spoilt by his mother but also carefully educated under her supervision, cut rather a strange figure at the Austrian Court and in high Viennese society. Remarks were made about his Bourbon nose, and every one laughed at his effeminate manner, his exaggerated elegance, and his love for jewels and knick-knacks; he was supposed to possess inclinations which harmonised with his appearance and manner. In a set which only cared for hunting, riding, the society of light and frivolous women, and was only interested in the life in cavalry regiments,—the refinement and intellectual affectation of young Ferdinand, his pretty speeches, his hatred of riding and all sport, his learning even, served as a butt for the laughter and sarcasms of the young archdukes and grand-dukes. Moreover, he did not possess the gift of making himself liked. His sly and suspicious expression prejudiced people against him. The more he became aware of his unpopularity, the more did he secretly indulge in venomous and bitter thoughts, and yet nurse in his heart

ambitions and schemes which would have evoked shrieks of laughter if he had ever dared to disclose them. It was only from his mother that he got encouragement and sympathy. And she was the only being that he ever really loved, and who had any influence over him. From the day of Princess Clementine's death, a void was created in Ferdinand's heart which nothing could ever fill.

On the abdication of Prince Alexander of Battenberg, the European diplomatic world was astonished at the proceedings of the young Prince of Saxe-Coburg, who presented himself as a candidate. The Courts laughed —ours especially, although Prince Lobanoff, our Ambassador in Vienna and an intimate friend of Princess Clementine's, had upheld to a certain extent the ambitions of young Ferdinand, whom he represented in his dispatches as possessing far more personality than public opinion would have supposed. In Vienna they were certainly glad to have at hand some one of no importance who would be willing to embark on the venture; if he failed, it would not be a serious rebuff for Austrian policy; if he succeeded,—then there would be at the head of Bulgaria a Catholic prince, related to the Austrian Royal Family, and naturally prejudiced against Russia, who at this very moment was declaring his election and installation in Bulgaria to be illegal.

We are all acquainted with the beginning of Prince Ferdinand's reign and his complete effacement before Stamboulov's omnipotence. We know of his marriage with a princess of Bourbon-Parma—a young lady endowed with neither beauty nor health, but whose intelligence and high moral qualities were indisputable. She had a true affection for her husband, who finally reciprocated it a little and who even deigned occasionally to take her advice. The people around her loved her, and even in her new country she succeeded in making herself liked.

But Princess Marie-Louise's virtues were not sufficient in themselves to uphold the tottering throne of the

Prince. Ferdinand felt that the dictatorship of Stamboulov could not last long, that the country was tired of it, that plots would multiply, and that if he himself did not forsake the dictator in good time, the downfall of the latter would inevitably entail his own, and perhaps even involve him and his family in a sanguinary catastrophe.

At this moment the change of régime in Russia, followed by the appointment of Prince Lobanoff as Minister for Foreign Affairs, opened up to Ferdinand vistas of salvation. By the interposition of Serge Tatischeff, a publicist of great talent and an ex-diplomat, confidential conferences took place between Lobanoff and the Prince of Bulgaria. They led to startling events: the resignation of Stamboulov; the reception of the eldest son and heir of the Prince—who had been baptised as a Catholic—into the pale of the Orthodox Church; and the reconciliation of the Prince with Russia. There is an old fairy-tale in which an unnatural lady in a castle, in order to preserve her youth and beauty for ever, allows a horrible witch to plunge her child at midnight into water which has been cursed, and to turn him thereby into a were-wolf. Those who are acquainted with the feelings of the old Catholic families of Austria and Italy can readily understand that to all Ferdinand's relations—and especially to his wife—the deed which he had committed with regard to his child was almost equivalent to the infernal baptism in the fairy-tale. He was selling the soul of his innocent child in order to keep his throne. He himself was for ever after haunted by feelings of shame and superstitious terror; and he never forgave Russia for this sacrifice which he had been obliged to make to our political and religious exigencies.

Ferdinand has never been beloved by his people, whom he hated and despised. He allowed this contempt to be apparent to foreigners, especially to the members of the diplomatic corps in Sofia. (" Countess, allow me

time to put on my gloves: I have to shake hands with my charming subjects, and I never risk that with a bare hand." "Madame, I am going to take you into the great hall, where the *élite* of Sofia is assembled; you will see dreadful faces! Do not be alarmed!" These are the kind of things that I myself have heard him say. And he did so repeatedly.)

But Prince and subjects were agreed on other points than those of personal relations and sympathies. In politics, the Bulgarians considered Ferdinand an admirable tool for their national aspirations; his personal ambition, his intelligence, his great cunning, his parentage and connections, were all great natural assets to the Bulgarian cause. On his side the Prince knew that on questions of foreign policy, he could always rely on Bulgarian patriotism, stubbornness and artfulness, and that in the event of war, officers and men would fight with ferocious and even brutal courage, and would display that tenacity, endurance and voluntary submission to iron discipline which would make the Bulgarian army one of the finest in the world.

Since the downfall and assassination of Stamboulov, and the reconciliation with Russia, the Prince had been able to breathe more freely and to feel that he was at last master of the country. But dangers and difficulties still existed. Party quarrels, and passionate national aspirations exploited first by one side and then by the other; the flagrant incompatibility between a decadent prince of Franco-Austrian origin and a people composed of "peasants of the Danube"; Macedonia in a perpetual state of ferment and hurling at Sofia her riff-raff who were past-masters in the art of conspiracy—all combined to keep alive the Prince's fears and to sharpen his instinct for intrigue. Ferdinand by his very nature belonged to those men who, in order to compass their ends, are far more inclined to bring into play the vices than the virtues of those around them. His reign served to develop this tendency. He loved to stir up irreconcilable rivalries, he excelled in the art of keeping the fear of

judgment ever before political men who had compromised themselves by bribery and corruption, and in holding them by the dread of punishment or by the necessity of relying on his protection or forgiveness. In 1913 there was at one time in Bulgaria a Cabinet composed almost entirely of men who had either been sentenced and forgiven, or who were on trial for malpractices and abuse of power.

The military element, always dangerous in these countries of *pronunciamentos*, became the object of the Prince's special attention. Ferdinand took great trouble over, and spent his own money on building, an enormous school for officers in Sofia, and supplied all the necessary accessories. The young men are completely isolated from the world, and are under the supervision of instructors possessing Ferdinand's complete confidence; their national feeling is intensified, but at the same time they are taught to look on the goodwill of the sovereign and supreme chief of the army as the sole source of all welfare and promotion. When the young men leave the school the vigilant eye of the master is still on them. In order to isolate the soldiers in their garrisons in civil surroundings, comfortable officers' messes were inaugurated everywhere at the Prince's own expense. Good food and good wines were provided at extremely low prices; officers passed all their spare time there, and they learnt above all things to be very guarded and discreet. They realised that there were eavesdroppers about who repeated to their superior officers and even to the Sovereign things they had discussed amongst themselves, and they discovered that capable and deserving officers had often been arrested in the midst of a brilliant career, whilst promotion had been given to others whose only claim to it had been their talent in gaining access to the master's ear. Ferdinand, who is well versed in history, knew that the Sultans, when raising janizaries, used to take Bulgarian boys, convert them to Islamism, and have them educated in special schools. He wished to

have his own janizaries, and he succeeded up to a point.

At the time that I became acquainted with Ferdinand and his Court, Princess Marie-Louise had been dead some years; her death had caused sincere grief to all around her, and had put an end to *all* family-life in the Palace in Sofia. Princess Clementine had followed her daughter-in-law to the grave, leaving a terrible void in her son's life; he had married again, but his second wife played no part whatever in his life, or in that of his subjects. The King plunged into voluntary solitude, absorbed completely in his plans, his dreams of grandeur, his acute anxieties, his masterly political combinations.

If Ferdinand had lived in the very middle of the "Quattro cento" as *podestà* either of Ferrara or Mantua, he would have vacillated between the Pope, the King of France, the Roman Emperor and the "Serenissima"; he would have pillaged orphanages and erected beautiful buildings; he would have caused his enemies to be stabbed at night in the streets, or he would have poisoned them at his feasts; he would have surrounded himself with scholars and artists, and luxurious palaces, with brocades and halberdiers covered in gold lace. He would certainly have possessed that fine and true artistic taste which now he only pretends to have. Born four centuries too late, the King of the Bulgarians contents himself with indulging in dreams of greatness, with dressing-up as a Byzantine "Basileus," and with being portrayed thus by third-rate painters; instead of erecting palaces, he is content to lay-out botanical gardens, for, far from having become rich as a sovereign, he has on the contrary ruined himself by presents, endowments and pecuniary assistance destined to purchase partisans; being unable to exterminate his enemies by poison or steel, Ferdinand endeavours to pit them one against the other. But, exactly like his mediæval prototypes, he wields the weapon of political intrigue admirably, preferring it to any other occupation or any other

concern, displaying, however, more elasticity than perseverance, more audacity in conceiving his plans than determination in carrying them out.

The portrait that I am drawing of the King of the Bulgarians may appear to be very black and much exaggerated. And yet, in passing judgment on this complicated character and on this person so universally disapproved of, I am ready to plead extenuating circumstances.

The exercise of the rights of sovereignty in a Balkan country does not come within the category of callings which ennoble the characters of those who pursue them. More especially must one admit this when it is a question of Bulgaria and the Bulgarians, a people already cursed once by history—for it is *they* who brought the Turks into Europe—and who then, during five centuries of a particularly cruel yoke, being deprived of the slightest vestige of national autonomy, became uncouth and less civilised than any other nation of the Near East.

In a word, for thirty years Ferdinand and the Bulgarians have mutually corrupted each other.

But we ought to place to the moral credit of the King of the Bulgarians the fact that in the whole course of his existence as prince, he has lived exclusively in the political life of his people, interesting himself deeply and solely in the problem of the raising of Bulgaria, and consecrating himself to that at all hours and on all occasions. This undoubtedly endued him with strength in comparison with other sovereigns, especially with those whose private life meant far more to them than their public life and that of their subjects. Some were mainly occupied in increasing their fortune; others gave themselves up to sensual pleasures; others again subordinated everything—even their most sacred duties—to the joys and cares of family life; Ferdinand had two passions only: the consolidation of his throne and the career of his people.

In Ferdinand's defence one must also plead the fact that he was born *neurasthenic*, and that the circumstances

of his life and calling greatly aggravated this tendency. To this is due his indecision, unsuspected by the public at large, and also his suspiciousness, so patent to every one. Ferdinand has never been able to come to a decision unaided. He could evolve, and cleverly elaborate the details of, a political combination; when the moment came to carry it out he needed another will to impose itself on his and to force him to act. For a long time his mother had furnished the necessary will-power. With Princess Clementine's death, Ferdinand's indecision assumed formidable proportions. In 1908, when the annexation of Bosnia nearly set all Europe by the ears, Ferdinand, warned in time by M. d'Aerenthal, prepared to follow up the Austrian step by the proclamation of Bulgarian independence and sovereignty. Everything was carefully arranged and prepared; but at the vital moment it was necessary for M. Malinov and his colleagues to force themselves on him in his saloon-carriage and to drag a decision from him—they succeeded far more by threats than by persuasion. And this is no solitary example.

Touching his deep distrust I must say that I have seldom seen any one more suspicious than King Ferdinand. Nearly every conversation that I had with him began in a favourable manner; one was face to face with an intelligent, cultivated and subtle questioner willing to use his intellectual charm and entering to a certain extent into one's point of view; then all of a sudden, without any apparent reason, a shadow would cross his face, his expression became crafty, and the King's thoughts were abruptly hidden from one, and one had to be content with a medley of evasions and commonplaces. This was because at a given moment the usual thought had crossed the King's mind: "Ah! but who knows whether he is not laying a trap for me? Whether he is not seeking an answer from me which may compromise or bind me?" From that moment all one's arguments were futile.

This was the Sovereign to whom I came to present my credentials, and whom I was to have as colleague during the course of the most serious events that Bulgaria has ever passed through, and which have had a fatal effect on our relations to the Bulgarian people.

CHAPTER III

BULGARIA IN 1911

THE presentation of his credentials by a foreign Minister takes place in Sofia with the usual ceremonial but with a little more pomp than in other Balkan capitals.

On the appointed day, gala-coaches and an escort of Hussars of the Royal Guard came to fetch me and my suite, and thus in full uniform and accompanied by the general aide-de-camp of the King, I crossed the short space between the Russian Legation and the King's Palace, an unimposing building situated—just as in Abel Hermant's play—between the public gardens, the square and *the* four-storied house.

The King awaited me in the Throne Room, with M. Malinov, President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs, at his side; I read my speech and handed my credentials to the King, I listened to his reply, after which he stretched out his hand to me with a few words of welcome and invited me to his study, the doors of which closed upon us without M. Malinov being invited to accompany us. There the King begged me to be seated, and we held a fairly long conversation touching on political questions of the moment and the news from the Russian Court,—a conversation of no importance, but in the course of which the King was pleased to show me a great deal of friendliness. When we had exhausted these subjects, we returned to the Audience Hall, where the King's Court and the Prime Minister were still waiting. Having been dismissed with great ceremony by the King, I was taken to pay my court to Queen Eleanor and the heir to the throne, and then I left, surrounded by the same pomp.

The King's treatment of his Prime Minister did not altogether astonish me; I had often heard of the off-hand manner with which he treated his Ministers; moreover, during the customary interview which I had had the day before with M. Malinov, the latter did not conceal from me that the days of his Cabinet were numbered, and that in all probability he would shortly hand in his resignation and that of his colleagues to the King. A few days after my audience I left for Paris, in order to collect my establishment and to make the necessary purchases for my new installation. I stayed a couple of days in Vienna, and there I read in the papers of the resignation of the Malinov Cabinet, and of the formation of the Gueshov-Danev Coalition Ministry, with the leaders of which I had had long conversations before my departure.

The fall of the Malinov Cabinet was not due to any acute political crisis. As always happens in parliamentary countries, but more particularly in the Balkan States, the Ministry was simply worn out by a fairly long period of power, and then foreign political circumstances were assuming another direction which naturally demanded other actors.

The Malinov Cabinet had witnessed a crisis as strange as it was unforeseen in Macedonian affairs. As is well known, during the first years of the century European diplomacy had undergone high trials in Macedonia. I mean the usual sequence, but becoming year by year more complicated, of plots, provocations, local massacres; and above all the vehemence of the struggle between the rival Christian nationalities: Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek; between the two latter, particularly, deeds of ferocious cruelty were committed.

The situation gradually led to the direct interference of Europe. The country was placed under the authority of an Ottoman High Commissioner chosen by the Powers; two civil commissioners—one Russian and one Austrian—were added; European officers were placed

at the head of a *gendarmerie* which they strove to reform; finally, an international financial commission inaugurated in the province a system for controlling and preserving the resources of the country from the demands of the Ottoman Treasury.

It is worthy of note that relations between the Russian and Austrian commissioners were not at all strained, and that this good understanding reacted in a favourable manner on the actions of the Consuls of the two Empires in Macedonia. This latter state of things was due to the *modus vivendi* existing between the two rival diplomacies since 1897, which threw cold water on the efforts of the Balkan States, especially those of Bulgaria, to create friction between Russia and Austria, and under cover of this friction to foment serious trouble in Macedonia. With the year 1908 came the overthrow of this scheme, which was partly artificial, partly necessary and beneficial to the work of maintaining the peace of the world.

In July of that year, at an inopportune moment for every one, the Turkish Revolution broke out. In a few short weeks, Abdul Hamid's régime and—more important still—all the former autocratic Turkish régime were destroyed, and at the same time the enormous influence which Germany had been able to acquire in Constantinople seemed to be lost for ever. Under the influence of spontaneous enthusiasm, the Christian nations of Turkey believed ardently in the inauguration of a new era of fraternity and progress, they threw themselves into the arms of the sons of their former oppressors, and wished to work out the salvation of their common country. Armenians, Roman Catholic Syrians, Greeks of the Archipelago, and Bulgarians of Macedonia forgot their grievances and their old quarrels. Heads of Macedonian bands fraternised with the members of the Committee "Union and Progress"; Greeks and Bulgarians embraced one another; and meanwhile the civil commissioners, the officers of the *gendarmerie*, the European members of the financial commission were

gradually disappearing like a useless appendage, incompatible with the unlimited moral credit which the Powers vied with one another in assigning to Turkey in her radical renovation.

Moreover, relations between the European Powers themselves were becoming particularly complicated during the same year 1908.

The act of the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina had been prepared before the Turkish Revolution, which as I said before had been a surprise to every one.

As the year 1908 coincided with the Jubilee of the sixty years' reign of Francis Joseph of Austria, a newly-appointed and ambitious Minister—M. d'Aerenthal—wishing to make his name from the outset, desired to present the annexation as a Jubilee present to the aged Monarch. In M. Isvolsky—also newly appointed, and keen to make his country forget the recent disasters on the shores of the Pacific and to replace Russian policy in the historic groove of the Near East—M. d'Aerenthal found a suitable partner, willing to listen to proposals and to formulate some of his own. A friendly exchange of views took place through the interposition of the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in St. Petersburg. The Russian Foreign Office received the wishes of Vienna fairly favourably, and suggested on their side that it was necessary for Russia that the government of the Straits should be improved in her favour. In the very midst of these discussions, which were endorsed by a very friendly exchange of views between St. Petersburg and London on this same question of the Straits, the Turkish Revolution broke out. This event, however, did not check the plans of the two partners, and the interview planned between M. Isvolsky and M. d'Aerenthal took place all the same at Buchlau. But there all the cards were shuffled. The ambitious and unscrupulous Austrian Minister persisted with his schemes and, in order to take Europe by surprise, hastened the act of annexation, with the result that Russia—supported by England and France, who thought the moment had

arrived to regain their former influence in Constantinople —refused to demand the compensation of which she had formerly dreamt, and also absolutely refused to recognise the annexation.

The diplomatic negotiations which ensued did not turn to our advantage, as is well known. Thanks to the support which Germany hastened to lend to Austria, the annexation was first recognised by the Sublime Porte, then by Russia and by the other Powers on Russia's representations. M. d'Aerenthal received the much coveted title of Count; and Russian public opinion, violently excited by the ultra-patriotic Press, felt and displayed deep displeasure.

This displeasure was much exaggerated: the countries annexed had been for a long time under the real power of Austria-Hungary, and Russia herself, in her confidential negotiations with Austria, had contemplated on four separate occasions the possibility of the annexation pure and simple of these provinces (firstly in 1875 at Reichstatt, secondly in 1879 at a select and secret sitting of the Congress of Berlin, thirdly in 1897 on the occasion of the Emperor Francis-Joseph's visit to St. Petersburg, and fourthly at Mürzsteg); concerning the government of the Straits, the right of passage through these for our men-of-war belonging to the Black Sea Fleet—which was all that we asked—did not constitute any very real advantage for Russia, for in the event of political complications the Porte could always close the Straits to us *de facto*. Finally, the crisis due to the annexation had brought us far nearer to England and had consolidated the entente once for all.

Further, our relations with Bulgaria at the settlement of the crisis of 1908–1909 assumed a particularly favourable character. Looking on himself, especially at the outset of his ministerial career, as a continuer of Prince Lobanoff's policy, M. Isvolsky inherited also the Prince's feelings of good-will towards the Bulgarians and towards Ferdinand. Thanks to the efforts of our Foreign Secretary—supported by the Grand-Duchess

Vladimir, the sworn patroness of King Ferdinand at the Imperial Court—the title of "Tsar," which the latter had assumed under cover of the last European crisis, was accorded to him by Russia before all the other Powers. Ferdinand, when hastening to the funeral of the Grand-Duke Vladimir, who had just died, was greeted in St. Petersburg with the title of "Tsarinian Majesty" and royal honours were given to him.

The independence of Bulgaria was also recognised by us without difficulty, and in order to facilitate a definite arrangement between the new kingdom and its former suzerain, our Foreign Office proposed the following combination and succeeded in getting it accepted. Turkey consented to transfer the arrears of the Bulgarian contribution to the account of the war-contribution which she had owed us since 1878; and Bulgaria, entirely free of all liabilities to the Ottoman Empire, pledged herself to indemnify us by adequate annuities. M. Isvolsky liked to say in those days that Russia by her benevolent actions had, as it were, freed Bulgaria for the second time; and up to a point he was right, for our attitude under these circumstances had effectually laid the foundation of an extremely close Russo-Bulgarian understanding which lasted till the end of 1912.

Such were the advantages accruing to Russian politics from the crisis of 1908–1909.

It is true that some of our statesmen and of our diplomats, such as Count Witte, M. Kokovtzoff, M. Zinovieff, Count Osten-Sacken, Prince Ouroussoff[1] and others, sincerely regretted everything that had happened since the interview at Buchlau, and saw in it a decided step towards the universally dreaded European conflagration. But the opinions of these men had their origin in a point of view directly opposed to that prevailing amongst the bulk of Russian politicians and intellectual people, and in consequence their critics had nothing in common with the ordinary critics. Alas! The terrible events which dismembered before our very

[1] Our Ambassadors in Constantinople, Berlin, and Vienna.

eyes our unhappy country, so ill-prepared to face them, justified the apprehensions of these statesmen. Altogether, the crisis of August, 1908 to March, 1909, marked the end of a policy of compromise between Russia and Austria, and accentuated the division of Europe into two directly opposed camps, whilst complications were to be foreseen in the near future on the Balkan question—henceforth to be a burning one.

The Balkan statesmen, ever practical and on the alert, immediately took advantage of the new state of affairs. They realised that Russian policy would most certainly wish to avenge the Buchlau trap, and the thinly disguised German ultimatum of March, 1909; and that in consequence it was necessary to prepare for events which might occur—or even to provoke them if they did not occur with sufficient rapidity.

Moreover the evolution of the new Turkish Government facilitated these schemes of the Balkan States and gave fresh impetus to their national aspirations.

Two years had not gone by since the second taking-up of arms by the Young Turks (in April, 1909, followed by the final deposing of Abdul-Hamid) when the Ottoman revolutionaries resumed towards their Christian fellow-citizens the same policy as that pursued by the "Red Sultan." First came the horrible massacre of Adana—said to have been fomented by the partisans of the Old Régime, but in the repression and punishment of which the New Régime displayed rather too obvious a mildness; then by degrees the Young Turks imagined that the Christians were becoming too grasping—which was possibly fairly true—and to check this abuse of liberty they sought to affirm the superiority, indispensable in their eyes, of the believing Osmanlis. They did this so unconstrainedly and with so much impatience that the Christians were forced to guard their new rights by the old means of plots and recourse to foreign protection. Little by little the former state of chaos reappeared in Macedonia and Thrace, then in Armenia and Syria.

And simultaneously with this metamorphosis of

Turkey, the Talaats, the Djavids and others who now ruled the Ottoman Empire uncontrolled, were allowing themselves to be more and more allured by the advances made to them by German policy through the medium of the "great and glorious Enver," the promoter of the Revolution, who was a military agent in Berlin, and who lived there surrounded by Imperial care and flattery.

Towards the spring of 1911 the cycle of Turkish evolution was complete, and a practically *quo ante* political situation existed, except that instead of a Europe ostensibly united, the East had to deal with a Europe frankly divided into two camps and arming herself with feverish haste.

Malinov's Radical Cabinet had had its day; it had profited by the crisis of 1908 to secure the complete independence of the country, and to take over the section of the Ottoman railways which still existed in Rumelia; it had maintained intimate relations with the Bulgarian revolutionaries in Macedonia before as well as after the short-lived period of reconciliation and fraternisation with the Turks; it had succeeded in securing the protection of the Russian representatives and had not made unfair use of it. But times had changed, causing a new situation to arise. For Bulgaria the key to this situation lay in Russian protection and good-will. The Bulgarian Radicals were on good terms with our diplomacy and on excellent ones with our Liberal Party, but Russian diplomacy was suspected of "Moderantism" and our Liberal Party was far less enthusiastic about enterprises in the Near East than were the Nationalists who gathered round the *Novoye Vremja*, the Octobrists of the Duma, etc. . . . It was *these* groups who had to be conciliated; moreover, they had correspondents in Bulgaria and special protégés amongst the old Bulgarian Nationalists, commencing by the *pure* Russophiles with M. Danev at their head as the recognised successor of the old Dragan Tzankov. It was

therefore necessary to comply with the new state of affairs and to present to Slavophile Russia, always impatient of action, an "orthodox" Bulgarian Ministry, *i.e.* a group of people of ancient traditions, and whose very names would be synonymous with devotion to Russia. This was done by fusing the Danev party with that of Gueshov; and King Ferdinand, who personally did not like the one and detested the other, gave way for once to the combination, and accepted the formation of the "great National Ministry." As to M. Malinov's party, it promised not to oppose his successors in matters of foreign policy.

This was the meaning of the change of Cabinet which took place in March, 1911, and this the political situation in Bulgaria when I took up my post there.

CHAPTER IV

RUSSIAN AND BULGARIAN RELATIONS

I HAD been acquainted with M. Gueshov for a long time, and I had a liking for this calm, self-possessed old man, whom I held to be perfectly sincere in his feelings towards Russia. Such he appeared to me during the whole time that I had dealings with him. In the spring of 1912, when I was in St. Petersburg, M. Sazonoff, to whom I imparted my sentiments conceiving Gueshov, simply remarked: "he is crafty"; he repeated this in 1913 when Gueshov had already been out of office for some months; but he would never explain his words. I conclude that this opinion of Gueshov came from a Bulgarian source. It is also true that since 1914 M. Gueshov's newspaper, *The Mir*, has gone over rather openly to the side of the enemies of Russia and the Entente. Nevertheless, until I have proof to the contrary I shall persist in asserting that during his whole term of office his attitude towards us was perfectly correct, and that he sincerely desired to act in accordance with Russia's views. After the catastrophe of 1913 Bulgarian feelings changed and became so hostile that even the passing over of old Gueshov to the enemy's camp could be admitted as a possibility; but one ought to know if this really ever took place, and whether Gueshov, who has lived abroad a great deal since 1913, really inspired the articles in *The Mir*.

At one time also I had been acquainted with M. Todorov,[1] who in the Gueshov-Danev Cabinet held the post of Minister of Finance and in the "Narodniak" party the second place after M. Gueshov. He was a very

[1] His name is now spelled Theodorov, and he is Bulgarian Plenipotentiary at the Conference in Paris.

sincere man of moderate views, though a little too excitable in conversation. No one, even amongst us, ever doubted the sincerity of his feelings towards Russia.

Among the Tzankovists, I knew M. Ludskonov very well, the son-in-law of the old Tzankov who had died in March, 1911. He was a perfectly honest and sincere man; his feelings towards Russia—I should even say his devotion to the Russian cause—were indisputable. But a little weak and far too easy-going by nature, he was not born to lead a party; therefore he gave up his place to M. Danev.

I had never met the latter before I came to Sofia as Minister. As soon as I returned from Paris, M. Danev, who in the meantime had been made Home Secretary, called on me, and sketched out his ministerial programme. I was not very favourably impressed by him. With the experience I had acquired of Balkan politicians, I seemed to recognise in him the typical characteristics of the sworn Russophile—the political man who, whilst not being hostile to us, considers that the Russian representatives are forced to support him in all he does, to hate all his enemies, even personal ones, and to see eye to eye with him on all matters affecting his country. Like most men of this type, Danev appeared to me to be imbued with stubbornness even more than Bulgarian.

During his visit he announced—as if he was saying something that would cause me special pleasure—that the new Government was going to carry on the prosecution, already begun by the Malinov Cabinet, of M. Ghennadiev, General Savov and the other shufflers who had formerly belonged to Stamboulov's camp and who, as was universally known, had been guilty of financial dishonesty when last in office. M. Danev apparently thought that the Russian Minister ought to be delighted at the imminent conviction of the "agents of Austria," which would render them harmless for ever. He was much astonished at the indifference with which I received the news. In the first place I had serious doubts as to

whether Ferdinand would allow men to be completely crushed who might be of use to him in the event of any change of political system, and then I considered it to be beneath the dignity of a representative of Russia to take an interest in these internal quarrels and to mix up our political interests with a case which only concerned the penal laws and justice of the country. M. Danev then spoke for some time about the necessity of strengthening the present relations between Russia and Bulgaria by the conclusion of a military convention, and he ended by attacking King Ferdinand very violently. What he said about him was quite true, but I refused to follow him on to this dangerous ground.

I was far more satisfied with my first conversations with M. Gueshov, who I often saw in his capacity as Foreign Secretary. In compliance with my orders from St. Petersburg, I entered into practical negotiations with him which aimed at securing definitely the use of the sum lent by us to the Bulgarians in 1909, and at obtaining at last the payment—by regular annuities—of the Bulgarian debt of thirteen million francs, unliquidated since the Russian occupation of 1877–79.

I succeeded in carrying these matters through, thanks to the good-will of M. Gueshov and M. Todorov, who had set their hearts on maintaining the commercial integrity of Bulgaria.

King Ferdinand was away at the moment, as he generally was, either when there were no dangers or disturbances ahead in the country, or when he did not wish to come to a decision—but to await developments—in a difficult political situation. Hence, he was away a great deal; moreover he was bored to death in his Palace in Sofia.

However, the King returned rather early in the summer. The new Cabinet, in agreement with the King and the Radical members of the Opposition, had just put a constitutional question : whether the Royal

Government should be granted the right to conclude secret conventions with foreign countries before submitting them to the Sobranjé, a right which was not mentioned in the existing constitution. Hence as it would be necessary to add an additional clause to the organic law of the country, the Great Sobranjé—*i.e.* a constituent assembly alone possessing the right to decide the question—had to be convened. As I have just said, the King, his Ministers and the Radicals who were not in power were agreed on this point. The Radicals were desirous of following up the conferences they had held with us on the subject of a Russo-Bulgarian military convention which they thought was on the eve of being concluded. Moreover, at the Russian Legation it was thought that this was the object of the new organic law. In the country at large, opposition only came from the Socialists and the "Agriculturists"—a new party who preached the strictest economy in State expenditure, and who were irreconcilable foes to war and armaments. Much astonishment was created in Sofia when the *Novoye Vremja* and a few other Russian Nationalist newspapers suddenly began to support the Bulgarian Opposition, represented on this question by elements with which these papers had, after all, nothing in common. The *Novoye Vremja*, which led the campaign, displayed a fear that if the Bulgarian Government obtained the right to conclude secret treaties without having to have recourse to the vote of the Sobranjé, Ferdinand would be in a position to come to all kinds of agreements with Austria! Our Foreign Secretary had to intervene in order to persuade the *Novoye Vremja* to relinquish this ill-timed campaign.

In the month of June the "Great Sobranjé" was convened at Tirnova, and the Diplomatic Corps was invited to the formal opening. We had a special train for the journey, as if we were going on a pleasure-trip. The weather was beautiful, the political sky fairly clear, and most of the Foreign Ministers were on pleasant terms. The following summer we made the same trip

for the festivities marking the 25th anniversary of Ferdinand's reign. But how changed the situation had become ! and what fears haunted us !

On the very day of the opening, the Assembly passed the proposed law by a large majority, in spite of a few violent speeches made by the Socialist leaders.

Throughout the summer, my relations with Government and Court were still very friendly. On mine and our Military Attaché's initiative, General Fichev, Chief of the Bulgarian General Staff, was invited to the grand manœuvres at Krasnoe-Selo, where he was to be presented to the Emperor and to meet our military chiefs. Fichev, who had finished his military education at Turin, had never been to Russia, and was looked upon as a Stamboulovist and an enemy to Russian policy. Yet in his relations with us he never showed any hostile feelings, but appeared to be sincere and moderate. Acting on the principle that one ought to attract people possessing genuine qualities and not repulse them, we took the necessary steps to insure a hearty welcome to the Bulgarian General. He left St. Petersburg flattered and delighted. Later on, in momentous circumstances, General Fichev displayed a sincerity and prudence that many Russophile leaders might well have envied. He vehemently opposed the march of Bulgarian troops on Constantinople, a move which ended in the bloody and useless sacrifices of Chataldja, and provoked our suspicion and displeasure. By his opposition to this, Fichev fell into disgrace with his master; the Chief of the General Staff was forced to apply for sick-leave and to return to Sofia, leaving the direction of his Staff to his adjutant Nerezov. The latter played a disastrous part later on at the time of the Bulgarian attack on the Serbians (June, 1913).

Fichev's journey to Russia was followed by another of far greater importance. At the wish expressed by M. Gueshov, acting as the King's spokesman, I readily agreed to arrange the visit of the Bulgarian Crown-

Prince to his godfather the Emperor. My suggestions were favourable received, and Prince Boris was invited to Kieff, where the Imperial Family passed the month of August, and from there he was to accompany them to Tsarskoe-Selo. The young Prince, who was seventeen years of age, had never been to Russia and did not know his august godfather.

In a conversation which I had had before leaving St. Petersburg with M. Sazonoff, he had confessed to me that he would very much like to marry one of the Grand-Duchesses, daughters of the Emperor, to the Crown-Prince of Rumania, and another to Prince Boris. Only, as he wisely added, it would be necessary to be extremely cautious, as he had not mentioned the matter at Tsarskoe-Selo, and he knew that the Emperor and Empress would never consent to arrange marriages for their daughters which might be contrary to the feelings and inclinations of the young Grand-Duchesses themselves.

Moreover, from a political point of view, anything was preferable to a marriage missed by a refusal from our side: these humiliations are never forgiven. I agreed entirely with M. Sazonoff. Therefore one can imagine how disagreeably surprised I was on my arrival in Sofia to hear my assistants talking quite openly and unconstrainedly about the future—and apparently settled—marriage of Prince Boris with one of the Emperor's daughters, the only point still unsettled being whether he was to marry the Grand-Duchess Olga or the Grand-Duchess Tatiana! The First Secretary to the Legation, a young man with a great deal of assurance and a very loud voice, even went so far as to mention it *in my presence*, at the salon of one of my foreign colleagues. I immediately silenced my young and impetuous assistant by asking him if he had received these confidences from the Emperor himself, who had not deigned to honour me with the same trust. The lesson was absolutely imperative, but it drew down on me the irreconcilable enmity of the gentleman in question.

As I had expected, Prince Boris was received with the utmost friendliness; in consequence of his air of extreme youth—he was small and puny, with a childish face—he was treated as a boy and allowed to share without any formality in the intimate family life of the Emperor. The greatest care was taken of him, and he associated quite informally with the two youngest daughters of the Emperor, the Grand-Duchesses Maria and Anastasie; the former was then only about fourteen years of age.

The Crown-Prince's visit to Kieff coincided unfortunately with the assassination of the Minister-President of Russia, Stolypin. The Prince was an eye-witness of the foul deed, which occurred in the *entr'acte* of a gala performance, and one feels sure that this sad and horrible sight must have thoroughly spoilt the good impressions which he would otherwise have brought back from his visit.

I was deeply depressed by Stolypin's death. It proved that the Russian Revolution was far from being over. Under cover of an apparent calm, the lava of passion and violence was smouldering, ready to upset a state of order which was really only due to the power of the police and the force of habit.

I had known Stolypin as a youth in his parents' house in Moscow. At that time I was very intimate with his eldest brother Michael, since killed in a duel. "Petia" Stolypin, as he was then called, was about fifteen years old, and was noted for his good behaviour, love of study, and deep feeling of honour, which moreover was a distinguishing characteristic of the whole Stolypin family. Such he remained through all the vicissitudes of life and up to his death. I saw him again, after the lapse of long years, at the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg; he was living there with his family in 1908, in consequence of the criminal attempt made on his life in the summer of 1906, in which some of his children were injured. The President of the

Council gave me the impression then of being very uncommunicative and, up to a point, very much depressed; I doubt very much whether, in his heart of hearts, he had preserved unbounded confidence in himself and his system. In an uncongenial atmosphere, surrounded by the high dignitaries of St. Petersburg, this country squire displayed an openness and straightforwardness which won universal esteem, but his task was in no way made easier thereby. On the other hand, his long rural career, more particularly his term as governor of a province, had developed in him leanings towards patriarchal despotism. These tendencies alienated all truly liberal minds. The flattery heaped on him by a certain portion of the Press, and the Octobrist section of the Duma—which only existed through his protection—all combined to dim his mental vision; having commenced his ministerial career as a champion of the "Zemstvo," *i.e.* of provincial self-government, he ended it—sad to say—as the unlucky head of the political police of the old régime! All the same, in spite of his errors, Stolypin preserved a perfect honesty of purpose, and a strong and upright character. His death deprived the Conservative party of a man who, on going out of office, might have become an eminent political leader. But even if he had remained at the head of the Government, Stolypin would never have allowed the Government machinery to get so completely out of order and to reach a pitch of dilapidation which made possible the new victorous thrust of the Revolutionists. The Revolution was ill-timed and disastrous, for in the midst of a world war it aimed at establishing an ultra-Socialist Republic in Russia, and in the mad attempt it destroyed all patriotic feeling in the country.

In the sphere of foreign policy, Stolypin played a more important part than was generally supposed. He undoubtedly possessed certain German sympathies, while remaining intensely Slavophile and Nationalist, and consequently firmly attached to the system of the French alliance. The German Empire attracted

him by the order which reigned there, by the national patriotism which seemed to animate all classes of the population, all political parties. Moreover, possessing an intimate knowledge of the actual state of Russia, and realising the internal dangers the Empire would have to face if war broke out, Stolypin frankly dreaded a war and consequently anything which might lead to the collision so often predicted with Germany. As long as he lived he had an indisputable influence on M. Sazonoff's policy and on that of his *locum-tenens*, M. Neratoff. This influence showed itself in very early days in the interviews which the new Russian Foreign Secretary held with the Berlin politicians in November, 1910.

On his return to St. Petersburg and to business after the death of his brother-in-law, Sazonoff had no longer any reason or desire to be under the influence of that incongruous group of men officially called the "Council of Ministers" or "Cabinet." From the autumn of 1911 our foreign policy was definitely divorced from the home policy of the Empire, and remained solely within the province of the Foreign Office. Sazonoff, who was above all things a good comrade and a staunch friend, was from henceforth entirely under the influence of his own environment, and all his decisions were arrived at in select committees of a few collaborators, men who were mostly intelligent and mentally distinguished, but who often lacked practical experience.

During the years that followed, M. Sazonoff and the Foreign Office became more and more cut off from the rest of the Government.

We ought to note that in general during the years immediately preceding the World War and the Revolution, there was a pecular change in the kind of people who were called upon to govern Russia. Men of no proved political reputation, lacking in experience, with no marked ability, sprang up no one knew whence, and gradually monopolised the power and influence over all state affairs. Thus bank-notes of great value were

exchanged for small change, which rattled about in the money-bags but only possessed one merit : that it was easy to circulate and exchange.

The summer of 1911 ended for me by the visit of the Russian Squadron to Varna. The principal ships of our Black Sea Fleet, under the new Vice-Admiral Bostroem, came this year with great pomp to visit the harbours of Bulgaria and Turkey, and the Rumanian harbour Constanza. At Varna, whither I went with my suite to meet our Squadron, the reception was exceedingly warm. King Ferdinand was not there, of course : as soon as he was free from the worries of the Great Sobranjé, he had left for foreign parts. But Queen Eleanor, who was spending the summer at Euxinograd near Varna, all alone in the seclusion of a small ancient convent, hidden away in one of the corners of the park, was delighted to preside at the reception and to receive from our Navy the royal honours which were so grudgingly bestowed on her at the Court of the King her husband.

As is customary on such occasions, I received the official visit of the Admirals, and then went the same day with great ceremony on board the flagship and others of the Squadron. Each time it was the usual naval reception : the cutter stopping at the ship's side ; the thunder of the salute, then on board, the reception by the Admiral and the ship's officers, with military honours, and the introduction of the other officers on board ; finally the salute of the crew drawn up on deck, the presenting arms, answered by the usual cheers. I had witnessed these receptions several times at Constantinople when I was in attendance on my eminent and never-forgotten chief, M. de Nelidoff, and they had always produced in me a pleasant feeling of emotion : they evoked images of our country, represented by the splendid ships, by the glorious flag of St. Andrew, by the formidable guns, by the charming hospitality of the officers. and last but not least by those tall, fair youths, with open, almost child-like, expressions, who were

drawn up before us, and who later on, in the evening, sang patriotic songs reminding us of loved ones far away.

I felt the same emotion at first when I visited our Squadron lying off Varna. The firing of the salute, the going on board, the cordial shaking hands with the officers . . . but when I was face to face with the men drawn up in battle array, when I had said "good luck, my good fellows," and had received the usual answer from them, I felt a sudden and painful shock. It was twenty years since I had seen our sailors, and good gracious! what a change! Instead of a row of open countenances, young and happy, looking at one with ingenuous and gay expressions, I only saw surly faces, with dark and suspicious looks, in which one seemed to catch glimpses of ill-concealed hatred. It even appeared to me as if the physical aspect of the crew had changed; I seemed to remember them fair, with clear grey eyes, and broad, bright faces; now they stood looking at me with dark eyes that looked old and bilious. At first I thought I was influenced by a preconceived idea; the regrettable incidents of 1905 and 1906, the bloody mutiny on board the *Potemkin*, the terrible insurrection at Cronstadt had doubtless biassed my mind, and led me to look at very ordinary faces with a prejudiced eye. But no; the more I observed our sailors during the few days I was at Varna, the stronger my first impression became. As to the officers, they had changed very little: they seemed to have the same good qualities and the same faults. They were the same good fellows who seemed to answer one's silent interrogation by: "We realise what threatens us, but we can do nothing. When the time comes we shall know how to die, as our friends died at Tsushima; if necessary we shall bare our chests to the bayonets of our own men; but meanwhile let us lead our ordinary daily life, come what may!"

The visit of our Squadron to Varna was marked by official festivities which were very friendly; there was the dinner I gave to the officers of the Squadron,

the Bulgarian authorities and the principal townspeople of Varna; a reception given by Queen Eleanor in the beautiful park at Euxinograd; Her Majesty's visit to the Squadron, when all the ships returned the royal salute; finally the "curfew-bell," followed by a dance on board the flagship, to which the townspeople of Varna were invited.

Vice-Admiral Bostroem, who commanded the Squadron and the whole of the Black Sea Fleet, was an acquaintance of mine. We had often met in Paris during the winter of 1904-5, while the International Commission of Inquiry on the Dogger-Bank incident was sitting. Holding at that time the post of Counsellor to our Embassy in Paris, I was appointed delegate of the Russian Government to the Commission; and Captain Bostroem, then our naval-attaché in London, often came to Paris to report to Admiral Dubassoff, Baron Taube, our legal adviser, and to me the result of the investigations he made in Hull and other English seaports. Captain Bostroem was very zealous in his investigations, but rather too credulous concerning the information he gathered; this finally placed him in a very false position, as two English witnesses, found and presented by him, were convicted of perjury.

Alas! The command of the Black Sea Squadron ended even more disastrously for poor Bostroem than his zeal in the Hull incident. A few days after our leave-taking at Varna, when the Russian Squadron, after a series of festivities, was leaving the harbour at Constanza, the Admiral had the bad luck to run his ship aground on a sandbank. This incident put an end to Bostroem's brilliant but brief career.

Thus I spent my first summer in Sofia. The summer of 1911 will remain memorable in history through an event which caused more surprise than emotion in Europe, but which was the starting-point of fateful events. I allude to the commencement of the Italo-Turkish War.

Of course, neither of the two interested parties had realised the importance and significance of their conflict for the world at large. Anxious to secure to the restored Ottoman Empire its complete independence of the Powers up till then arbiters of its fate, the Young-Turkish Government had selected Italy as being the least dangerous of the Great Powers on which to impose its claims. It felt certain, moreover, that Germany would intervene at the crucial moment to prevent an armed contest. In reasoning thus it had lost sight of Italy's privileged situation among the rival Powers, and of the fact that Italian action in the East would not arouse exaggerated fears or inclinations to interfere in either of the two camps. As to Italy, she hoped that her energetic attitude would ensure the immediate success of her cause. Rome had not reckoned with the slowness of a war in the desert, in which, as far as Italy was concerned, everything had yet to be organised, whereas the Turks should come off fairly well with a small array of forces, and a ready-made system of guerilla warfare.

By lasting for more than a year, the Italo-Turkish War doubtless contributed to the ripening of the Balkan events of 1912 and 1913. And these most certainly hastened, and up to a point prepared, the explosion of the terrible World War.

CHAPTER V

SERBO-BULGARIAN RELATIONS

In my conversations with the principal members of the Cabinet, I repeatedly had opportunities of touching on the question of Serbo-Bulgarian relations; each time I noticed the desire to improve these relations, but I always found myself up against a feeling of distrust of the Serbians, so I refrained from insisting too much. However, towards the end of September, 1911, when paying a call on M. Todorov, who was taking the place of M. Gueshov then on leave, I was very much surprised to hear him broach the whole question.

"We have come to the conclusion," said M. Todorov, "that if we wish to guard our complete political and economic independence from the encroachments of Central Europe, and if we truly desire to improve the lot of our kin in Turkey, we must as far as possible make our national and economic policy one with that of Serbia. We represent two nationalities very closely related by blood, language, and even by our former historic destinies. What prevents us from living in perfect harmony together? Simply and solely, at this moment, disagreement on the subject of our sphere of action in Macedonia. We would therefore suggest to the Serbians to go thoroughly into this question with us, in order to arrive at a good and solid understanding. I will not conceal from you that we wish to draw up a settled agreement with Serbia. What do you think of the idea, Monsieur?"

I replied, of course, that speaking generally I could not but approve of the reasons and feelings which appeared to sway the Bulgarian Government. But that

as to knowing whether we should consider it an opportune moment to start these delicate negotiations between Sofia and Belgrade, I should first have to ask the advice of our Foreign Secretary, and to confer also with my colleague in Belgrade, M. Hartwig. I continued: "I have just received permission to go to Paris for a fortnight on urgent private business. I could go by Vienna instead of straight through by the Orient-Express, and take the Zurich train, and branch off at Landquart to Davos, where M. Sazonoff is still staying. His health has improved so considerably that he will shortly be able to return to St. Petersburg and to business. On returning from Paris, I will stop for a few hours in Belgrade so as to confer with Hartwig. Then in three weeks from now, I could discuss the question far more profitably with you."

"Splendid!" said M. Todorov; "the King will probably have returned by then, and so will M. Gueshov; and if you bring back with you the approbation of your Minister and the valuable co-operation of M. Hartwig, I trust we might then succeed in carrying through the negotiations which have been outlined several times, but which up to now have begun and ended there."

Two days after I started, and during my journey I had enough leisure to go over in my mind the vicissitudes of Serbo-Bulgarian relations. I will limit myself here to the enumeration of the principal phases.

I. Up to about 1870 there existed an almost complete ignorance on the part of Russian policy of Bulgarian nationality and aspirations. Serbia, under the noble Prince Michael Obrenovitch, represented, as far as we were concerned then, the whole Slav cause in the Near East; the enthusiasts of this cause looked on the Serbian principality as a "Balkan Piedmont."

II. Between 1870 and 1875 General Ignatieff, the omnipotent Russian Ambassador to the Sultan Abdul-Azis, *discovers* Bulgaria, and espouses the Bulgarian

cause at the time of the movement which founded the Bulgarian National Church. The Bulgarian nation—"Bulgar-meleti"—makes its appearance, as it were, in the political world of the Balkans, with the representative of Russia as godfather. In the meantime Prince Michael Obrenovitch had been assassinated, and during the minority of Prince Milan, Serbian policy was suffering from the want of a respectable and respected Government.

III. Balkan troubles begin in 1875 with the Herzegovinian insurrection, secretly supported, if not actually fomented, by Austria. The Emperor Alexander II. and Russian public opinion wish to obliterate completely the recollection of the Crimean campaign, to cover Russian arms with new glory, and especially to resume the illustrious part of Defenders of the Christian Faith in the East. The influence of the aged Prince Gortchakoff, who opposes these projects, is definitely on the wane, and the Emperor frames his own policy—allowing for that of his Chancellor—with his Ambassadors: Ignatieff in Constantinople; Count Peter Schuvaloff in London; and M. Novikoff in Vienna. Disorders break out in Bulgaria followed by massacres, horrible as ever, but this time exaggerated rather than suppressed by the Press and European diplomacy. A palace revolution in Constantinople, and a heated struggle for influence between the Embassies of Russia and Great Britain. Serbo-Turkish War, and enormous enthusiasm in Russia for the Serbian cause, which is completely mistaken for the whole Slav cause.

IV. Conference at Reichstadt, at which, in order to guarantee the neutrality, or even under certain conditions the co-operation, of Austria in a war in the East which we feel to be imminent, we consent beforehand to the Austrian occupation of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and even of the sanjak of Novibazar; in other words we leave Serbia herself within the sphere of Austro-Hungarian influence. Hence the absolute necessity for our policy to found a new autonomous Slav State in the

Balkans, which would constitute a sphere for Russian influence.

V. War in the East and the creation of the Bulgaria of San Stefano, the Bulgaria of General Ignatieff, including the whole of Macedonia, closing Salonika, as an outlet, to the Austrians, and the Nish Valley to the Serbians. Revision of the Treaty of San Stefano in Berlin, and considerable restrictions in the boundaries of Bulgaria. Count Schuvaloff, in answer to the lamentations of M. Ristitch, the Serbian Plenipotentiary, advises him to come to an understanding with Austria, and he is perfectly right, in view of the concessions granted by us to Austria-Hungary at Reichstadt. Impressed by these warlike events and by these clauses in the agreements, Serbia and her young King begin practically to submit to the predominating influence of Austria. In the meantime, Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia appear to be genuinely devoted to Russia and amenable to our advice.

VI. (1880-1886). An era of internal political quarrels in Bulgaria, in which we take an active part, begins to disturb Russo-Bulgarian relations. The change of reign in Russia, and the faults of Prince Alexander cause us to dislike the latter. Abandoned by Russia, threatened in Bulgaria, the Prince abruptly changes his policy, discards his absolutist tendencies, calls a Radical Government into power, seeks English protection, and to satisfy national wishes, invades Eastern Rumelia. King Milan of Serbia, under pressure from Austria, turns against his neighbour and declares war on him. This unfair and fratricidal blow does not succeed; the Serbians are defeated at Slivnitza, the Bulgarians occupy Pirot, and are only stopped before the gates of Nish by European interposition. These events, however, constitute a real misfortune for the Slav cause in the Balkans, as they inaugurate a long era of distrust and estrangement between the two adjacent countries.

VII. During the next few years and up till 1896 the Serbians take advantage of the complete breach between Russia and the Bulgaria of Stamboulov to enhance in

our eyes their national aspirations in Macedonia, where they are fighting Bulgarian propaganda. Towards 1890, on the abdication of King Milan and the formation of the new and powerful national party of the Radicals, the Serbians definitely supplant the Bulgarians in the good graces of official and Slavophile Russia: the Treaty of San Stefano is, as it were, tacitly revised by Russia, and the Serbians benefit by the revision.

VIII. A new change of reign and the appointment of Prince Lobanoff to the post of Foreign Secretary mark, between 1895 and 1896, a new trend in Russian policy. The Bulgarians return to favour, and very naturally profit by it to attempt once more to place their Macedonian aspirations under Russian protection. The muddled state of Serbian home policy between 1896 and 1900 seems to facilitate this plan. And soon Bulgarian activity redoubles in Macedonia.

IX. But Russian policy, taught by experience, will not undertake to protect one of the competitors at the expense of the other, nor allow itself to be forced into separate action in favour of the populations of Macedonia. Meanwhile a *modus vivendi* is inaugurated with Austria, and Macedonia gradually becomes, thanks to our initiative, a sphere for wise intervention by the Powers, with the exception of Germany. The Foreign Secretary and his Russian representatives in Constantinople, Vienna, Belgrade and Sofia use their efforts to bring about a reconciliation and more especially a unification of interests between Serbia and Bulgaria. These efforts are not altogether successful. A certain strain of mutual distrust and jealousy always exists. However, the tension is slightly relaxed, even on the dangerous ground of Macedonia, where, during the particularly troublous times of 1903–1908, the struggle between Bulgarians and Serbians becomes less bitter, and in any case never attains to that pitch of ferocity which characterises during the same period the Bulgarian exploits against the Greeks, and *vice-versâ*. The Turkish Revolution helps to check momentarily all

rivalries in Macedonia. They are about to begin again when the advent of the new Russophile Grand Ministry in Sofia appears to facilitate our efforts to bring about an understanding between Bulgarians and Serbians, which would prevent a renewal of former hatred and the repetition of former errors.

I only spent a few hours in Vienna; I did not succeed in reserving a sleeping-carriage to Zurich, so had to take a seat in the evening in a small first-class carriage, where a lady was already installed, signifying to me by her presence that I should spend the night sitting bolt upright, and hence without sleep. My surprise was great when I recognised this lady as a very old acquaintance of mine, Mademoiselle Marie Vassiltchikoff—Macha Vassiltchikoff, as she was commonly called—an intelligent and cheerful old maid, of enormous size and brilliant colouring, and very light and amusing in conversation. At one time she had been maid-of-honour, with active duties, to the reigning Empress, and was in high favour with her royal mistress. She was the daughter of Alexander Vassiltchikoff, keeper and head of the collections of the Imperial Hermitage, and laid claim to artistic taste, and placed this taste at the disposal of the Empress, assisting and advising her in the furnishing of the sumptuous apartments of the young Imperial couple in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. I do not know whether it was a natural inclination, or a desire to flatter the tastes of her mistress that made the plump Macha go in so very much for the "secessionist" and decadent style which had just sprung into being in Germany, and which had found an august patron in the person of the unbalanced Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, brother of the Empress of Russia. This style was utterly discordant with the old walls of the Winter Palace, built by the best Italian and French architects of the middle of the eighteenth century. But naturally every one admitted to visit the new Imperial apartments was lost in admiration and praise. Prince

Lobanoff, then Foreign Secretary, who in art ostensibly cultivated the principles of the great styles of the eighteenth century, alone dared to be outspoken, and each time that he accompanied the Empress into a room in the Palace which had not yet been touched, would exclaim: "Thank goodness, Macha Vassiltchikoff has not been in here!"

Many years had elapsed since then, and Macha, who had left the Court, was now living near Vienna, attracted thither by some close friendships she had made in an agreeable and sympathetic little set of the best Austrian society.

My travelling companion explained that she was on her way, accompanied by Prince Francis of Lichtenstein (formerly Ambassador to St. Petersburg) and a few of his guests, to the re-opening of the old castle of Vaduz (capital of Lichtenstein), which had recently been restored; she said that she like me had not been able to get a sleeping berth. Having talked for a long time, we settled ourselves as best we could, each in our corner; we spent a most unpleasant night, and in the morning dashed as soon as we could into the restaurant-car, to solace ourselves with hot coffee. There we found Prince Lichtenstein, who had known me for some time, and a very gay party, in which I found some former good colleagues. When they saw the two of us appear together, after a night spent in a *tête-à-tête* it was naturally the signal for a running fire of witticisms: we were treated as a newly-married couple, questioned as to our first impressions, etc., etc. Breakfast was ending merrily when the train reached Vaduz, where my travelling companions got out, and a few minutes later I arrived at Landquart, where I was to take the little mountain railway which goes to Davos.

I should have been greatly surprised if any one at that moment had predicted that in a few years I should meet the plump Macha Vassiltchikoff again, in Stockholm on her way to St. Petersburg, *viâ* Lapland, in order to

play a brief politico-comic part, to her own disadvantage and to her shame.

At Davos I had the pleasure of finding M. Sazonoff really on the road to recovery, and the next day I was able to relate and discuss with him the overtures recently made to me by M. Todorov. M. Sazonoff listened most attentively. "Well," said he, when I had finished, "but this is perfect! If only it could come off! Bulgaria closely allied to Serbia in the political and economic sphere; five hundred thousand bayonets to guard the Balkans—but this would bar the road for ever to German penetration, Austrian invasion!" "Quite so," I replied; "but there is also another side to the question which I venture to raise. In the first place, I personally do not greatly dread an Austrian *military* invasion; I firmly believe that Austria does not nurse such dangerous schemes. Penetration by intrigues, economic stratagems and other means—that I believe in; and also that such penetration would be effectually checked by a sincere and lasting Serbo-Bulgarian reconciliation; but in a direct attack with armed forces, no! I shall never believe in it, except in a completely new situation and under quite exceptional circumstances![1] But on the other hand, I cannot help wondering whether Bulgaria and Serbia, having united their forces (representing more than half a million soldiers—and admirable soldiers, I assure you), are not thinking much less of guarding against Austrian aggression than of attacking Turkey and of settling the Macedonian question by the sword? The Italo-Turkish war may well encourage them in this idea. That is what I fear. The most serious events might well occur at a time when Russia is not ready and she might have to submit to many disagreeable things if she does not wish to be drawn into the fray . . ."

[1] I was wrong as it turns out. But one must allow that the general political situation at the moment when I talked to Sazonoff at Davos was quite different from what it was after the two Balkan wars, and more especially after the Treaty of Bukharest.

"Oh! but Russian diplomacy is there to prevent matters taking such a turn," replied the Minister sharply. "We must simply check all dangerous proclivities at once in Sofia and in Belgrade. You tell me that the present Bulgarian Government is quite sincere in regard to Russia; you also tell me that King Ferdinand seems to you to be very cautious. We have the same impressions about Belgrade. Under the circumstances, I repeat, we shall make both countries listen to reason. You might write to M. Neratoff and ask him for instructions; for my part, I firmly believe that a loyal agreement, putting an end to all these sad misunderstandings between Serbians and Bulgarians, is highly desirable, and that we ought openly to encourage them to enter into it."

This was briefly the pith of my conversation with the Minister.

A fortnight later, on my return from Paris, I stopped in Belgrade to talk with M. Hartwig.

He appeared to be very well versed in the overtures made to me by M. Todorov, although he did not openly admit this.

"The Bulgarians," said my colleague, "have at last understood that they can do nothing without the co-operation of the Serbians. I expected this and I am quite satisfied: if only the Government in Sofia will display in the negotiations about to commence a true conciliatory spirit, and will not ask the Serbians to give up things which they cannot give up; for at the last attempt to arrange and define the spheres of influence in Macedonia, the Bulgarians would not even abandon their claim to Uskub—the former Serbian capital—which as you must admit was really insane on their part! But I have reason to believe that this time the Bulgarians will be obliged to be more reasonable. As to *my* Serbians, I am quite sure of them."

"But are you not afraid that, if they come to a complete and formal agreement, the two Slav states may be tempted to throw themselves immediately into the

fray and to attack Turkey, whose dissolution appears to be setting in again? . . ."

"Oh! I feel sure that the Bulgarians would willingly interpret the matter thus. But the Serbians would not allow themselves to be drawn into such a venture, with Austria in the background! Moreover, they will always listen to our good advice. King Peter is very prudent, and you yourself know the wisdom of M. Pachitch. . . ."

We separated with great cordiality, exchanging the promise to communicate with each other on the negotiations doubtless about to commence between the two countries.

M. Hartwig played such an important part in the events which have occurred since, that I must here attempt to sketch his political portrait.

Born and educated in Russia and in exclusively Russian surroundings, this grandson of a German doctor who had emigrated to Russia, had absolutely nothing German about him, either in his appearance or his way of thinking. To the end of his life he remained typically Russian, a Russian *student*, an enthusiast for certain ideas, devoted up to his death to certain political conceptions, despising formality, and conventionality in appearance, sometimes even in his intercourse with others ignoring the conventions; vehement and despotic in his opinions, but a good fellow all the same, and willing to forgive the wrongs he had done to others. (A characteristic far more rare than might be supposed.)

Poor and lacking patrons, but with a brilliant scholastic career behind him, and possessing the true Russian powers of application and thoroughness, Hartwig soon attracted attention in the Asiatic Department of the Foreign Office, which he entered on leaving the University of St. Petersburg.

At that time the offices of the Ministry were still divided into two definite camps. On one side the "Chancellor's office"—or Minister's Cabinet—full of young men-of-the-world, well connected, well educated,

and destined for careers in the Embassies and Legations of the West; cleverness at once attracted attention, if any one showed any true ability all the town talked about it. Much stress was laid on good manners and discreet behaviour generally, and scrupulous good-fellowship; personal intrigue was rigidly excluded, and every young man who went through the successive stages could be sure of promotion in his turn; exceptions were only made—and approved of among the men themselves—in those cases of recognised striking ability alluded to above.

On the other side, the Asiatic Department were supplied from divers grades of society, to which the former Directors had tried to attract the talent and intelligence of the day. Those who were admitted were destined to diplomatic and consular careers in the Near East and in Persia. And as a matter of fact, talents abounded in this profession between the forties and eighties of last century. Later on the composition of this Ministry, which had been so brilliant under Prince Gortchakoff, deteriorated as he grew older and feebler, and men of talent became more rare in the Asiatic Department.

But all the same Hartwig had to push himself forward. The ambitious young man became one of the informants of the *Novoye Vremja*, which at the time was pursuing the Ministry with criticism and accusing it of lack of vigour and patriotism, more especially in Eastern affairs; he also kept in touch with our General Staff, which indulged in the same criticism of our diplomacy. But one must admit that it was not personal views alone which induced Hartwig to become the echo of these critics and to furnish them with material; all his life he had been a staunch adherent of a policy of action in the Near East and in Central Asia; and he devoted his zeal and his talents to this end. It was during the administration of Count Lamsdorf that Hartwig's career received its true impetus. He promptly became the right hand of the amiable and retiring Minister, who, an

ardent worker himself, appreciated unceasing work and devotion to duty in others. Moreover, without entirely shelving his "Activist" convictions in the sphere of our eastern policy, Hartwig succeeded, as long as the Lamsdorf Ministry lasted, in restraining his ardour and in bowing to the wisely Opportunist views of his chief. Appointed Director of the Asiatic Department, he soon became known and recognised in High Places, and when in 1904 Lamsdorf's successor appointed him Minister to Teheran, Hartwig left to take up the post rather as if he were in disgrace, for he had aspired either to the Embassy in Constantinople or to the post of Foreign Secretary. After two years in Teheran, his relations with his colleague of Great Britain became impossible; they no longer spoke to each other, they hardly even bowed; as at the moment we were inaugurating the entente with England, the two Ministers were recalled by common consent, and Hartwig was appointed to Belgrade.

Having spent all his life (with the exception of two short visits to Montenegro and Burgas) in the offices of the Asiatic Department specialising in the Slav question, Hartwig had gained a knowledge not only of Balkan questions and records, but up to a point of the people themselves. To him were sent all the Slavs who came to St. Petersburg: political exiles and refugees, ministers on missions, young princes and princesses educated at the expense of the Court in privileged schools and institutions, etc. Amongst all these people, whom he received with good-nature and in whose favour he interceded with his chiefs, "Nicolas Henricovitch" was deservedly popular. He found himself at once amongst old acquaintances when he took up his post in Belgrade, where he had access to everything, and where he might flatter himself that his advice would be listened to and followed. On this score he experienced a few disappointments. But with the innate adaptability of his nature, he appropriated those very ideas which it was his duty to fight, and made himself their authorised

champion; so that they often were approved of by our Foreign Office, where he had left a few fervent friends and some devoted admirers. But one must allow that, in order to have his support, every cause had to bear the stamp of very orthodox Slavophilism, *i.e.* of hostility to Austria and devotion to Russia.

Very intelligent, as I said before, gifted with a wonderful memory, and having read and studied much, Hartwig had two flaws in his reasoning powers which sometimes obscured his judgment and hampered his actions. In the first place, he had too much confidence in the might of his own pen, when writing minutes, dispatches, etc.; his career had endued him with the soul of the publicist and brilliant official writer. With him, an apt syllogism often took the place of the inexorable logic of facts. Secondly, this man, so near the zenith of his career, had framed for himself a political system which was absolutely arbitrary, ingenuous even: Hartwig firmly believed—and said so openly—that it was quite possible for Russia to remain on the best terms with Germany, whilst striving to outdo Austria in every possible way. In St. Petersburg he had always endeavoured to be friendly towards the German Embassy; in his two posts as Minister, he maintained the best possible relations with his German colleagues. Officially the Germans did the same, but in their heart of hearts they did not like him; they saw in him a fanatic and a muddler, and suspected him of duplicity. I have always wondered how a man of Hartwig's intellectual worth could fail to see that in Berlin for years they had thoroughly espoused the Austrian cause in the East; that they had made it *their own;* that they were driving Austria towards Salonika whilst they were taking possession more and more of Constantinople. To come to a friendly agreement with Austria which should contain nothing disadvantageous to Germany—*that* might be contemplated as a merely opportunist and temporary policy! But to attempt to cement a true friendship either with Germany to the

exclusion of Austria, or with the latter to the exclusion of Germany—here was a policy doomed to failure and, what is more, which might become extremely dangerous at any moment!

I knew the character and the opinions of my colleague of Belgrade long before I was appointed to Sofia. I knew he was as popular in Bulgaria as he was in Serbia, that he had much influence and commanded authentic sources for private information. I was therefore prepared beforehand to learn that when the Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations began, Hartwig would wish to play a prominent part in them. Personally I saw no objection to this, and I should have been glad if my colleague had been successful in certain cases in obtaining from the Bulgarians from afar what I should not have been able to obtain from them on the spot. But the continuation of the negotiations proved that whenever it was a question of national claims, all restraining action became difficult in Belgrade, impossible in Sofia.

CHAPTER VI

THE SERBO-BULGARIAN TREATY

THE Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations lasted from October, 1911, till February, 1912. The place chosen was Sofia, King Ferdinand being very persistent on this point: he pretended that Belgrade, owing to its geographical position, was infested with Austro-Hungarian spies; but the fact of the matter was that it flattered his vanity to see the Serbians coming, as it were, to him! The negotiations were to be conducted with the utmost secrecy, and only the respective Russian Ministers were allowed to know what was going on. In point of fact, Hartwig and I were the constant arbiters, continually consulted, and referred to in each difficulty, however small, by both parties.

The negotiations were soon concentrated almost exclusively on the defining of the spheres of influence in Macedonia, and finally four months were spent in fixing the future frontier between Serbia and Bulgaria. In discussing the line of this frontier *in spe*, the two parties showed such an entire lack of any conciliatory spirit that I am still wondering how they ever arrived at any agreement! After long preliminary debates they at last agreed on the two extreme points of this famous frontier. These were: in the north-east the spot where at that period the frontiers of Turkey, Bulgaria and Serbia converged; in the south-west the northern point of Lake Ochrida.

But then the line between these two points had to be drawn. As it was manifestly impossible to send a commission to work on the spot (the Turks might have taken this amiss!), it was necessary to rely on the most detailed maps of the Russian, Serbian and Bulgarian

General Staffs. The demarcation of the boundary-line gave rise to endless discussions; each elevation, each village, each stream was bitterly disputed, and to solve the question they sought now the interposition of the Russian Ministers, now the topographical authority of our military agents. Each side wished to mark the frontier by a curved line, curving outwards as far as possible into the future territory of the competitor; but by dint of arguing, a remarkably straight line was arrived at—and this in spite of the very uneven surface configuration of Macedonia—the result—well-known in physics—of two equal efforts working in an inverse sense!

On the Bulgarian side it was M. Gueshov and M. Todorov who were the most amenable and the most willing to arrive at a sincere agreement, whereas M. Danev and the military, as was moreover to be expected, displayed inflexible obstinacy. So far as the principal representative of Serbian interests—the Serbian Minister in Sofia, M. Spalaïkovitch (later on Minister in St. Petersburg)—was concerned, his vehement nationalism was tempered by the sincere desire to cause Slav solidarity to triumph on this question. Very hasty and very impressionable, M. Spalaïkovitch had always been distinguished by his straightforwardness and sincerity, as well as by his keen intelligence: on the whole it was the quintessence of the Serbian nature; the bonds of friendship which I kept up with him often enabled me to have a soothing and restraining influence on him.

Throughout the conferences—more especially during the first three months—King Ferdinand affected to hold himself aloof from them and to give a free hand to his Ministers. He only mentioned the subject to me two or three times. The first time was at the end of November, at the wedding of my eldest daughter, to which the Court and the Diplomatic Corps came. That day, in a brief aside, the King told me of the satisfaction he felt about the Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations; but he suggested a few doubts as to the sincerity of the Serbians. I

hastened to assure His Majesty, by reason of information received from Belgrade, that the Serbians truly desired to arrive at the most complete agreement with Bulgaria. The second time I went into the subject much more thoroughly with the King. This was on the 6th (19th) December, the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor. It was customary on that day for the King to accept an invitation to luncheon at the Russian Legation, and in the evening for him to give a State dinner followed by a grand reception at the Royal Castle. After the luncheon, having held little formal conversations with every one in turn, the King came into my study and we talked together for some time. In the course of conversation the King, for the first time, mentioned certain fears he entertained concerning the actual fact of the Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations. His Majesty expressed the rather justifiable thought that if the substance of these conferences came to be known by Vienna and Berlin, the Central Powers might bring forward the whole Balkan question and raise difficulties which primarily would not suit St. Petersburg. "That is why," said the King in conclusion, "one cannot possibly be too prudent either in the negotiations themselves, or as to the ends which these negotiations are to attain." This time Ferdinand seemed to me to be sincere; doubts and fears were always much more frankly expressed by him than any other sentiments or motives of his complex mind. Up to a point I shared the opinion of the august speaker. The Serbo-Bulgarian conferences, in this respect, did most certainly present certain dangers. Of course, the chief reason of Ferdinand's fears lay in his desire not to break definitely with Vienna; but at the same time, he sincerely dreaded the risk of war, and he fully realised that this risk existed as the result of a Serbo-Bulgarian alliance, based solely on the partition of Macedonia. Bearing in mind the words of the Emperor, and constantly remembering my last conversation with Sazonoff in which he had expressed his conviction that the chief aim of Russian

diplomacy should consist in avoiding all conflict in the Near East, I, as representative of Russia, was completely at one with King Ferdinand the moment it was a question of avoiding the possibility of war. Consequently, in the course of conversation I tried to induce him to express more definitely his dread of a collision with Turkey; but the King avoided doing this: he truly dreaded war, but he was not going to have it said that he dreaded it.

In the dispatches which I sent off every fortnight to St. Petersburg, to M. Neratoff and then to M. Sazonoff on his return from Davos, I related in detail the progress of the Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations; but each of my dispatches was accompanied by a private and confidential letter in which I did not omit to point out the danger of war which might be brought about by the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement, so much extolled and desired by us. I laid great stress on the facts that the negotiations were now exclusively concerned with territorial demarcation and with the defining of a frontier *in spe* between Bulgaria and Serbia; that throughout the conferences I could not observe a desire to arrive at a really cordial agreement between the two countries; that these conferences were assuming a character of mere political opportunism, and that the Italo-Turkish war which was going on meanwhile certainly incited the Balkan States to action. Each time the answer from St. Petersburg was to the effect that we certainly would not hear of an armed collision in the Balkans, and that everything must be done to prevent such a collision, but that, on the other hand, a Serbo-Bulgarian agreement would be particularly welcome and agreeable to us, because it would constitute an effectual barrier against Austro-German penetration in the Peninsula. In the following dispatch I expressed my complete adherence to this point of view of the Ministry, but at the same time I reiterated my apprehensions. To which the answer was once more that "although on the one hand one would . . . etc. . . . notwithstanding,

on the other hand, one perhaps etc., etc! . . ." This exchange of views lasted till the beginning of February, 1912, when the famous frontier-line was at last settled and marked on the map of Macedonia, and nothing remained to be done but to sign the agreement. At this juncture I was informed from St. Petersburg that His Majesty the Emperor, when receiving the Bulgarian military attaché, had expressed to him in very precise terms his desire to see the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement concluded and signed. From that moment I no longer felt myself justified in expressing doubts and fears as to the agreement. *Roma locuta—causa finita.*

The Serbo-Bulgarian agreement was signed by the Serbian and Bulgarian Foreign Secretaries in the last days of February, 1912, and ratified by the two Sovereigns under date of March 13th, which in this leap-year corresponded to February 29th, O.S. I have often remembered, since, the superstitions attached in the West to the number 13, and in Russia to the date of February 29th, which is considered singularly unlucky. But the fact that it had been possible to keep the conclusion of the agreement a complete secret may have consoled the interested parties for this. No one had any idea of it, except Russia, and those to whom we judged it fit and proper later on to confide the secret. Turkey and the Powers of the Triple Alliance only knew of the Serbo-Bulgarian compact when the Balkan War broke out. It is true that our Foreign Secretary had received from Belgrade some information as to the secret of the agreement having been betrayed by Ferdinand to the Austrian Court. Later on, in 1913, this retrospective disclosure appeared in the *Novoye Vremja.* Nevertheless it was quite untrue, and our Foreign Secretary had an opportunity of proving to himself *irrefutably* that in Vienna, as in Berlin, there was no idea of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement till shortly before the Balkan War, and that the German Minister in Sofia denied up to the end, that is till the mobilisation, the very existence of the agreement. I consider it

necessary, however, in alluding to the ignorance of the agreement on the part of the Powers of the Triple Alliance to except the military spheres of Italy. But I shall deal with this question later on.

The close of the Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations almost coincided with the festivities held for the coming of age of the heir to the Bulgarian throne, Prince Boris.

King Ferdinand wished to invest this anniversary with all the pomp possible. Invitations had been issued to related and neighbouring Courts, and for the 11th (24th) of February members of the Royal Families and ambassadors extraordinary arrived in Sofia, entrusted with the congratulations and good wishes customary on these occasions.

The Emperor of Russia, godfather to young Prince Boris, sent as his representative to Sofia the Grand-Duke Andrew (son of the Grand-Duchess Vladimir). The Crown-Princes of Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Rumania, the Archduke Charles Albert, the Prince of Prussia, Leopold, completed the group of august personages that King Ferdinand, accompanied by his two sons, received at the station in Sofia with military honours and all customary ceremonial. The Ambassadors of the other European Powers, of the United States, and of Turkey all enhanced by their presence the brilliancy of the festivity, which was favoured with exceptionally fine weather. For three days the streets of Sofia, usually rather deserted, were enlivened by automobiles and royal carriages conveying the King's guests and their suites to feasts in the Palace, to receptions and to military parades. The Castle of Sofia, ordinarily so dark and gloomy, was brilliantly illuminated, and filled with the gay life of festivity and by a crowd of courtiers in full dress. The Russian Grand-Duke, as the representative of the godfather of Prince Boris, took the first place at all ceremonies.

Among the princely guests, Prince Alexander of Serbia was the one who made the best impression on

me. Serious and sincere in manner, he displayed much tact during his stay in Sofia; he talked a great deal and very willingly with the Bulgarian politicians, preserving an attitude of official respect towards King Ferdinand; he treated Prince Boris with sincere good-fellowship; his manner was unassuming, yet perfectly dignified.

The Austrian Archduke, still quite young and allowed for the first time in his life to go to foreign parts—and on an official mission, too!—behaved with exemplary modesty, always looking to his governor—an ultra-correct Austrian General.

Finally Prince Leopold of Prussia presented the really curious type of a Prussian officer half automaton, half decadent. It seemed as if his every movement was planned in order not to make creases in his extremely well-cut uniform; even his conversation—if a few short sentences uttered in a perfectly monotonous voice can be called "conversation"—seemed to belong to some ingenious German machine. This Prussian Prince had at one time found special favour in the eyes of the Emperor William, who revived for him the grade of Field-Marshal-Colonel, in disuse since 1800. But on discovering that no real ability was concealed behind the military rigidity of the Prince, William was disillusioned about his protégé, and henceforth only employed him in formalities. The sending of Prince Leopold to the solemnities in Sofia emphasised the German Emperor's wish to show perfect coldness towards Bulgaria and her Sovereign, though at the same time displaying a great deal of correctness; William desired nothing from the Bulgarians and offered them nothing. In Berlin the choice of persons to whom missions of etiquette and ceremonial were entrusted was always influenced by ulterior motives and certain ideas, and in no way by the desire to please those to whom they were sent. Amongst us, unfortunately, this was never noticed and never well understood.

The festivities for the coming of age of Prince Boris

and the ratification of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement ended the first winter-season of my stay in Sofia; during this winter my wife and I had given a series of dinners and receptions to Bulgarian society, to the Court, and to the Diplomatic Corps. Having successfully terminated an important negotiation and fulfilled all my social duties, I could think of undertaking my journey *ad limina, i.e.* of going to St. Petersburg, to explain the ulterior aims of our Balkan policy, and to discuss certain questions of the hour with M. Sazonoff. Among these questions, one in particular would have to be discussed verbally and very secretly.

At the beginning of the winter which was just over, the Minister of Finance, M. Todorov, with whom I was on excellent personal terms, and in whom I had much confidence, had come to see me one day to tell me of a very confidential and quite unexpected request made to me by King Ferdinand. It was this: His Majesty was in great financial difficulties, he was especially worried by a debt of a million and a half francs (or Austrian crowns, which amounted to about the same) which he owed to the Laender Bank (Banque des Pays Autrichiens) of Vienna, and the Bank for some time had been making difficulties; it demanded securities or mortgages which the Bulgarian Court would not or could not give; it refused further credit; and meantime money was scarce in the Palace, and Ferdinand was often reduced to selling, not without difficulty, short-dated Court bonds to the Sofia banks for trifling sums. In order to put an end to this humiliating state of things, the King begged me to arrange with one of our large financial houses in St. Petersburg for a loan of two million francs, as a mortgage on his property of Vrana, situated a few kilometres from Sofia, a property small in area, where the King was laying out a beautiful garden and building a villa. His Majesty, according to M. Todorov, understood perfectly well that no Russian bank would accept such a mortgage without receiving supplementary security on the part of the Russian Government; the

difficulties which latterly the Laender Bank was always raising for the King were apparently mainly actuated by the displeasure felt by the Austrians at the present Bulgarian policy; *ergo*, it entered into *our* calculations to liberate King Ferdinand from all pecuniary obligation to Vienna, and thus to acquire fresh claims on his sincere gratitude.

I answered Todorov by saying that while refusing to enter into these latter arguments, I would at once fulfil the King's wish and would forward his request to St. Petersburg and second it. I did this in a special and very confidential letter to M. Neratoff, who was still managing the Foreign Office. Amongst other things I said that such a loan must most certainly not be considered a means of *buying* Ferdinand; that I remembered perfectly, during my stay in Belgrade, how our Government, on the entreaties of my chief, M. Persiant, had paid King Milan, who had just abdicated, a million francs on condition that he left the country for ever and never interfered again in the home or foreign policy of Serbia. Milan took the money and left for Paris, but when the last few thousand francs had been lost in gambling or spent on women, he returned quite naturally to Belgrade, as being the only place where he could exist decently, but where his presence soon caused fresh trouble. And it was we who were blamed by public opinion for having given money to a father to enable him to desert his son—a minor! So I wrote to Neratoff that I wished frankly to warn the Ministry against the erroneous idea that one could *buy* Ferdinand with those two millions. It was not money that would secure to us a lasting influence in Bulgaria, but systematic and laborious work. Nevertheless, the moment the King was obliged to beg such a favour of us, I considered that we ought to grant it frankly, simply, and without any humiliating conditions. Such a course of action would bind Ferdinand up to a point, and in any case would make our relations with him more intimate. M. Neratoff promptly replied that he

shared my point of view; and that he would certainly forward the King's request to the right quarter. But from that moment I had received no further information on the subject, and decided to elucidate the question personally in St. Petersburg.

I think it necessary to relate here the end of this affair. Ferdinand's request met with decided opposition at first from M. Kokovtzoff, who as Minister of Finance refused to give any security whatsoever to the society which might be willing to advance the sum in question to the King of Bulgaria. Speaking politically and as President of the Council, M. Kokovtzoff had no objection to granting the King this small favour and was willing to *recommend* the affair to one of our large banks, but he would not hear of a State *guarantee;* but without such guarantee no bank would do business. The discussions dragged on for a few months longer, and after renewed entreaties on my part and fresh favourable intervention from M. Sazonoff, the affair was arranged thus: the two million francs were advanced to Ferdinand by the Banque d'Escompte of St. Petersburg; but in reality the money was supplied from the personal funds of His Majesty the Emperor, at five per cent. interest, with repayment spread over a certain number of years. When I left Bulgaria towards the end of 1913, the Court of Sofia had already paid the first instalment of this debt. I do not know if it was as punctual in 1914; but I should, above all things, be interested to know whether King Ferdinand discharged this debt of honour (he knew whence the two million came) *before* he definitely passed over to the camp of our enemies, and before he treacherously stabbed heroic Serbia in the back? If Ferdinand did not do so, it is an additional stain on his character.

But let us return to the month of March, 1912. Before leaving Sofia for St. Petersburg it was absolutely necessary for me to see the King. However, Ferdinand had had, as if purposely, an attack of his usual ailment—

the gout—and always kept on putting off my audience. I learnt at last from a fairly authentic source that the King's illness was a diplomatic one, and that for special reasons known to himself alone, he did not wish to see me at the moment or to have the necessary politcal interview with me. Thus forewarned I thought it imperative to insist on my audience, by declaring that I should not go on leave till I had seen the King. Two days after I was invited to the Palace.

His Majesty received me in his study; he was half lying on a wide leather sofa; one of his legs was wrapped in a plaid rug, testifying to the attack of gout. On a table next the sofa a few art treasures were littered about: an antique Byzantine crucifix in carved wood set in silver—the gift, if I am not wrong, of the Metropolitan of Moscow; an old snuff-box in gold—the gift of the Empress Alexandra; a box with artistic miniatures—a souvenir of the Emperor Nicolas II. In his hand, white, dimpled and well cared-for, the King held a crutch-stick with a gold knob in the old Russian style, similar to that with which John the Terrible was always armed; only the steel point which ended the stick of the Tsar of all the Russias and which the bloodthirsty autocrat sometimes dug into the foot of an undesirable questioner by leaning his whole weight on the knob, was replaced on that of the Tsar of the Bulgarians—for the greater wellbeing of his visitors—by a common rubber end; the crutch had been given to the King by his cousin the Grand-Duchess Vladimir.

"You see before you, Monsieur," began the King, "a poor invalid surrounded by a few of his treasures, valuable by reason of their associations. Here is my sole consolation in my sufferings," he continued, pointing to the old crucifix, "here, . . ." and the King began to show me the artistic treasures which consoled him on his bed of sickness, and to tell me about their Russian origin. This preamble over, Ferdinand came down to facts.

He began by expressing his very vivid fears on the

subject of a possible disclosure of the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty.

"They are so imprudent in the Palace of Belgrade; every one has access to it and they talk to every one. Moreover, the whole of Belgrade is full of Austrian, and especially Hungarian, spies. Hence what would my position be if the old Emperor Francis-Joseph got to know of the agreement that I have just signed, and which has all the appearance of being chiefly directed against the monarchy of the Hapsburgs? And I feel sure that the Serbians will not fail to boast everywhere of their friendship with Bulgaria, that they will allow it to be understood in Vienna that henceforth they can depend on us; and the Serbian irredentists, that King Peter's Government cannot keep in hand—as *I* can keep the Macedonians—will not miss the opportunity to annoy Austria in Bosnia and in Herzegovina. And finally, we two, that is Bulgaria and Serbia, instead of profiting by our agreement to guard the rights of our kin in Macedonia, shall be forced to arms in all haste to uphold our own integrity and our own independence. I would entreat you most earnestly, Monsieur, to make my apprehensions known in St. Petersburg and to explain the true state of affairs. I shall await your return with impatience. For my part, I have already given the necessary instructions to General Papriskov" (at that time Bulgarian Minister in St. Petersburg).

I listened with some astonishment to the long-winded explanations of the King, in which truth was mingled with lies and clumsy fictions alternated with real opinions and fears. King Ferdinand was sincere when he acknowledged himself guilty towards the Emperor Francis-Joseph. Accustomed from his early youth to respect the aged monarch, he felt truly uneasy at the idea that in the Castle of Schoenbrunn he might be looked on as a traitor and an enemy. The fears which the King expressed on the subject of the Serbian irredentists were also well founded. But what he said about the Palace of Belgrade bore the stamp of wilful exaggeration.

Most certainly the doors of this palace were thrown open to all Serbians; King Peter did not shut himself up as King Ferdinand did in his study, only admitting those whom he wished to instruct on some point, or those from whom he hoped to hear some interesting gossip. King Peter, taking his *rôle* of constitutional monarch very seriously, talked freely with all the representatives of Serbian democracy, interchanging ideas and information with them; but above all he was guided by the opinions of his strictly constitutional Ministry. Though opening his door to every one, he did not really open it wide, just as he really only disclosed his thoughts and sentiments to true Serbian patriots who were incapable of having any dealings with the enemies of the country. King Peter did not recruit his servants, informants and secret counsellors from the ranks of those persons who were compromised in the eyes of the nation and the law; among *his* satellites one did not find a Ghennadiev, a Radoslavov, a General Savov and other doubtful characters of this type!

As to the fact that the newly-signed agreement would necessitate a fresh political situation for Bulgaria, the King could not be unaware of it. The frequent warnings that I had issued on the subject to M. Gueshov and the other members of his Government throughout the course of the negotiations were perfectly well known to him.

Taking advantage of the circumstances and of the words that the King had just uttered, I considered it my duty to repeat these warnings to His Majesty. "I am afraid," I said, "that the entirely new situation arising from the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement is not sufficiently clearly understood in Bulgaria. By signing this agreement Bulgarian policy has entered on a new course, accurately outlined, and cannot now turn back; having formed ties that cannot be broken with Serbia, Bulgaria has bound herself, by that very fact, to us, and the two Governments will have henceforth to listen very attentively to our advice if they really wish to attain their national aims. As to the apprehensions of your Majesty

on the subject of Austria, you may rely entirely on us. My august Master does not wish for war, at all costs he will avoid anything that might bring it about; and we will warn the Serbians, in the most explicit manner, against all dangerous impulses, against anything which might justly irritate the Central Powers. On the other hand, if the two Balkan countries, henceforth united, were to be attacked without cause by Austria we should doubtless look on such aggression as a challenge hurled directly at us. Moreover, Your Majesty knows my opinion and probably shares it, this opinion being that Austria—under present conditions anyhow—would not dare to risk an aggression without due cause. Finally, touching the justifiable claim of Bulgaria and Serbia to protect their kin in Turkey—for us the question resolves itself thus: on the one hand, as Your Majesty knows so well, we should not wish to do anything conducive to an armed collision in the Near East, and I have repeatedly informed the Royal Government that in St. Petersburg everything will be done to prevent such a collision. But on the other hand, we realise perfectly well that the best way to prevent any untoward events would be to resume and successfully to terminate the international work so well started in Macedonia before the Turkish Revolution. At that period one of the stumbling blocks to the work had been Serbo-Bulgarian rivalry. This rivalry once disposed of, our work will become far easier, and Your Majesty may rest assured that we shall avail ourselves of this improved situation."

While I was unfolding these ideas of mine, Ferdinand's expression became more and more gloomy. He refrained, however, from all controversy and, passing over to personal subjects, soon dismissed me with the same studied politeness and amiable words as heretofore.

But under this apparent amiability I thought I detected signs of displeasure, coldness, even hostility!

I have since been told—and had, moreover, found it out for myself—that the beginning of my personal rupture with Ferdinand dated from this significant

conversation. The King realised that I had no intention of becoming the blind interpreter of his opinions to the Imperial Government; he also understood that the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty gave a certain hold over him to Russian policy and consequently to the representatives of the Tsar. Ferdinand felt that certain alleys were henceforth closed to him : the feeling was unbearable and roused his anger against the Russian Minister who contemplated hampering the freedom of his political enterprises.

M. Gueshov, with whom I had a long interview on the eve of my departure, did not display any apprehension —in contrast to his master—on the score of the newly-signed agreement, and repeated the opinion, already expressed by him during the course of the negotiations with Spalaïkovitch, that the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty, concluded under the ægis of Russia, would necessarily involve the conclusion of military conventions between the two contracting parties as well as between both of them and Russia. I had already imparted this suggestion of M. Gueshov's to M. Sazonoff, and added—as my private opinion—that such conventions, drawn up, of course, on strictly defensive lines, might furnish us with further means of preventing ill-timed action on the part of the two Balkan kingdoms. The answer was delayed, and on taking leave of M. Gueshov, I promised him that I would go into the question in St. Petersburg, and would bring him back a definite answer from M. Sazonoff.

CHAPTER VII

RASPUTIN

I ARRIVED in St. Petersburg at the end of March, after an absence of a year. I recollect as if it were yesterday, the first impression of a political nature that I received : the very morning of my arrival, on looking over the *Novoye Vremja*, I noticed a short article in which the speech made the evening before by M. Goutchkoff at the Duma was quoted.

This speech was a brief but vehement diatribe against certain sinister influences which were dominating the Court and beginning to interfere in Government affairs.

I at once realised that this was aimed at the famous Gregory Rasputin. But as up till then I had only heard the strange influence of this individual at Tsarskoe-Selo spoken of as a mystico-hysterical whim of the Empress Alexandra's, and as, on the other hand, the Emperor was not in any case very devoted to Goutchkoff, I disapproved of this new philippic, which would cause further estrangement between His Majesty and the former President of the Duma: whereas I considered that it would be advantageous to the affairs of the country if the Emperor were occasionally to confer with this influential and very well-informed member of our Parliament, who with ardent patriotism and recognised authority presided over the Commission of National Defence. In short, I inwardly accused Goutchkoff of a *want of tact.*

I was thinking all this over when I went to luncheon with a near relation of mine. This relation was also related to Goutchkoff and did not like him much, and in our intimate conversations often alluded to him as an ambitious man who had become embittered and restless.

On arriving at my relation's house, I found him talking at the telephone: "Is that you, my dear? I ventured to ring you up on the telephone to tell you how very much I admired your excellent speech of yesterday at the Duma. . . . No, no! do not excuse yourself for a good deed; you have only done your duty as a citizen: it is very regrettable that every one else does not do the same," etc. . . . I could not believe my ears, and when my relation had at last finished his conversation, I exclaimed: "Is it really you talking? How many times have I quarrelled with you by standing up for Goutchkoff when you were abusing him; and now you overwhelm him with compliments, whereas I—I frankly admit—considered his speech to be a want of tact. What does this change mean?"

"Listen," replied my host, "do not let us lose time in idle discussion: you see a great many more people in St. Petersburg than I do; in three days from now you will have seen and heard so much that there will be nothing left for me to tell you. And then we shall see what you will say!" My relation was only wrong about the time-limit! On the evening of the very next day, I had only one remark to make to him: "You were perfectly right; but, good God! how sad it all is, and what is more *how* dangerous!"

I had heard the name of Rasputin mentioned in St. Petersburg for the first time in 1908. An intimate friend of mine with whom I was discussing Court affairs—I forget exactly why—said amongst other things: "There are strange rumours in circulation among the public, or rather, among the people! Yesterday, my wife's housekeeper—you know the one we have had for more than ten years—came into my study and said: 'Pray excuse me, sir, but I have something I wish to say to you. I have often heard you complain that your son-in-law could not get the post which had been promised to him ages ago. . . . Well! I believe I can help you.' 'You! my good woman; but in what way?' 'In this way. My sister, who is also in domestic service,

told me the other day that her master and mistress often receive a certain "old man"—a man of the people, quite simple: but he is received with a great deal of fuss; and he has already been an enormous help to that family; he has been able to help many others, as he is quite intimate with the Tsar and Tsarina, who do everything that he tells them. Allow me to beg my sister to speak to the "old man" in your son-in-law's favour!' As you may imagine," continued my friend, "I did not consent to this curious suggestion; but it is odd what rumours there are about amongst the people! It is evidently a question of a new Papus or of another M. Philip, only of Russian origin and in the popular style!"

While I was spending the winter of 1910–11 in St. Petersburg, rumours and inquiries on the subject of Gregory Rasputin had been the rage in society. It was relatively known that this "old man" or "poor innocent" was a native of Siberia, that he had formerly led a particularly dissolute life ("Rasputin" is derived from "rasputny" = *dissolute person*); that then suddenly he became a "trezvennik," *i.e.* a preacher of temperance and piety, and that, henceforth protected by a few great ecclesiastical dignitaries, he was summoned by them to St. Petersburg. There, through the "Montenegrins"—the Grand-Duchesses Militza and Stana—and through the salon—"little parish"—of Countess Sophie Ignatieff, he finally worked his way up to the Court, where he finds a patroness and so to speak an *impresario* in the person of the divorced lady Vyrouboff, *née* Taneieff. However, as during this winter of 1910–11, the Empress Alexandra did not shut herself up so completely as in former years, and was apparently feeling quite well, which means that she was behaving more or less normally, there was much less open mention of Rasputin and the Vyrouboff; moreover, the influence of these persons had not yet extended to Government affairs.

But matters had assumed a very different aspect during the year that I had spent out of Russia. It appears that in the meantime a group of low "opportunists"

had sprung up, who, aware of the ever-increasing influence of the Siberian rogue over the august personages of Tsarskoe-Selo, set themselves out to guide Rasputin, and allied themselves to the Vyrouboff and her relations in order to gain access to the public offices of the State and particularly to the public funds. One began to hear the names of a Prince Andronnikoff, of a M. Manus, of a Miassoïedoff, and they were spoken of as people who were plotting great things and influencing even the Government. The waiting-room of the uncouth moujik Rasputin was filled every morning by persons coming to ask favours, amongst whom one met with people of position and of the upper classes; they showed each other notes scrawled by this same Rasputin in a common style and an appalling handwriting, and in which he recommended some humble protégé or some one in need of assistance to the good graces of such and such a Minister.

One heard at the same time that the ecclesiastical dignitary who had contributed the most to Rasputin's good fortune had just written a letter to the Emperor in which he revealed the depravity of his ex-protégé, and repented bitterly of having introduced him at the Palace; the honest but ingenuous bishop concluded his epistle by entreating the Emperor to send Rasputin away; for himself, he implored permission to retire as a simple monk into a monastery, in order to do penance there to the end of his days. The story went that the bishop received a very gracious reply from the Emperor, earnestly begging him to remain at the head of his diocese: but Rasputin still continued in high favour.

At one time, influenced by a few letters of this kind, the statements of a few officials and some serious warnings, the Emperor did make up his mind to send Rasputin back to his Siberian village, where the adventurer arrived loaded with magnificent gifts and provided with a considerable sum of money; but by the time I arrived in St. Petersburg all the town was indignantly talking about the return of the "old man"

to the capital, and they quoted the names of such and such a lady and of such and such an official, whose houses, in the evening, were the scene of strange religious rites conducted by Rasputin.[1]

Much comment was also caused by the resignation of two maids-of-honour, specially attached to the Palace: Princess Obolensky, a person noted for her wit, tact, and kindness of heart, who at one time was very intimate with the Empress, and Mlle. Tutcheff, much esteemed for her character and her intelligence, to which she owed her position as governess to the Imperial children. The latter had several times protested vehemently against the repeated visits of the "old man" to her august pupils, visits during which he allowed himself to take liberties which were unnecessary to say the least of it. Mlle. Tutcheff was promised that this should not occur again, and Rasputin's departure brought the desired solution of the question. But now the terrible scoundrel had reappeared at Tsarskoe-Selo, the question revived with added acuteness and Mlle. Tutcheff, foreseeing a return to former practices, definitely left her charming pupils and the Court.

My first official visit in St. Petersburg was naturally to our Foreign Secretary. Having discussed with him all that had happened in Bulgaria since our last conversation at Davos, I begged M. Sazonoff, as was customary, to procure me an audience of His Majesty the Emperor.

"The Emperor will probably receive you during this week. To-morrow is the day for my report to Tsarskoe-Selo and I will take the opportunity to inform His Majesty of your arrival."

"And does the Empress Alexandra not receive?"

"Oh no! She has been ailing for a long time, and in general things are not going well in that quarter."

"But what is wrong?"

[1] Rasputin was in fact a *Khlyst*, *i.e.* half "Shaker," half Flagellant—a strange sect which from time to time rises in Russia from the common depths to the upper classes of society.

"Oh! You will soon hear of it; no one talks of anything else in town."

I let the matter drop, as in honour bound.

Two or three days later, I got out of the train at the Tsarskoe-Selo station and got into a Royal carriage to go to the Alexander Palace, the usual residence of the Imperial family. The weather was beautiful, dry and sunny. As we were nearing the palace, the footman began to explain to me—with the usual familiarity of those sort of people—why I was being taken to a different entrance than usual.

"See, your Excellency, the Empress's carriage standing at the other door! Her Majesty is going out for the first time for a long while," continued the footman with a self-satisfied smile.

A few minutes later, preceded by another Royal servant, I was making my way to the Emperor's study through the charming Louis XVI. rooms of the Palace, and across the spacious library, all lit up by the sunshine, and I was admiring the fine and simple architecture of this masterpiece of Guarenghi's. And beyond the grand colonade of the Palace, I could see the Empress's carriage disappearing on its way to the station. . . . The following day the whole of St. Petersburg was saying that the Empress, having gone unexpectedly into the town to visit an institute for young ladies, then went on to the house of one of Rasputin's faithful followers, and spent two hours there conversing with the "holy man." . . .

How many times since then have I recalled that morning, and that Imperial carriage driving away through the dazzling snow across the park at Tsarskoe. How many times have I recalled that magnificent dwelling, simple and grand in outline, with its exquisitely-proportioned rooms, its beautiful works of art, its admirable library, its beautiful bay-windows overlooking the park, which is delightful even in winter; all this setting which seemed to call for a royal existence, not so much sumptuous as refined and distinguished;

conversations with cultivated friends, scholars, poets, and artists; receptions, rather informal than otherwise, but composed of the real *élite* of a society in which intelligent elements have never been lacking; political discussions with the men of yesterday and of to-morrow, who would be flattered at being admitted into this sanctuary of refinement and elegance. This dwelling, I thought to myself, shelters a sovereign, powerful, but prone to good-nature and simplicity, gifted with a quick and inquiring mind made for the interchange of impressions and opinions; four young girls, whose beauty and charm will gradually be revealed to a respectfully-admiring world, like the blooming of rare and lovely flowers in our hot-houses; an adored son, just weak and sickly enough to bring a shade of melancholy into the beautiful eyes of his mother. . . . And this mother, this wife, this Empress, moving in this beautiful setting, with all these sources of joy and happiness, leaves the beautiful white palace, with its pictures, its sculpture, and its beautiful books, the flowers which perfume it and the delightful children who fill it with life; she leaves all this with the eager joy of a convalescent going out for the first time into the fresh air, and she goes to shut herself up for hours in a wretched room in a commonplace apartment with a dirty and knavish moujik, seeking from this creature—so immeasurably beneath her—spiritual consolation, foretelling of the future, guidance for a timid conscience and a sick mind. . . . And then she returns to this Tsarskoe palace, in which she has succeeded in "sequestering" her husband, to this palace whence nothing radiates to the adjacent capital and to the country: neither noble refinement, nor mental shrewdness, nor even political guidance—nothing save an absurd and ridiculous legend—grieved over by the friend and retailed triumphantly by the foe, and which goes on growing and circulating till it becomes one of the chief causes of a downfall and a catastrophe almost unequalled in history!

This time my audience with the Emperor was somewhat brief. His Majesty first expressed his sincere satisfaction on the subject of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement. I repeated to the Emperor my last conversation with Ferdinand.

"Yes," said the Emperor, "Ferdinand is terribly suspicious and dreadfully afraid that we shall take him altogether in hand. But you may reassure him on this subject. I have no wish to direct Bulgarian policy provided that Bulgaria behaves herself and does not drag us whither we cannot and will not follow her."

The Emperor then proceeded to speak of the festivities held for the coming of age of Prince Boris, and charged me to thank the King from him for the welcome extended to the Grand-Duke Andrew Vladimirovitch. I gathered from this audience the impression that His Majesty was indeed very much pleased at the complete reconciliation between Serbians and Bulgarians. When he spoke of King Ferdinand one perceived in his words a sceptical and even slightly scornful touch, but that in spite of that he looked on the King of the Bulgarians as a political factor who would have to be reckoned with. This renewal of goodwill towards Ferdinand might also serve as a sign that the idea of a matrimonial alliance between Prince Boris and one of the Grand-Duchesses, daughters of the Emperor, had grown to a certain extent. And, indeed, in intimate Court circles, I heard great liking expressed for the young Bulgarian heir—which proved relatively that Boris had produced a good impression on the Imperial couple.

The next day I went to see M. Sazonoff and gave him—as was fit and proper—an epitome of my interview with his Majesty. I asked the Minister on this occasion what his personal impression was on the subject of the military convention—a question on which we had only touched lightly at our first interview.

"Well!" said Sazonoff, "I wish you would be so good as to go yourself to General Jilinsky (at that time

head of the General Headquarters Staff) and endeavour to find out whether he is really in favour of this convention or not. I am under the impression that the matter is being settled at General Headquarters, although the preliminaries are the work of our former military agent in Bulgaria—Colonel Leontieff—and although, as you say yourself, Lieutenant-Colonel Romanowski endorses his predecessor's point of view."

On the appointed day, I went to see General Jilinsky, with whom I had never discussed important matters. At my first allusion to the convention, the General became irritable.

"But why should it be necessary for us to conclude a military convention with Bulgaria when one already exists? Have you been told nothing of the convention concluded by me *personally* in 1902? It is here in this drawer, but of course I cannot read it to you as it is a most secret convention; but you had better make inquiries about it at the Foreign Office, and perhaps you will be initiated into the circumstances relating to the conclusion and terms of this arrangement."

"I read the convention, General, when I was appointed Russian Minister to Bulgaria, and I re-read it to-day at the Foreign Office before coming to you. I know it by heart, and consequently I realise that it has a fixed object and that the point was directed almost exclusively at Turkey and Rumania. When Rumania had concluded a special convention with Austria-Hungary, we thought it expedient to conclude one with Bulgaria, promising her effectual help in the event of her being attacked by Turkey aided by Rumania. But now the political situation has completely changed; it is no longer a question of the possibility of an alliance—certainly not an offensive one—between Turkey and Rumania; on the contrary, we have to deal with the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance, which brings quite different elements into the question. . . ."

"All this is quite likely," interrupted the General; "but so long as the convention of which I spoke, and

which I myself concluded, exists, it is waste of time to speak of any other."

I understood that I had to deal with a pre-conceived idea firmly fixed in an obstinate brain; so I abandoned the principal object of my visit and passed to another subject: the journey which the Chief of the Bulgarian General Staff, General Fichev, had made to Russia a few months previously.

"General Fichev," I said, "was very much flattered by the welcome which he received here, and has carried away the best impressions of our military organisation. Up till then he had never been to Russia and did not know anything about the Russian Army. Colonel Romanowski, who accompanied the General, told me that at every moment he uttered exclamations of genuine surprise at the high standard of instruction of our troops, their skill in manœuvres, etc. . . . His foreign masters (Fichev had been a pupil of the Military College in Turin) had probably described the Russian Army as a semi-Asiatic force."

"So that is what M. Fichev told Romanowski, is it?" interrupted the General, "and I happen to know that he talked of our Army and of Russia generally in exceedingly hostile terms!"

"Really?" I exclaimed. "But then be good enough to quote your sources of information, General; the matter ought to be thoroughly sifted, and we ought to warn our military agent who, since his trip with Fichev, has become very intimate with him and trusts him."

"But I did not need any sources of information," replied Jilinsky, angrily. "Being a rabid Stamboulovist, he could not speak otherwise about Russia and the Russian Army. It is as clear as daylight!"

After this there was nothing left for me to do but to close our interview and to make my bow to the peppery General.

Two years and a half after this interview—in September, 1914—General Jilinsky, who in 1913 had been made Governor-General of Poland, was also

commanding an army corps. He was responsible for the operations of General Samsonoff's army in the region of the Mazovian Lakes, operations which ended in the loss of this army. The future historians of the War will have to decide who was the real culprit in this catastrophe: was it General Samsonoff who made mistakes, or was it General Jilinsky who decided on the operations before he had estimated the fighting strength of the army in question, and without knowing exactly what forces the enemy was opposing to it?

I went the next day to see the Foreign Secretary, to repeat the conversation I had had with the Chief of the General Headquarters Staff, and I frankly expressed my conviction that under the circumstances the proposed military convention could never be concluded.

"But what is your exact opinion as to the expediency of such a convention?" asked Sazonoff.

"To be quite frank," I replied, "I am still in doubt myself. On the one hand, you know my opinion about the desire for conquest of the Bulgarians and Serbians: having concluded with them a military convention of which the point would be directed against Turkey, we should appear to be encouraging their projects; by making, *per contra*, this convention into a weapon against Austria-Hungary, we should still further strain the chain of our relations with the Central Empires: woe to us if a link snaps! But on the other hand a military convention, drawn up with skill and great caution, might *unite* Serbians and Bulgarians and prevent them taking up arms against our wish, or at a moment we might consider inopportune. All this should be carefully weighed, and it is most regrettable that the chief of our General Headquarters Staff will not even allow a careful and impartial examination of such an important question."

"In that case, let us wait," said the Foreign Secretary, in conclusion.

Besides my audience at Tsarskoe-Selo and my

interviews with M. Sazonoff, I called on several members of the Government, and amongst others on M. Kokovtzoff—at that time already President of the Council—to whom I was bound by pleasant recollections of work shared in Paris at the time of our great loans of 1906. I also did not omit to visit General Polivanoff, then assistant to the Minister for War, to whom I always enjoyed talking, and who stood high in my opinion, for the thoroughness and impartiality which he displayed in the examination of all business questions. Moreover, I was bound to inform both these gentlemen of matters relative to my work in Bulgaria.

I also visited M. Goutchkoff, and talked at great length with him. Goutchkoff complained, amongst other things, of our want of all military preparation.

"You cannot imagine," he said, speaking of the work of the Commission for National Defence for the Duma, "what it has cost us to make the War Office ask *for supplies to be voted* for the making of big guns for the artillery, of which we hardly possess any. At last the first orders have been given, but they are quite inadequate." In spite of its being against his principles that grand-dukes should be at the head of public departments, Goutchkoff appeared tc be on fairly good terms with the Grand-Duke Serge Mikhaïlovitch, who was still in command of the artillery; but he complained bitterly of the Minister for War, Soukhomlinoff. I do not exactly remember whether it was on this occasion or later on that Goutchkoff gave me the full details of his collision with General Soukhomlinoff on the subject of the retired colonel of the *gendarmerie*, Miassoïedoff, who lived permanently with the Soukhomlinoffs at the War Office, as family friend and general factotum, and whom Goutchkoff openly accused of being a military spy, on behalf of Germany.

"Your principal will end at the gallows," he said to Miassoïedoff's seconds when they presented themselves at his house. This prophecy was fulfilled in 1915. Nevertheless it is very regrettable that Goutchkoff

should have consented to fight a duel with this low scoundrel. It was inconsistent on his part. But then it is through inconsistency and superfluous generosity that we Russians usually err.

It was not only Goutchkoff who spoke to me with indignation about Soukhomlinoff. The President of the Council, Kokovtzoff, who was always extremely guarded in his conversation, spoke in very bitter terms, one day, about his colleague of the War Office: "What can one do," he said, "when the Minister for War is a gentleman whose sole wish is to report to the Emperor, in his most agreeable baritone voice, the things which please His Majesty, but which he, Soukhomlinoff, knows perfectly well to be untrue!"

On the other hand, Kokovtzoff did not like Goutchkoff either; he accused him of being ambitious and conceited, and of causing unscrupulous political disturbances.

And it was between these three persons: Soukhomlinoff, Goutchkoff, and Kokovtzoff, that questions relative to our armament were to be discussed!

In the salons of St. Petersburg, which I frequented fairly regularly, Rasputin was the sole topic of conversation. Some persons, who were in a position to know, and who were very truthful, told me amongst other things that the Dowager Empress Marie-Feodorovna had been to Tsarskoe-Selo and had had a heart-to-heart talk with her son and daughter-in-law. "It is no question of you, of your affections, your convictions or rather your religious manias," she said, addressing the Empress Alexandra; "it is a question of the Emperor, of the Dynasty, of Russia! If you go on in this way, you will be the undoing of us all!"

A fortnight after my arrival in St. Petersburg, I was invited to an evening party given by the Foreign Secretary—the first big reception held by the Sazonoffs since their return from Davos. The beautiful "Empire" reception-rooms were brilliantly lit up, and gradually filled with guests: members of the Cabinet, of the

Council of the Empire and of the Duma, foreign diplomats, journalists, financiers, and society people of St. Petersburg, like one sees at all receptions of this kind. The men wore their orders and decorations, the ladies their smartest evening-dresses; in one of the rooms an excellent orchestra was playing, and in the first drawing-room the host and hostess smilingly received their guests, shaking them by the hand, and exchanging friendly small-talk with them. In short everything was done as it should be at such receptions. Yet nevertheless, from the outset, one felt there was something in the air, something which was depressing all the brilliant assembly. Smiling faces suddenly assumed a severe and anxious expression; some of the guests with worried looks were whispering together in corners; the Ministers, in particular, seemed to be in a very nervous state, with the exception, however, of General Soukhomlinoff, who walked through the rooms like a conquering hero, with his over-dressed wife on his arm. I went up to M. Kokovtzoff, who was leaning against a doorpost with an expression on his face like that of a judge about to pass sentence of death. I begged him to grant me an interview so that I could discuss with him an important matter entrusted to me by the King of Bulgaria (that of the loan mentioned above).

"Forgive me, my dear M. Nekludoff," interrupted Kokovtzoff, "but at this moment I really have not the heart for that. We have *such* a situation to face. . . . Besides, how can I make an appointment with you, when I do not even know if by to-morrow I shall still be in office? I tell you this quite confidentially, and beg that you will not repeat it."

After that there was nothing to be done, but to leave the speaker to his gloomy thoughts. In the next room I met Sazonoff who had left his post as master of the house for a few minutes and was talking with Krivocheïne in a window; the official smile on my chief's face had given way to a sad and worried expression. What does it all mean? I wondered.

At this moment I came across General Polivanoff. I drew him aside.

"Look here, General, what *is* going on amongst you all?" I asked him straight out.

"You do not know yet? but it is this," . . . and the General told me that the next day the President of the Duma—it was already Rodzianko—and Makaroff, at that time Minister of Justice, were to go to Tsarskoe-Selo in order to hand to the Emperor the whole revolting record of Rasputin, and to endeavour to obtain the instant dismissal of this dangerous and infamous person.

"If the Emperor does not consent, all the Ministers will resign."

"*All*, do you think?" I asked the General, glancing at Soukhomlinoff, who was passing at the moment.

"Perhaps *all* is saying too much," amended Polivanoff, with a knowing smile, "but the majority will go: Kokovtzoff, Krivocheïne, Sazonoff and others . . ."

The next day towards evening the rumour spread in town that the Emperor had favourably received the reports of the President of the Duma and of the Minister of Justice, and consented to the instant dismissal of the "old man" Gregory to his native village. A few days later, the Court left for the Crimea. Among the people who came to see the Imperial Family off at the station, one noticed Mlle. Tutcheff and Princess Obolensky, to whom the Imperial couple were particularly friendly; this might betoken their early return to Court. In St. Petersburg all the official world calmed down; all the Ministers remained at their posts.

Six weeks later, Rasputin returned *incognito* from Siberia, and took up his abode again in the capital!

Detained in St. Petersburg a little longer by some business matters, I did not return to my post till the end of April (N.S.).

CHAPTER VIII

INTRIGUES AT SOFIA

On my return to Sofia I perceived at once that the situation there was much changed. I noticed that the first result of the newly-signed agreement had been to strengthen the "activist" party, at the head of which M. Danev had of course placed himself; in my absence he had become infinitely more intimate than before with the King. Ferdinand had left for foreign parts a few days before my arrival; but before leaving he had decided to send M. Danev to Livadia and St. Petersburg, under pretext of presenting officially to His Majesty the Emperor and to M. Sazonoff the text of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement. Danev was to be accompanied to St. Petersburg by our military agent in Sofia, Colonel Romanovski. All this was related to me on my arrival as a settled thing, and I learnt at the same time that the discussions about this journey had been confided to General Poprikov, Bulgarian Minister in St. Petersburg. It was quite clear to me that Danev was being dispatched to our country in order to entreat the Emperor and M. Sazonoff to grant active and willing support to Bulgaria in case of certain events and complications in Macedonia. And at the same time Danev was to use his best efforts to convince us that King Ferdinand was at present behaving with perfect loyalty towards Russia and the Tsar, and that we might henceforth abandon all suspicion and distrust with regard to him.

Danev left soon after my return to Sofia. He was very graciously received at Livadia by H.I.M. the Emperor, and perfectly well received in St. Petersburg

by M. Sazonoff. On his return, however, he seemed somewhat disappointed. I soon learnt the reason when I received official information on the exchange of views which had taken place between King Ferdinand's envoy on one side, and M. Kokovtzoff and M. Sazonoff on the other. These two statesmen had given Danev to understand in a very amiable but very firm manner that we should not, under any circumstances, allow ourselves to be drawn into an active policy in the Balkans. The same thing was repeated to Danev at Livadia.

I heard later that Danev had been entrusted with another mission for King Ferdinand ; I will speak of this further on.

After my return to Sofia and during the succeeding summer months, I noticed the increased activity of the Italian military attaché, Colonel Merrone. During my absence, the latter had formed a close friendship with our military agent. In the summer these gentlemen were already on thee-and-thou terms which evoked a certain amount of astonishment in the Diplomatic Corps of Sofia, for such terms are not customary between two foreign colleagues. Through Romanowski and also through General Fichev—a former Italian pupil—Merrone managed to become acquainted and to be on a friendly footing with several Bulgarian senior officers, from whom there was much to be learnt. I am justified in believing that Colonel Merrone—a tall, fat and jovial Neapolitan, with a very friendly manner, but at the same time intelligent and rather a Paul Pry—knew how to use all these friendships, and that he ended by knowing of the existence of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement and its contents. He hastened—as in honour bound—to communicate this information to the Italian General Staff. The Italian Minister in Sofia, Count Bosdari—as I was able to prove conclusively later—was only initiated into the secret some time afterwards. An intelligent man, highly educated and of very moderate views, he did not share the enthusiasm of a certain

number of Italian politicians who wished that a conflagration should break out in the Balkans in order to assure to Italy a prompt and brilliant victory over Turkey.

When Lieutenant-Colonel Merrone's statements on the subject of the *alliance* concluded between Bulgaria and Serbia were received in Rome, the first question asked must have been as to what Italy could gain from the new situation. Should she approach Serbia and Bulgaria, suggest an alliance with them, and with their help finish the war in a brilliant manner by conquering part of the coast of Asia Minor? Yes, but would Germany and Austria countenance such a proceeding by their ally? And would the other Powers consent to the balance of power in the Near East being thus upset in Italy's favour? No, this plan, however alluring it might be at first sight, offered too many pitfalls and dangers. Would it not be better, on the contrary, to transmit the valuable information just received to Berlin and to Vienna; and by warning the Allies thus of the danger which threatened them, incite them thereby to energetic intervention in Constantinople, an intervention which would force the Porte to grant important concessions in Italy's favour, and would put an immediate end to the war? But in the first place such a course of action would not harmonise with the principles of loyalty; and then who could guarantee that the Central Powers would set such a price on the information furnished by Italy? It is quite possible that, having warmly thanked the Ally King for the service rendered, Berlin and Vienna might forge any kind of diplomatic weapon with the information, without concerning themselves further with Italy's interests, and would continue to concentrate all their efforts on increasing German influence in Turkey. But then how could one make use of the information received and of the new political situation? In this way: by allowing Bulgaria and Serbia complete freedom of action, but by taking great care at the same time not to lavish diplomatic favours on

them. If a Balkan war ensued, then either the Porte would immediately accept all the Italian conditions and the Italo-Turkish war, which was beginning to drag on too long, would end very advantageously for Italy; or some new path would be discovered, some new *combinazione* arise which Italy could profit by. By virtue of these considerations of an essentially practical nature, Lieutenant-Colonel Merrone was allowed to watch very closely the patriotic inclinations of his Bulgarian comrades-in-arms.

One must be fair to Merrone: he fulfilled this mission with great cleverness and perfect tact, and fully deserved the reward bestowed on him after the conclusion of the Peace Treaty between Italy and Turkey, when he was made aide-de-camp to the King, but allowed all the same to keep his command in the regiment—a distinction very rarely conferred in the Italian army.

I have already mentioned in the preceding chapter that King Ferdinand had received unfavourably the explanations which I gave him before my departure for St. Petersburg in regard to my view of the scope of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement. A few of my dear colleagues at the Russian Legation profited by my absence to endeavour to exasperate Ferdinand still more against me, by all the means in their power—some of them very unscrupulous ones—and to show him that it was possible to get rid of the Russian Minister who had ceased to please him. The King jumped at these suggestions, and shortly after my departure for St. Petersburg he had already fixed his choice on two candidates for my post. One was the former Chief of the Chancellery in the Foreign Office, M. A. Savinsky, who had just been appointed Minister to Stockholm, and who had twice been recommended for the post in Sofia by M. Sazonoff's predecessor, as well as by the Grand-Duchess Vladimir —Ferdinand's chief patroness at the Russian Court. The other candidate was General Mossoloff, formerly an officer in the Horse Guards, who in his youth was

aide-de-camp to Prince Alexander of Battenberg, and who then went into the administration of the Imperial Court, where he was finally given the rank of Lieutenant-General, although he had never returned to the Army. Very intimate with the Emperor, Mossoloff was commissoned to accompany the Grand-Duke Andrew Vladimirovitch to Bulgaria, to act as mentor to His Highness in this country where he had so many acquaintances. This flattering mission and the festivities of Sofia awoke in the worthy General the sudden desire to exchange his Court functions for the activity, the honours, and the high salary of a Minister Plenipotentiary. He seemed to have been predestined by fate itself to the post of Sofia. All the same it was M. Savinsky who became my successor, and that only at the end of 1913. As to General Mossoloff, his diplomatic career only began much later, during the celebrated Stürmer's short term at the Foreign Office.

The spring of 1912, thus served as a starting point for intrigues emanating from different sides, which aimed at terminating my term of office in Sofia. The historic events which occurred soon after prevented the realisation of these intrigues, up till the moment when these same events in their final development caused my departure from Bulgaria to be almost opportune. I was transferred from Sofia to Stockholm after the Treaty of Bukharest in 1913, and as I did not approve of the stipulations in it, it would have been very painful to me to remain in Sofia; although my presence in Bulgaria during the beginning of the World War might have been of some use to the cause of Russia and the Allies.

I received the first information on the subject of the intrigues against me in June, 1912. I heard from St. Petersburg that Danev had repeatedly insinuated there and at Livadia that I had not succeeded in establishing good relations with Ferdinand and that I had not even got on well with the Bulgarians. Besides these accusations of a purely academic nature, I got to know—on good authority—that a great deal of gossip about me

was circulated in the office, and lobbies of our Foreign Office. Some of this gossip was merely ridiculous, but some was of a fairly shameful nature. This gossip had its origin in Sofia, came from one and the same source, and aimed at one and the same object—that of getting rid of a Russian representative who did not approve of a policy of chance and who possessed some influence over the greater part of the Bulgarian Government. One of the vilest calumnies about me came from a most unexpected source and chiefly through the medium of the Bulgarian Minister in Rome, M. Rizov, who at the moment enjoyed the closest friendship with our Ambassador to the Quirinal, M. Kroupensky. This calumny for one instant succeeded in upsetting M. Sazonoff. A year later he begged me "to consign the incident to the place for all noxious things"; but it had produced a certain impression prejudicial to me all the same.

M. Rizov is too well known for it to be necessary to say much about him. A schoolmaster in Macedonia and a vehement Bulgarian agitator, he was one of the first Macedonian Bulgarians who thought it useful to the national cause to side with Stamboulov and to declare himself openly an enemy of Russia. For about ten years, between 1885 and 1895, Rizov was the bugbear of our consuls in Macedonia and of our Embassy in Constantinople, for he incited his fellow-countrymen to the most bitter and vehement strife against the partisans of the Universal Patriarchate, and not only against the Greeks but also against the Serbians and the Kutzo-Wallachians (Rumanians). In 1896, when a complete change occurred in the relations of Bulgaria with Russia, Rizov gave up his Catilinarian existence in Macedonia and entered the Bulgarian Diplomatic Service. After long years spent in Cetigne as Bulgarian Diplomatic Agent, Rizov, who in the meantime had married a young and beautiful Montenegrin, had managed to insinuate himself into the good graces of Prince Nicholas and his set, and to cause his former hostility towards Russia to be forgotten; he endeavoured

to conciliate Russians in general, and his Russian colleague in particular. From Cetigne he was appointed Minister to Rome. At the beginning of the winter of 1912 he came from Rome to Sofia; we saw each other several times and had some interesting interviews, during which, as was only natural, Rizov tried very hard to captivate me. He was undoubtedly an intelligent and shrewd man, who had acquired a certain amount of cultivation, and who knew how to adapt himself to the diplomatic environment which seemed so inappropriate to the poor Macedonian schoolmaster of former days. But, violent, addicted to intrigue and devoid of all principles, Rizov remained a conspirator all his life, and at the crucial moment when Serbo-Bulgarian relations were becoming strained, he played a bold but fatal part. Later on I shall have occasion to mention this remarkable but suspicious personage again.

Of course, if from the very beginning our Foreign Office had met the step taken by King Ferdinand with marked coldness, as they had done when he attacked M. Sementovsky,[1] the intrigue would have fallen through this time also, and the King would at once have realised that it was better in his own interest to remain on good terms with me. But as it was, I received the impression that the attacks directed against me from Sofia found a very ready echo amongst a certain set in our Foreign Office, amongst just those men who kept up close relations with my colleague of Belgrade and who had been connected in some way or other with my lamented predecessor.

I have already given an account of the conversation which I had with the King in March, just before I left for St. Petersburg, and have moreover explained that it was in this conversation that the King's resentment against me had its origin. This ill feeling was carefully and skilfully fostered during my absence.

No doubt I made a mistake, in the course of that conversation, in speaking to the King too frankly, and

[1] See Chapter I.

in recommending that Bulgaria should henceforward pursue a straightforward and undeviating line of policy, relying confidently on co-operation with Serbia, and in concert with her, on the benevolent and essentially prudent advice of Russia.

Now this was exactly what Ferdinand was most afraid of, for above all things he was most anxious to keep himself independent of all such measures and to be free to follow the tortuous policy of which he was so fond.

Ever since his arrival in Bulgaria his policy had been that of balancing St. Petersburg against Vienna. The irreconcileable antagonism between the policy of Russia and that of Austria was, with him, not only a dominant article of faith, but also a chosen ground of action. He did not believe that there was the least chance of an agreement, or even of a durable *modus vivendi* between the two powers who were struggling for mastery in the Balkan Peninsula.

Ferdinand was convinced that if he managed affairs so badly as to become irrevocably associated with the policy either of Vienna (which meant Berlin also) or St. Petersburg, Bulgaria would sooner or later be disastrously involved in the struggle which was sure to come, and, if that struggle resulted in the decisive defeat of either of the adversaries, Bulgaria and her king, even if they were on the victorious side, would have perforce to submit to the control of the conqueror.

Ferdinand's ideal policy, on the other hand, consisted in keeping a free hand for himself and his country, and in securing and consolidating for Bulgaria, an influence, even if it were only a subordinate influence, which would enable him to hold the balance in the Near East.

He had much greater confidence in his own political skill than in his military power: he was afraid of war, but always recognised that if it was necessary to fight in order to fulfil the national aspirations of the Bulgarians, it would be much better to ally himself with partners who were weaker than himself than with more formidable allies.

The chief desire at St. Petersburg was to see Bulgaria and Serbia closely united in order to bar the approach to the Peninsula against the Teuton and Swabian aggressors. But to the Bulgarians and their King this was not the chief concern; they were, above all things, men of action, and sought for immediate and substantial advantages, while Ferdinand, a political dreamer, was forming plans of greater magnitude to which I will refer later on.

If the King had been willing to place more confidence in me, and in his conversations with me to enter more frankly and less enigmatically into those political designs which dominated him, he would have seen that I was in no wise disposed to add to his anxieties or to demand what was impossible.

But to place confidence in any one was just what Ferdinand was incapable of doing, and this advantage was withheld from all the Russian ministers accredited to his Government. He wanted them to be docile instruments, and to act as the advocates of his cunning desires and ambitions at St. Petersburg. He knew quite well that I would never lend myself to this sort of thing; to a certain extent I vexed him, and he thought it best to get rid of me with all civility.

Warned by the intrigue which had been formed against me, I only took two measures to fight it. During the month of July, I informed King Ferdinand, through his private secretary, M. Dobrovitch, that if for any reason His Majesty wished me to leave Sofia, he had only to tell me so quite frankly, and then I would myself beg St. Petersburg to give me another post, as I considered it quite inadmissible that between the King of the Bulgarians and the Russian Minister such constant misunderstandings should exist. Some time after I received, through the same M. Dobrovitch, the answer that the King still appreciated, esteemed and liked me very sincerely; that if some friction had existed between him and me, it was due solely to misunderstandings; that the King considered the continuation of my work in Sofia to be valuable for Bulgaria, etc., etc. It is true that in the meantime the political

situation had changed completely, and that Ferdinand at the moment was inclined to view things in the same light as I did. Soon after these mutual explanations, the King, at his Jubilee celebrations at Tirnova, conversed at great length and very amiably with me in full view of all present, and on his return to Sofia sent me a signed photograph of himself.

Before all this I had already informed M. Gueshov and M. Todorov of the intrigue against me, and, frankly disgusted at it, they both entreated me earnestly not to try to leave my post.

A few months later, when the intrigue frustrated in July began again, one read one day in the *Rousskoye Slovo* that the Russian Ministers, Nekludoff in Sofia, and Savinsky in Stockholm, were soon to be mutually exchanged. I wrote then to the man whom I esteemed the most in M. Sazonoff's set, Baron Schilling, begging him to tell me quite frankly if this news was true. I added that having always judged people severely who clung to their places, I had not the slightest intention of clinging to the post in Sofia, important and interesting though it was, because the person holding such a post ought above all things to possess the complete confidence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Schilling replied that the question of my being transferred to an equivalent post had been raised at *one* moment at the Foreign Office, but that at the *present* moment there was no question of it. All the same, the news published in the *Rousskoye Slovo* was not officially denied, as it ought to have been. I came to the conclusion from all this that *at the present moment* (the Balkan War had just broken out) the Foreign Office still considered my presence in Bulgaria to be indispensable; but that when these serious events were over, they would not scruple in St. Petersburg to send me to another post, even to a far less important one.

If I dwell so much on these purely personal intrigues, it is because they did have an indisputable influence over the final course of events in Bulgaria. Towards the end of 1912 every one in Sofia knew that the Russian

Minister's position was insecure and that from henceforth one need not reckon much with his opinions or advice. All this was known also to my foreign colleagues, and several of them gave me friendly warning of what was being plotted and hatched against me. But I am anticipating events. Let us return to the spring of 1912.

During the month of May I succeeded in making a trip to Constantinople which I had had in view for a long time. I had left the Bosphorus twenty years ago and I was delighted at the prospect of renewing my glorious impressions of this unique spot. Moreover, I wished to have a heart to heart talk to Michel de Giers, recently appointed Russian Ambassador to Constantinople, to Hartwig's intense disappointment. I had met M. de Giers in St. Petersburg in March, but we had not had time to talk at great length, besides de Giers lacked the most essential element of a political interview—his own impressions of Constantinople, where he was going for the first time.

During an enchanting week, I had again before my eyes the marvellous panorama of the shores of the Bosphorus and of the Sea of Marmara and all the well-known pictures of Constantinopolitan life. I found few changes. Only the wretched street curs no longer existed ; the picturesque and crazy wooden bridge connecting Galata and Stambul, and lined with fruit stalls and shops where Turkish delicacies were sold, had been replaced by an ordinary iron bridge ; and in the environs of Pera Turkish soldiers, newly dressed in khaki, were drilling without ceasing under the watchful eye of German instructors, which in my day was a somewhat rare sight. Everything else looked very much as usual. During one of my visits to the Grand Bazaar of Stambul a fire broke out in the adjacent quarter between St. Sophia and the sea, and immediately assumed the proportions that a fire assumes in Constantinople alone, because of the accumulation of old wooden buildings

made of dry old planks. A very familiar sight to me: a motley crowd intent on rescuing its wretched garments, the sinister double illumination of the fire on one side and of the sun veiled and reddened on the other; swarms of pigeons driven out of their nests by the fire, and flying around at the same time as the burning brands in clouds of white smoke; the *touloumbadjis* (voluntary firemen), half-naked, rushing to the fire and giving wild shrieks from time to time. . . . The fire lasted two days, and delayed for a few hours the departure of the train which was to take the German Ambassador, Baron Marschall von Biberstein, who had been appointed to London in the same capacity. I remember meeting the aged diplomat on his way to the station. The carriage in which Baron Marschall, his wife and his daughter were seated was preceded by an open carriage entirely filled with bouquets and bunches of flowers, gifts, evidently, of the German colony and the "grateful Turks."

"Do look," I said to my companion, "it's exactly like a funeral: here is the carriage with flowers and wreaths preceding the hearse, and behind, the long file of carriages accompanying the deceased to his last resting-place! Truly I should not have liked to leave my post surrounded by that style of ceremonial!"

My words were an involuntary prophecy. Two months later Baron Marschall died suddenly in London, carrying with him into the grave all the hopes centred by Germany on their new Ambassador. Marschall was replaced in London by Prince Lichnowsky, and in Constantinople by the fiery Wangenheim.

M. de Giers, to whom I confided my impressions on Bulgaria and my apprehensions as to the real aim of the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance, expressed his own fears quite as frankly. I even received the impression that in his heart he was blaming me for having consented to serve as intermediary in the negotiations between Bulgaria and Serbia and for having taken such an active part in them. I feel sure, however, that if he had been in my place he would have done exactly the same, for

it was not part of the duty of a Russian representative in a Slav country to offer opposition to the reconciliation or even the alliance of this country with another Slav country. Of course our policy was bound to check beforehand all the warlike tendencies of Bulgaria and Serbia and was capable of doing so; but this *rôle* belonged to the central organ of our diplomacy, which moreover had been warned in good time and repeatedly by me.

Our new Ambassador to Constantinople in our interviews also emphasised—with the obvious intent that I should pass the information on to Sofia—the enormous danger that according to him war with Turkey would present to the two Slav kingdoms themselves. According to M. de Giers the Ottoman Army was quite different from what it had been in Abdul Hamid's time. Admirably equipped and perfectly trained, under the command of German generals and senior officers and of young Turkish officers, well trained and drilled, it constituted a real power which might cause disagreeable surprises to Serbian and Bulgarian optimists. The Ambassador maintained this opinion till the actual war of 1912, or rather till the first decisive defeat of the Turks. Always concientious in his work as in the expression of his opinions, M. de Giers usually placed entire confidence in his professional collaborators in any branch. His opinion of the Turkish Army was based entirely on the reports and information of our military agent in Constantinople, General Holmsen, an honest Finno-Swede, married to the daughter of the former Governor-General of Finland, Bobrikoff. Holmsen was on very intimate terms with the military attaché and the German senior officers, who were very attentive to him and who furnished him with all sorts of information on the Ottoman Army. And in representing to their Russian colleague the state of this Army as a truly brilliant one, the German officers were far from displaying premeditated duplicity: they were simply guided by that very natural feeling which consists in

seeing one's own work through rose-coloured spectacles.

Be that as it may, Holmsen himself was firmly convinced that the Bulgarian and Serbian Armies were infinitely inferior to the Turkish Army, and he maintained this opinion with the straightforwardness and obstinacy inherent in his Swedish nature. It is a fact that the brave general did not know the condition of the Serbian and Bulgarian Armies.

I met General Holmsen four years later in Stockholm, on his return from captivity in Germany—he was a physical wreck! From the beginning of the war he commanded a brigade in the army corps of General Buhakoff, which, at the time of our second defeat in East Prussia in February, 1915, displayed heroic courage in cutting through the hostile army which surrounded it on all sides. General Holmsen told me that there were neither guns nor shells left in some of the battalions of the division of which he had become the head on the battlefield, and half the bayonets were twisted or broken by the continual shock of hand-to-hand fighting. The soldiers, worn out by four days and nights of continued fighting and marching, sometimes fell down in the snow and went off into a leaden slumber without paying any attention to death which was raging round them—so terrible was their fatigue. At last the remnants of the heroic army corps reached the first line of defence of Grodno : alas! it was already occupied by the enemy, so they had to surrender. They did not know that Grodno was still held by Russian troops, and that if they had advanced, these could have rescued them. In listening to this heartrending account, I naturally refrained from reminding the General of our conversations in Constantinople and from pointing out how mistaken he had been in his prognostications!

One of the things which struck me most in Constantinople was the complete serenity, the indifference even, with which every one seemed to look on the Italo-Turkish

war; one really could not believe in the Italian Fleet blockading the Dardanelles, and that quite recently the Italians had tried to break through the Straits. The only complaint heard—and that a bitter one—was of stagnation in commercial affairs.

In May and June there appeared on the whole to be a political lull in Sofia. The King was still abroad, and M. Gueshov at some watering-place. But shortly after my return from Constantinople, I learnt through several sources that very important business was being transacted at the Bulgarian Foreign Office, and more especially at the War Office. My Serbian colleague was also holding frequent interviews with the Bulgarian Ministers and politicians. The tone of the Bulgarian Press was becoming more and more nervous with regard to Macedonia and what was going on there. In the streets of Sofia one met more and more frequently brown and sunburnt individuals with gloomy expressions, sometimes armed to the teeth, who were the object of great curiosity; these were the heads of well-known troops arriving from Macedonia. Finally I was informed in a more definite manner that Serbia and Bulgaria were on the point of concluding a military convention aimed exclusively at Turkey. Having some slight knowledge of the psychology of Balkan nations, I soon possessed proof that my fears of a conflagration were about to be realised. After a little hesitation, on the 4th July, 1912, I dispatched a fairly long code-telegram to M. Sazonoff, in which I mentioned all the alarming signs I had noticed, and I concluded the telegram by expressing my deep-rooted conviction that both on the Bulgarian and the Serbian side, they were actively preparing for war, and that they even intended to hasten events. I heard later that my telegram produced an impression highly unfavourable to me.

"Have you read Nekludoff's *hysterical* telegram?" the heads of departments and the young secretaries of Sazonoff's set were continually asking each other.

Alas! This telegram proved to be *historical,* not hysterical!

During the month of July M. Gueshov and the other Ministers who had been on leave returned to Sofia. At the same time affairs in Macedonia were taking a more and more alarming turn. It was quite clear that, setting aside natural and logical causes, one was confronted by the work of Serbo-Bulgarian agitators and abettors. Two small towns in Macedonia, Ishtib and Katchaneh, in particular became in turn the scene of bloody events of the kind so common in Hamid times. In both these places, on market day, bombs exploded close to the bazaar; among the killed and wounded, naturally, Turkish women and children were found: immediately, as at a given signal, the Mussulman population fell on the Bulgarian peasants who had come to market and began to massacre them; they also attacked the houses of Bulgarian patriots and leading men, and the usual "atrocities" took place. In both cases the Turkish garrison did nothing to stop the massacre; it was even suspected of having aided and abetted. Certainly the people who threw the bombs—and they never were Turks—knew perfectly well what the result of their deeds would be.

Such sad incidents were of frequent occurrence in the days before the Turkish Revolution; but then no one thought of making them a *casus belli*; Bulgaria became irritable, the Bulgarian newspapers published warlike articles, the Great Powers cautioned the Porte, and then everything resumed its normal aspect. That was why the respective Governments of Western Europe did not attach any extraordinary significance to the Macedonian events of July, 1912. But our Foreign Secretary, who was perfectly well aware of the true meaning of these regrettable incidents, ought to have perceived a serious warning in them. That is how I understood them, and consequently I did not fail to emphasise in my telegrams and dispatches that the Balkan War was the order of the day and was a perpetual menace.

On this occasion it is noteworthy that M. Gueshov, as soon as he returned from his holiday, was remarkably frank and correct in his behaviour to me. He confirmed the information that I had received from a private source on the conclusion of the Serbo-Bulgarian Military Convention, and if my memory does not deceive me, the actual text of this convention was communicated by Colonel Romanowski to our General Headquarters Staff.

M. Gueshov even went further in his confidences; he confided to me that Bulgaria and Serbia had just made an arrangement with Greece; this arrangement, in contrast to the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement, was not concerned with the demarcation of boundaries in Macedonia, but it was a kind of military convention in case of "Turkish aggression."

There is one curious detail; whereas M. Gueshov was displaying so much frankness towards me, the Greek Government took great care not to communicate this arrangement to our representative in Athens, although he was much esteemed and very popular there. At the end of July I went to Vienna to meet M. Sverbeieff, to discuss some important private matters with him. Sverbeieff, who had just left the post of Athens and was on his way to Berlin, where he had been appointed Ambassador, heard for the first time from me that the Greeks had made an arrangement with Bulgaria and Serbia.

In the first days of July I was more or less agreeably surprised by the advent of my friend M. A. Goutchkoff in Sofia. As managing director of one of our principal insurance companies, he came to Bulgaria and Serbia to assist at the inauguration of branches of this company. At least that was the avowed object of his journey, but in reality the journey was a kind of political inquiry. In Russian activist circles in which Goutchkoff possessed undoubted authority, they had got wind of the events which were shaping in the Balkans, and

Goutchkoff was commissioned—unless he was acting on his own initiative—to verify *de visu* the rumours which were circulating. Political circles in Sofia greeted the eminent Russian guest with the most cordial reception. The principal Ministers conversed at great length with him; the members of the former Malinov Cabinet met Goutchkoff at an evening party given by their colleague, M. Liaptchev, a fiery and irreconcilable Macedonian.

Under the influence of all that he had heard there, Goutchkoff talked to me for a long time and appeared desirous of convincing me that the events, apparently imminent in Bulgaria and Sofia, were not only unavoidable but desirable.

"But look here," I replied, "was it not you yourself who told me four months ago that Russia's equipment was absolutely inadequate, and that a war, taking us unawares, might be fatal to us? And now you appear to think it natural and almost desirable that the Balkan States should declare war on Turkey! But what in this case would Russia's position be, forced to remain a passive witness of these events, whatever their result?"

"Yes, that is true," said Goutchkoff; "but then have we ever been prepared for events during the whole course of our modern history? and nevertheless we have progressed considerably in the solution of our historic problems in the Near East. Moreover, at this moment, as I have satisfactorily proved, the Slav States will not wait for the concentration of our forces. You yourself, M. Nekludoff, who, by virtue of family traditions and the whole of your earlier career, have had Constantinople as a centre of attraction, would you not be happy to have your name connected with the definite solution of the Straits question in our favour?"

"Certainly, I should have felt the most intense and legitimate pleasure. But on the other hand, what heavy responsibility I should have taken on myself if, seduced by this mirage of personal ambition, I had allowed

myself to be drawn into a game which might have ended in cruel disappointments for Russia!"

Goutchkoff's opinion that we often reaped success in spite of our perpetual unpreparedness was shared by our military agent, and it often led him, in his interviews with the Bulgarian military, into making assertions which I should have wished to be less encouraging and less enthusiastic.

From Sofia Goutchkoff went to Belgrade, where he was received with even more cordiality than in Sofia, there was even an official tinge in the reception given in his honour. A few days after I had taken leave of him, I left to meet Sverbeieff in Vienna, and at the Belgrade station I was an incognito witness of the almost triumphal departure of Goutchkoff, who got into my train. The royal waiting-rooms were brilliantly lit up, a soft red carpet was laid down up to the door of the *wagon-lit;* and after a somewhat long wait, I perceived the excellent M. Goutchkoff, dressed for travelling, accompanied by all the Serbian Ministers headed by M. Pachitch, M. Hartwig, the Mayor of Belgrade, and other political personages; most of these gentlemen were in evening clothes, for they had just come from a grand banquet given to the eminent Russian guest. At last all the good-byes were said, there was much shaking of hands, some friendly tapping on the back, cries of "jivio," and the train slowly steamed out of the station, while Goutchkoff, touched by so much cordiality, stood at the open window of his coupé waving to his Serbian friends. He was slightly abashed when I suddenly emerged out of the darkness of the corridor and asked him: "Well, my dear Goutchkoff, and what have you been doing in Belgrade?" The following morning, before we reached Vienna, he told me that the public mind was much excited in Serbia, and that Macedonian events were looked on as most serious; he omitted to tell me what he himself had said and preached to the Serbians.

Three days after, on my return from Vienna, I was a

witness at the same Belgrade station of another departure: that of the heir to the throne, Prince Alexander, who, with M. Pachitch, was going to inspect the troops in the south-east of Serbia, that is near the Turkish frontier. I could not help thinking that this journey was rather significant.

Towards the beginning of August, Bulgaria's disquieting state of mind was already the constant topic at the interviews of members of the Diplomatic Corps of Sofia. I noticed that the representatives of the Triple Alliance, and the new Turkish Minister, the intelligent and shrewd Nabi-bey, had no idea of the complete understanding between the Bulgarians and the Serbians, and did not perceive, in the conduct of the two Governments, a direct preparation for war; but all the same they were beginning to be anxious, and watched my words and deeds with suspicious curiosity. Moreover, Nabi-bey soon left for Switzerland, ostensibly to take a cure, but in reality to begin secret negotiations, by order of the Porte, with some Italian financiers, selected *ad hoc*. These secret conferences were transformed into official negotiations of peace as soon as the Balkan War had broken out. I have reason to believe that the preliminaries of these negotiations had been laid down in Sofia before Nabi-bey's departure to Switzerland.

On the 11th (24th) August, the feast of the veterans of the first Bulgarian militia was generally celebrated in Sofia, and always with great pomp. During the days—celebrated for ever in Bulgaria's history—of the 9th to the 11th August (O.S.), 1877, when the Turks, pursuing from Kazanlyk the weak detachment of General Gourko, ascended the southern slope of the Balkans and tried to take the Schipka Pass by assault—a position fiercely defended by us—the Bulgarian militia, newly formed into picked battalions, displayed heroic courage side by side with regiments of Russian Chasseurs, and helped to save Shipka and to bar the road to northern Bulgaria to the Turks. Ever since, the anniversary of the 11th (24th)

August has been celebrated every year by the illustrious survivors of these battles. On the eve of this day, the veterans gave a banquet to the representatives of the Government and to the Russian Legation; on the day itself a solemn service was held in the cathedral of Sofia, and the historical colours of the first Bulgarian militia, amongst which the flag called "of Samara" was particularly noticeable, were brought from the Palace to the church; this was the flag embroidered and presented to the Bulgarian militia by the Russian ladies of the town of Samara; it was covered with Bulgarian blood in the hand-to-hand fighting near Stara-Zagora (Eski-Zagra), where the Bulgarian militia with their bayonets succeeded in cutting through the Turkish lines and in saving the precious flag.

The Bulgarians in general have not an expansive nature. This people, reserved and taciturn, is almost completely incapable of boisterous manifestations of enthusiasm. So that the festival of the veterans usually went off very calmly according to the programme once drawn up; and the crowd gathered round the cathedral appeared to watch with indifference the procession of the colours and the review of the veterans and of the Sofia garrison which took place in the big square.

On this occasion, that is in 1912, we received as usual an invitation to the veterans' banquet and to the service in the cathedral. But on the eve of the banquet Gueshov said to me: "Shall you go to the banquet, Monsieur?" "I was just going to ask you the same question," I replied.

"I think," said Gueshov, "that it would be better for you and me not to go; every one is over-excited; at the banquet speeches may be made which would place us in an embarrassing position. But I shall, of course, go to the cathedral, and we earnestly beg of you to come as usual."

On arrival at the cathedral at the appointed time, we were struck by the emotional atmosphere which pervaded the sacred edifice. One saw pale faces, shining

eyes, tears coursing down the cheeks of aged men . . . and all of a sudden from the precincts of the cathedral, where an enormous crowd was collected, a formidable "hurrah!" resounded, but a "hurrah!" the like of which I have not heard since my childhood, when in the large square of the Kremlin in Moscow the crowd cheered the Tsar-Liberator Alexander II. What can this mean? I inwardly wondered. Is the King arriving at the cathedral, and would they give *him* such an ovation? At this moment the doors of the church were thrown open, and there appeared: first the flag of Samara, then the old colours of the militia, and then Macedonian colours entwined in crêpe. But all eyes were bent on the flag of Samara; the veterans gathered round it; with tears in their eyes they kissed the staff, the drapery, the St. George streamers. A thought flashed like lightning through my mind: it is war, I thought. Certainly and undoubtedly, it is war!

The review passed off with every one still in the same frame of mind, and when I drove to the Legation I was cheered with cries of "hurrah!" and "Russia for ever!"

Soon after Gueshov informed me of the agreement concluded with Montenegro. In all my interviews with Bulgarian Ministers I always tried to restrain the warlike tendencies of some amongst them, by proving to them the undoubted dangers to which Bulgaria and Serbia would expose themselves if they allowed themselves to be drawn into a war with Turkey, even if they were supported by Greece and Montenegro. I quoted the excellent state of the Turkish Army reformed and commanded by German generals, the possibility of an attack on the Serbians from behind by Austria and the utter impossibility of our doing anything to prevent this; I did not conceal my doubts of the Balkan allies maintaining close solidarity up to the end; but my principal argument was that Russia was afraid of bloodshed which might finally spread all over Europe—which

would not help the cause of our Balkan kinsmen in the least.

My arguments on the subject of the strength and perfect equipment of the Turkish Army were received by my Bulgarian listeners with a sceptical smile. Gueshov assured me repeatedly that the Bulgarian Headquarters Staff possessed quite different information on the state of the Ottoman Army, information based on systematic observation and absolutely reliable secret intelligence. And that concerning our wise desire to prevent a war in the Near East, the only way to attain that would be for Russia and Europe to resume their former course of action and their work of organisation and autonomy in Macedonia ; in short that Europe must at last renounce her illusions on the subject of a new state of affairs in Turkey. I entirely shared this last point of view, and I remember that after the second massacre which took place in Macedonia, I made the suggestion, in a dispatch to M. Sazonoff, that the Powers should take Macedonian affairs in hand and immediately send their consuls to Katchaneh and Ishtib, to hold an inquiry on the massacres which had taken place there, just as was done under the old Turkish régime, which was exactly like the new one. I also communicated my views to our Ambassador in Constantinople. In St. Petersburg it was not thought possible to carry out my idea. It is true that it would be difficult to change our relations with Turkey all at once, and to reconquer a position voluntarily abandoned by European diplomacy nearly four years ago—four years during which the Powers had vied with one another in good behaviour towards the Young Turks and had almost been obsequious to them. And even admitting that *we* had decided to change our attitude towards Turkey abruptly, should we have been followed along this path by the other Powers, even those of the Entente?

M. de Giers was not long in replying to me from Constantinople; and he persuaded me to warn the

Bulgarians in the most emphatic manner that they were courting certain disaster if they declared war on Turkey. M. de Giers—a serious-minded and straightforward man—was absolutely sincere in his warning. He felt much sympathy for the Slavs of the Balkans and dreaded their defeat, which would have had as a consequence either the considerable diminishing of the prestige of Russia, or our being dragged into a collision with the Central Empires.

I took care to impart to Gueshov the opinion of our Ambassador in Constantinople, but I could only realise afresh and more fully that arguments on the subject of the military strength of the Ottoman Empire would not produce any effect on the Bulgarians.

I heard besides that King Ferdinand, who in April and May had seemed inclined for war, was much perplexed at this moment; he dreaded extreme measures and would have liked things to drag on for some time.

In August, 1912, it was twenty-five years since Prince Ferdinand of Coburg had been elected Prince of Bulgaria and had set foot on Bulgarian soil, although he was not recognised by Russia and a few other powers. This anniversary was to be solemnly celebrated at Tirnova in the presence of the Diplomatic Corps. Given the circumstances and the activist fever which had seized the Bulgarians, it was to be feared that the Jubilee would not pass off without incident; I foresaw at the same time that at Tirnova all eyes would be fixed on the Russian Minister and that the King himself would pay me marked attention. By a concurrence of strange and significant circumstances, the representative of that Power which a quarter of a century earlier had positively refused to recognise Ferdinand, now became the most prominent acolyte—I might even say the principal trophy—of his Jubilee!

The celebrations passed off well. There were no political demonstrations; only in all the speeches addressed to the King, beginning with the sermon of the

Metropolitan of Tirnova, the following note predominated: "You, sir, have enhanced Your own prestige, won the attention of the Powers, raised Bulgaria to the rank of a sovereign State, and assumed for Yourself the title of King; but You must remember that during these twenty-five years You have not furthered by a single degree the real aims of Bulgaria, those which had been fixed by the Tsar-Liberator in the treaty of San Stefano!" Russia and the Tsar-Liberator were repeatedly mentioned in the speeches.

After the banquet served in the municipal theatre, the King drew me aside and had a long talk with me. He complained of his difficult position, assured me of his sincere desire to avoid a collision with Turkey, but at the same time alluded to the patriotic agitation which had seized on the whole of Bulgaria and which would only settle down in a peaceful manner if the rights and the autonomy of the Bulgarians of Macedonia and Thrace were truly and effectually realised.

"You have heard the speeches which have just been made, and you have probably grasped their true meaning. Hence you can judge the difficulty of my position. Nevertheless I mean to act up to the last moment with the idea of preserving peace. I beg you to transmit this to St. Petersburg, and at the same time to entreat them earnestly to come to my assistance."

This was my last interview with the King before the Bulgarian mobilisation. Of course, I informed M. Sazonoff of the purport of it, and added that, according to my own opinion, events could still be checked by energetic action respecting the Porte, but that in a few weeks it would be too late.

I was inordinately astonished, and up to now I cannot understand that, in spite of my warnings, our Foreign Secretary could remain so calm about Bulgaria and Serbia. When the mobilisation was announced, we like all the other European Cabinets were aghast, and we proceeded to heap on Sofia, Belgrade, Athens and Cetigne

threatening warnings and reproaches which were almost ultimatums. But it was too late!

At the time I explained this impenitent optimism of St. Petersburg to myself in the following way: our Foreign Office was certain that without the help of Serbia, the Bulgarians would never make up their minds to move; moreover, no one in our country doubted the obedience and good behaviour of the Serbians; and M. Hartwig took great care not to report to the Foreign Office what was really happening in Belgrade, as it might shatter our illusions.

But later on I came to the conclusion that the behaviour of my colleague in Belgrade did not represent so much a cause of ulterior events as one of the symptoms of our way of tackling political questions. Our diplomatic chiefs in St. Petersburg, simply, were filled with what M. Isvolsky, in a speech made at the Duma some time before, had called "healthy optimism," and which had led Russia then to the brink of war!

CHAPTER IX

THE BALKAN WAR, 1912

The 17th (30th) September, 1912, the Bulgarian mobilisation was ordered simultaneously with the Serbian, Greek, and Montenegrin mobilisations, and from the first moment all the members of the Diplomatic Corps in Sofia without exception understood that this mobilisation meant a determined war with no turning back. But such was not the opinion of the European Governments. For several days warnings, prayers, and threats were abundantly poured on Sofia, Belgrade, etc., but they produced no effect whatever on those to whom they were addressed. Finally, on the fourth or fifth day, the representatives of the Powers in Sofia, Belgrade, etc., received from their respective Governments instructions to declare to the Government to which they were accredited that the Powers were determined to obtain from Turkey a régime of justice and autonomy for all the people of a common origin of the four Balkan States at present allied; but that if, on the other hand, these States would not listen to the wise advice offered them, and insisted on making war on Turkey, the Powers, even in the event of victory by the allies, would not permit any territorial change in the Peninsula prejudicial to the Ottoman Empire. The first part of this declaration was eminently sound, and corresponded on all points with what I had suggested and preached in June and July; but in October, and after mobilisation had been ordered, the promises of the Powers were arriving decidedly too late!

Having assembled at the house of our senior, we decided to make the prescribed declaration the very

next day to M. Gueshov, one after the other, and in a verbal form but strictly identical. To effect this we drew our communication up together, and each of us was to *read* the text to M. Gueshov. It is not difficult to guess that not one of us expected any result from this proceeding. The evening before, my French colleague and I had confessed as much to one another. The next day, when I was on my way to the Foreign Office at the appointed hour, I met Count Tarnowski, the Austro-Hungarian Minister, coming out of his Legation.

"Well, so we are going to take our famous step, are we?" he asked with a sarcastic smile.

"Certainly," I replied.

"And you think that something will come of it?"

"I doubt it."

"And I am quite sure that nothing will," replied my colleague sharply; "Europe is simply placing herself in a ridiculous position!"

I did not answer, but in my heart of hearts I could not but agree that Tarnowski was perfectly right. A few weeks later, when the final and brilliant success of the Balkan States was clearly evident, the Powers completely *forgot* the declaration they had made during the mobilisation; every one in Europe began to court the victors, more especially the Bulgarians. Such always has been and such always will be the power of success. But after this what must the Bulgarians, Serbians, etc., have thought of the august decisions of Europe, of her warnings, her threats?

The mobilisation went off splendidly in Bulgaria and in Serbia. I should never have thought that a people so reserved as the Bulgarians were capable of the enthusiasm they displayed during those memorable days. There were no drunkards: there never are in Balkan countries. Everywhere exemplary order reigned, except in a few railway stations where the reservists who had been called up took the trains by assault, and even climbed up on the roofs of the carriages in order

to arrive more quickly at the rallying-point. My wife and my youngest daughter, who were returning from Russia *viâ* Bukharest and passing through the whole of northern Bulgaria exactly at this time, told me that at each station there were crowds of women, old men, and children escorting, with flowers, songs, and jokes, their sons, husbands, and brothers who were joyfully going off to the decisive conflict with the time-honoured enemy. The same thing was told me by travellers who had crossed Serbia. The day after the one on which the mobilisation was ordered war became inevitable. If the Bulgarian or Serbian Government had wished to obey the injunctions of the Powers and—not to demobilise—but only to check the course of events, it would have inevitably provoked a revolution, and the armed troops would have crossed the frontier on their own initiative.

The die was cast. As to us, representatives of the Great Powers in Sofia, we could only be spectators of military deeds and of the first decisive encounters.

I often wondered at the time and afterwards how the Central Empires could have allowed the Balkan States to go to war without at least trying to prevent it by more prompt and effectual means than the representations of united Europe and her platonic threats. I explain the fact by the complete confidence possessed by Berlin in the victory of the Turks over the Allies. Such a victory would necessarily lead to diplomatic negotiations between the Powers, and during these negotiations the Central Empires would have the enormous advantage of being on the *side of the victor*. The unexpected, and what is more, rapid and decisive, success of the Serbian and Bulgarian arms flabbergasted Berlin and Vienna to such a pitch that they had not even time to agree together to prevent this success. It became henceforth necessary to change the sphere of action to that of the inevitable competition between the victorious countries, and to postpone the decisive blow to another day and a more propitious moment.

Germany waited for this moment for exactly twenty-two months.

I must confess that from the moment war broke out I was entirely and whole-heartedly on the side of the Serbians, the Bulgarians, and the Greeks. I was witnessing the accomplishment of all that had been prepared by the efforts, the blood, and the thought of several generations of Russian statesmen, soldiers, and thinkers. The three small nations—of a common origin and Orthodox—had become strong enough to risk a contest with their time-honoured foe, alone and without outside help; their victory would serve as a striking justification of all our previous policy, of all the efforts, all the sacrifices of the Russian people; hence any one will realise the intense interest with which I followed the military operations which had just begun.

I knew through private sources that the Bulgarian Army would advance boldly in Thrace, and that the key to its final success would be the taking of Lozengrad (Kirk-kilisseh), whilst the Serbian Army had reserved Macedonia as its scene of action in the direction of Skoplie (Uskub) and beyond. I was overjoyed the morning that Gueshov telephoned to tell me that Lozengrad had been taken by two Bulgarian divisions which crushed the Turks by a truly overwhelming advance. From that moment the Bulgarians were threatening the rear of the Turkish Army, which had to retreat hurriedly before the principal forces of the Bulgarians. By the afternoon all the town knew of the happy event, and towards evening there was a procession of townspeople, school children, Macedonians, and reservists marching with torches through the principal streets, and stopping to cheer lustily in front of the Palace and the houses of Gueshov and Danev, and more lustily still in front of the Russian Legation. This time I thought it my duty to go out on to the corner balcony which overlooked the Square, to listen to the excited speeches of the leaders of the procession and to reply by a short but

stirring address. From that day and at each fresh success of the Bulgarian arms up to the taking of Adrianople inclusive, the like manifestations were repeated in front of the Russian Legation, but none of them made such a lasting impression on me as the first one, in honour of the taking of Lozengrad.

A few days later we heard that the Serbian Army, after the sanguinary assault of the "Zrny-Vrch" positions, during which the Serbians accomplished astounding feats of valour, had completely beaten the Turkish Army and was pursuing it across the elevated plain—so sadly famed in the history of the Serbian people—which bears the name of "Kossovo Polé." I was told later that when the Serbians reached this place, hallowed throughout centuries by immortal memories of heroism and mourning, and extolled in the three epic poems called the "Kossovo Polé Songs," that each Serbian soldier bent down to kiss the sacred soil and placed a handful of earth in his bosom in a clean cloth. . . . Such moments are indeed rare in the history of nations: all honour to those amongst them who have purchased them by time-honoured fidelity to the historic ideal, and with their noble blood shed on the very spot and at the vital moment! . . .

Neither the Bulgarian nor the Serbian Army gave the enemy time to recover. While the Serbians had occupied their former capital Skoplie almost without striking a blow, had advanced on Bitolia and there, after four days' ferocious and difficult fighting, had utterly and completely beaten the last Turkish troops, the Bulgarians were overtaking the Ottoman Army at Lule-Burgas. After three days' sanguinary fighting, during which the positions were perpetually changing hands, the Turkish resistance was finally overcome and their Army forced to the most hurried retreat, which at times degenerated into a flight. Such is the glorious account of the first Balkan War (October, 1912).

But beside these glorious annals, an incident far less

flattering to the Bulgarians occurred at the very outset of the War.

As I have already said, the principal operations in Macedonia fell to the Serbian Army; but parallel to the Serbian action and more to the south-east a large Bulgarian detachment was operating, that of General Todorov, who was sent across the Rhodope Mountains straight in the direction of Salonika. In this quarter there were but few Turkish troops, and only the town and port of Salonika, constituting the base of operations of defence in Macedonia, were guarded by a fairly large garrison. General Todorov's detachment, having crossed the mountains and routed the irregular detachments of native Mussulmans who courageously defended the passes and defiles, at length emerged on the road to Salonika. The Bulgarians advanced so quickly that they hardly had time to set fire to the rich Turkish villages, or to massacre many of the inhabitants. This was because from another side the troops of the "Diadoch" Constantine were advancing, or rather rushing with giddy haste. Never before, since the days when Achilles with the swiftness of a stag pursued Hector round the walls of Troy, have the Greeks marched with such rapidity as on this occasion, when they had at all costs to reach Salonika before the Bulgarians. And the Greeks were the first to get near the town of St. Cyril and Methodius. When General Todorov's detachment got near Salonika the Greeks had already been there two days, and the whole Turkish garrison, discouraged by a series of defeats in Macedonia, and knowing that they were between two fires, had already surrendered to the "Diadoch." But this did not suit the Bulgarians at all. Having arrived in sight of the Turkish camp, they opened fire, and then dispatched envoys to the Ottoman heads suggesting they should surrender. The Turks, who had just surrendered to the Greeks, hastened to surrender again to the Bulgarians. But the Greeks would have none of this. And when General Todorov's troops began to

surround the Turkish camp, the commander of the Greek troops informed the Bulgarians that he would resort to force if they did not cease immediately to molest their Turkish prisoners and if they did not abandon the idea of entering the town. A little more and they would have come to blows, but fortunately the young Crown Prince Boris was in Todorov's detachment, and this constrained the Bulgarian general to prudence, and the "Diadoch" Constantine, who had been warned in time, to be a little more conciliatory. The incident was at last settled. A Bulgarian brigade was allowed to enter the town, and to garrison the northern suburb, while the greater part of Salonika remained in the power of the Greeks, who made their headquarters there. The Turkish prisoners also were left in Greek hands and sent to Greece. This beginning augured no good. Throughout the duration of the war, the Greeks and Bulgarians who occupied the southern part of Macedonia were in a permanent state of feud. Each side schemed to occupy more ground, and shortly before the conclusion of peace a real collision took place, which ended in bloodshed; I will refer to this further on.

The complete defeat of the Turkish Army at Lule-Burgas opened to the Bulgarians the road as far as Constantinople, or rather up to the strongly fortified line of Chataldja, which encircles the town north of the shores of the Black Sea as far as those of the Sea of Marmara. The demoralisation of the Turkish troops and the state of panic in Constantinople were such that if at this moment the army of Radko-Dmitriev had risked an immediate march on Chataldja it could have taken the Turkish fortifications at one stroke. Unfortunately for the Bulgarians they were short of munitions, and had to halt for three or four days awaiting them. But at this moment a circumstance occurred which, although quite natural, had not entered into the Bulgarians' calculations; and Stambul was saved.

Generally speaking, the autumn, or at least the months of September and October, O.S., constitute the most beautiful season of the year in the entire Balkan Peninsula. During the seventeen years that I spent there at the outset of my career I only once saw a wet autumn; in the other years this season was fine, mild, and sunny, except for a few stormy days now and then. Such was also the previous autumn of 1911 which I spent in Sofia. But in 1912, shortly before the battle of Lule-Burgas, rain suddenly began to fall, and there were continual downpours lasting for at least a month. From the first, the bad Bulgarian roads and the execrable Turkish ones became absolutely impassable; the heavy clay soil of this part of the Peninsula turned into deep and holding mud, and the military convoys stuck on the road. A few days later all the draught-horses had died; then the bullocks succumbed, and only the buffaloes still held out and managed to draw their heavy loads, but at a snail's pace. The doctors and sisters of one of our Red Cross detachments who at this moment were travelling between the Bulgarian frontier and Lozengrad told me later that their convoy only managed to do from *four to six kilometres a day*, and that only thanks to the efforts of the robust Russian medical attendants, and of the no less robust Bulgarians of the convoy, who perpetually shovelled away the clay into which the wheels of the waggons were sinking up to the axle.

Under these conditions the march of the Bulgarian Army was becoming extremely difficult: the guns had to be drawn by buffaloes, and as to the cavalry it simply had to halt, as the horses, up to the hocks in mud, were perpetually breaking their legs. Also the head of the Bulgarian Headquarters Staff, General Fichev, and most of the other generals protested firmly against the further advance on Constantinople. But at this moment a new factor in the development of events appeared on the scene: the ambition, suddenly aroused and immeasurably increased, of the King of the Bulgarians!

Knowing Ferdinand fairly well, I could easily picture

his terrible anguish during the fateful days of the mobilisation and the first days of military operations.

But when at the King's headquarters the news came through, first of the brilliant victory of his troops at Lule-Burgas and of the decisive successes of the Serbians in Macedonia, when in a few short weeks there was nothing remaining to the Turks in Europe but Constantinople and its outskirts, Adrianople, Janina and Scutari in Albania surrounded and besieged, and the peninsula of Gallipoli—then Ferdinand's anguish suddenly gave place to a violent outburst of pride and ambitious hopes.

A Bulgarian lady, Russian by birth, who met the King just at this time, told me some amusing details about Ferdinand's behaviour; he did not conceal his almost childish joy and his overweening pride in the least. The King walked with her along the platform of the station where his headquarters were, and the incredible elasticity of his movements were a great contrast to his usual heavy walk of a gouty and obese person: His Majesty bounded in the air like an india-rubber ball. "Now then!" he exclaimed with a triumphant smile, "what have you to say about it, madame? What do you say? *Bulgar-Vilayet!* Eh what? *Bulgar-Vilayet?* Who would have thought it?" and the King went on repeating his *Bulgar-Vilayet*, accompanying the words with his most malicious smile aimed at the *Padishah*.

At this moment he was evidently remembering his first journey to Constantinople, when the Sultan was holding an investiture; he remembered his meeting with the sly, obstinate, old Abdul-Hamid, and how he had to bow before him and to kiss the hand of the Padishah, his sovereign. Yes, he had gone through it all; he had done it in an insinuating manner, as if it cost him nothing; but in reality he had felt deeply humiliated, and the memory had never been effaced from his heart. It was at this period that at the Sultan's Court Bulgaria was always spoken of as *Bulgar-Vilayet* (the Bulgarian

province). And now "what a change of destiny by the grace of God!" The fate of Turkey seemed to be in Ferdinand's hands as it had once been in the hands of the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon, who approached the walls of Constantinople with his army, with the object of cutting a way through and being proclaimed Emperor of the East. And Ferdinand with his vivid and prompt imagination foresaw himself playing the part of Simeon.

The objects assigned to the war with Turkey seemed to him to have been left far behind, and all his thoughts, all his projects were centred now on the town so near at hand. He pictured himself making his entry into the Imperial City, having obliterated the last traces of Ottoman domination in Europe. And then on his skill, his subtle diplomacy an unexpected solution of the Straits question might depend—a solution in favour of the Bulgarians, this people who forty short years ago had been ignored by the whole world.

There is Russia, it is true, who for two centuries has been aspiring to the possession of the Straits and dreams of erecting the cross on the dome of St. Sophia. But these political ambitions of the Tsars, these traditional aspirations of the Russian people have always met with and will continue to meet with irreconcilable opposition from the rest of Europe. Even in allied France the Russians would scarcely find a handful of politicians willing to accept the installation of the Empire of the Tsars in Constantinople and in the Dardanelles. The possession of the Straits by a Power like Russia would increase her might to such an extent that she would become a real danger to the balance of power in Europe. The old formula of Napoleon I. that the Power which possessed the Straits would acquire world-wide supremacy has not yet lost its meaning. For Austria it would be the signal for the disintegration and the secession of her Slav dominions; for Germany, the overthrow of all her projects of commercial and "Kultur" supremacy in the Near East; for England the

sharing of her supremacy in the Mediterranean; finally, for Italy the sudden approach of an alarming giant. Russia in Constantinople would be the reconstitution of the Rome of the Orient, but how far more powerful than Byzantium ever was! And where in this case would the Rome of the West be, where the second half of the Roman Empire which counterbalanced the Oriental half? One would most certainly not seek this Rome at Potsdam, and still less in Vienna or at the Quirinal!

There still exists one power, thought Ferdinand, continuing his soliloquy, which has neither lost its prestige nor abandoned its aspirations to universal supremacy, and to which the extension of the Empire of the Tsars as far as the shores of the Sea of Marmora would be intolerable and almost fatal. This power is Roman Catholicism. The triumph of the cause of Greek Orthodoxy the day after the abrogation of the temporal power of the Popes—for to the Church fifty years are but a day—would furnish a palpable proof that the *Cæsarian-papacy* of the Orient is at least equal to the power of the Roman Holy See.

Hence, concluded Ferdinand, all the vital forces in Europe are hostile to the installation of the Russians in Constantinople. But if the stupid domination of the Turks in this capital of world-wide importance were once broken and were to disappear, would it be possible for Europe to restore it? No, that is out of the question! Who then would replace the Turks on the shores of the Bosphorus? Would Constantinople become an international free town, in other words the principal market and seat of power of European bankers and Americans of Jewish origin? Or would one give Turkey over to that "Constantine XIV." who with his tiny army had just "prigged" Salonika from the Bulgarians? Would it not be infinitely more natural for the European Powers to favour the installation on the Bosphorus of a State powerful enough to guard the Straits, but not powerful enough to be a menace to the balance of power in Europe, *i.e.* Bulgaria?

And how would the Holy See look on such a solution of the question? But to this Ferdinand had an answer ready, formulated during long years of meditation.

The Bulgarians, throughout the course of their history, have represented one of the feeblest supports of Greek Orthodoxy; sometimes they fell under the influence of Rome; sometimes the heresies of the Paulicians and Albigenses triumphed all over the kingdom; and not so very long ago, at the very first awakening of the Bulgarian national conscience in the forties, this awakening was already partly exploited by Roman propaganda. The first preachers of Bulgarian liberty did not issue only from the universities and seminaries of Moscow and Kieff. Several of the striking personalities of the future Bulgaria had received their education either at Montpellier or in Constantinople under the vigilant eye of the Lazarists and of the brothers of the Christian Faith, until the English Robert College and the Protestant work of American missions competed against these. Given these precedents Ferdinand did not think it would be so very difficult to guide his people into the path of a reconciliation with Rome, a path traced nearly four centuries ago by Ignatius Pocej in Western Russia.

In imagination Ferdinand already drew the picture of this reconciliation—under his ægis—of the Western Church with the Church of the East; the solemn Mass in St. Sophia's, celebrated strictly in accordance with the Oriental ritual (Ferdinand had made a deep study of this ritual), but during the course of which the name of the successor to St. Peter would be mentioned before and above that of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Then only would they understand in Rome that by consenting to his son's conversion to the Greek Church, Ferdinand had rendered one of the greatest services to Roman Catholicism. And then not only would his excommunication be rescinded, but also his name would be blessed and quoted side by side with those of the great isapostolic monarchs.

There is no doubt that this hope of a reconciliation with the Holy See (and with his own conscience into the bargain) was one of the mainsprings which incited Ferdinand to the taking of Constantinople. And there is also no doubt that—from the moment that such incredible prospects unfolded themselves to the King of the Bulgarians—he at once realised that he had but one real competitor and enemy, and that this enemy was Russia.

Onward then! onward! whate'er the cost, towards these sacred walls, while Europe has not yet realised the whole importance of the success of the Serbian and Bulgarian arms. The King's headquarters sent off an order to Sofia to dispatch at once all the grand uniforms of the Royal Guard, the gala-coaches, and six white horses: perhaps it would be as well to include even the costume of the Byzantine Basileus in which, shortly before, the King had posed to a French painter and a Viennese medallist; this costume would surely be found in the Royal wardrobe! The ceremonial of the entry into Constantinople of the new Tsar Simeon—for Ferdinand intended to adopt this name in the event of eventual success—was thought out in every detail. "*Bulgar-Vilayet!* Eh what? Who would have thought it? *Bulgar-Vilayet!*"

But the floodgates of heaven which were opening over the Balkan Peninsula prevented, this time at least, the realisation of all this phantasmagoria. It was not till a week after the victory of Lule-Burgas that the Bulgarian troops, by the King's express order, resumed their march on Constantinople, and a week went by before they could approach the lines of Chataldja. In the interval Berlin had pulled herself together, and so had the German military instructors of the Ottoman Army. The Baron von Wangenheim and the German generals in Constantinople united their efforts to infuse some energy into the broken and wavering spirits of the Young Turks. The fortifications of Chataldja were

hurriedly armed, guns were brought in, the garrison made up to strength, and on both sides of the fortified line, in the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, the battleships of the Ottoman Fleet with their guns prevented the Bulgarians creeping along the shores. When the Bulgarian Army began nevertheless to attack the line of Chataldja, the enterprise was found to be too much even for the indomitable courage of the Bulgarians: one after the other the hosts of brave men who rushed to the attack were mown down and littered the ground with their corpses; and after two days of deadly effort, only one Turkish redoubt had been taken, only to be lost the next day, for the Turks concentrated the fire from their other forts on to it. No, the line of Chataldja was absolutely impregnable without the assistance of big guns or of ships of the line, if it were only from the Black Sea side; and the Bulgarians possessed neither.

Checked and thrown back at Chataldja, the Bulgarian Army spread over the whole of Thrace, with the exception of the narrow peninsula of Gallipoli, where it also was stopped by the formidable positions of Bulair; moreover, the Bulgarians had no interest in occupying the European shore of the Dardanelles. The Bulgarian sphere established itself on the whole of the northern shore of the Sea of Marmara, and Ferdinand had his headquarters sometimes at Kavala on the Ægean Sea, sometimes at Rodosto on the Sea of Marmara. But his dreams about Constantinople were decidedly shattered. Ferdinand realised this himself, and from that moment all his efforts were concentrated on securing to Bulgaria all the country just occupied by his Army, plus that part of Macedonia which was due to the Bulgarians by virtue of the agreement with Serbia.

It would be difficult to say to what extent the Bulgarian people shared or did not share the dreams of their master about Constantinople. On the one hand, there existed in Bulgaria—and ever since the eighties

—some extreme patriots who looked on Constantinople as the natural portion of the Bulgarian people, and who, like Ferdinand, dreamt of the times of the Tsar Simeon. In the celebrated military song composed during the Russo-Turkish War for the use of the Bulgarian militia, and which has since become the national anthem of Bulgaria, "Schoumi Maritza," one already read the line, "March, march—*Tzarigrad* [*i.e.* Constantinople] is ours!" But I have always thought, and I still think, that the greater part of the Bulgarian "intelligence," and more especially the mass of the people, did not dare, and did not even wish, to aspire to the possession of the town, which was commonly considered the goal and lawful portion of the Great Liberator—Russia.

Bulgarian public opinion—I would rather say *the opinion of the Bulgarian people*—which was thoroughly intractable on the subject of Macedonia and of the famous frontiers of San Stefano, did not aspire to the south-eastern part of the peninsula beyond Adrianople and Lozengrad. But these two towns were considered by the Bulgarians to be theirs by right, although Adrianople was inhabited principally by Turks, and Kirk-Kilisseh by Turks and Greeks. The latter had been in the power of the Bulgarians from the first days of the war, and Adrianople surrounded and besieged, it was easy to see that the Bulgarians were determined to take it at all costs, and to possess definitely this ancient capital of the Osmanlis (before the conquest of Constantinople by Mahomet II.).

I knew, on the other hand, that amongst us—or at least our Headquarters Staff—a rule existed about a *prohibited area* round the Straits, within the limits of which the aspirations of no matter which other country would not be tolerated by us; and the Bulgarians had been warned of this about 1909. Towards the end of October, when all Russia—not excepting official Russia—was hailing the Serbian and Bulgarian victories with enthusiasm, and when the famous threat of the Powers not to recognise any of the conquests of the Balkan

States had been completely forgotten by every one, I received from St. Petersburg instructions to remind the Bulgarian Government of the rule about the *prohibited area*, or in other words to warn it that Russia would not allow the Bulgarians definitely to occupy Adrianople and its environs.

These instructions placed the Russian representative in Sofia in a very awkward position. Bulgarian public opinion, as I said above, demanded the taking and the annexation of Odrine. Moreover, the military operations which were developing in Thrace showed clearly that if such a formidable fortress, situated at the junction of the Maritza and the Arda, were left in the hands of the Turks, the establishment of the Bulgarians on the shores of the Ægean Sea would become very precarious. Now, not only were we not opposed to this establishment, but we even supported it up to a point. Southern Bulgaria is separated from the Ægean Sea by ranges of very high and impassable mountains: the only practicable road from Philippopolis towards the shores of the Ægean Sea follows the valley of the Maritza in a south-*east* direction as far as Lule-Burgas, and from there it turns abruptly to the south-*west* and reaches the sea at Dedeagatch. One could, if necessary, make the road from Dedeagatch end above Lule-Burgas but not above Adrianople. During the war and so long as Adrianople held out, the Bulgarians could not even make a way round which would connect the two sections of the Sofia–Constantinople line, as topographical conditions were too difficult. I could well imagine what an unfavourable impression our communication on the subject of the prohibited area would produce, and how all our enemies in Bulgaria would hasten to profit by it.

But other reflections were added to this one. It was evident to every one that the Turkish Revolution of 1908 had not caused the political scales in Constantinople to turn in favour of England, of France, and still less of Russia. German influence had issued triumphant

from this momentary trial, and had continued to reign on the shores of the Bosphorus up till the day when the Balkan war broke out. At this very moment the fate of this influence, or rather of this taking possession, was at stake. If Turkey ended by losing all her European possessions, except Constantinople and the strip of land absolutely indispensable to the defence of the Straits, the Turks would be led by direct evidence to understand how little they had reaped from German influence and protection. The prestige of Germany in the Near East would be for ever compromised. But there would be more in it: seeing a Bulgaria, doubly strong with her obstinate people and her immoderately ambitious King, rising up so near her own capital, Turkey would be inclined to seek the protection of those who, in case of danger, could come to her assistance directly and with no delay. Now, such help could only be brought to the Turkish capital by the Fleet that Russia kept in the Black Sea, and by the troops of Russian origin which could be brought up in a few days; on the Dardanelles side a like service could be rendered to Turkey by the English and French Mediterranean Squadrons. Such a situation of the Powers of the Entente in Constantinople would naturally not constitute the definite solution of the Eastern question, but it would hold enormous guarantees for us in the event of Germany planning to provoke a collision with Russia. In short, I considered that the real diminution of Turkish power on the European shores of the Straits and of the Sea of Marmara would bring about the downfall of German iufluence and the increase of our own. The world-wide events of the last years have confirmed the opinion I formed then. I am convinced that if in 1913 the Turks had not been enabled almost entirely to recover their former frontier with Bulgaria, the Young-Turk régime would have promptly come to an end, and Turkey, humiliated, disillusioned about German benefits and constantly threatened on the Bulgarian side, would never have dreamt of challenging

Russia, but on the contrary would have sought our protection.

Inspired by these considerations I answered the telegram of M. Sazonoff, who enjoined me to remind the Bulgarians of our rule about the "prohibited area," by saying that I considered such a proceeding most dangerous to our influence in Bulgaria and to our future relations with the country. My arguments prevailed. A few days later I received another telegram in which I was told that Russia was rescinding her prohibition on the subject of Adrianople, and was recognising beforehand between Turkey and Bulgaria a frontier going from Midia on the Black Sea to Enos on the Ægean Sea ; this frontier effectually gave full satisfaction to the justifiable aspirations of the Bulgarians. I was authorised to inform the Bulgarian Government of the matter, and the good news was hurriedly made public. "From this day forward there are no more Russophobes in Bulgaria," I wired to Sazonoff. And in fact the Russian name has never enjoyed so much prestige in Bulgaria as it did from this moment until the untoward events of the summer of 1913.

But the line of the future Turko-Bulgarian frontier still had to be drawn more accurately. I considered that it ought to ascend slightly from Midia to the environs of Lule-Burgas, and curve again southwards as far as Enos, so as not to go too near the Sea of Marmara. But our military agent, who, under the influence of Bulgarian victories, had arrived at a paroxysm of Bulgarophile sentiments, thought we ought to consent to the line which would follow the course of the Erghen, and which the Bulgarian General Staff favoured. His opinion prevailed in St. Petersburg, and our Headquarters Staff, who but a month before were insisting on the "prohibited area," were now giving their consent to a line which only left a strip of land about forty kilometers in depth for the "hinterland" of the Straits.

But Ferdinand's ambition was not satisfied with this

concession. Having had, with a heavy heart, to give up the conquest of Constantinople, he began from December, 1912, obstinately to demand the extension of the new Bulgarian territory to the shores of the Marmara, the inclusion of the town of Rodosto, and the annexation by Bulgaria of two islands in the Ægean Sea: Samothrace and Thasos. The island of Samothrace, close to the exit from the Dardanelles, evidently tempted Ferdinand by the divine classic lines of its pearl-grey rocks rising out of the blue sea; thus it met his gaze from Dedeagatch, but at the same time this island is so near the Straits that if necessary it could command the entry. The large island of Thasos, separated from Kavala only by a narrow arm of the sea, forms a natural complement of the Macedonian coast where Bulgaria was going to establish herself; as it possesses vast forests this island could be very useful to its new owners. Unfortunately nearly the whole of it is the private property of the family of the Khedives of Egypt, direct descendants of the lucky native, the celebrated Mehmed Ali. Hence the annexation of Thasos could only be effected by virtue of a special arrangement with the reigning Khedive and consequently with England; and the latter appeared in no way disposed to deliver into the unscrupulous hands of the Bulgarians the beautiful forests of Thasos and the mineral riches with which the island was credited.

Ferdinand's entreaties on the subject of Rodosto assumed an acute character during the last months of the war. The King repeatedly sent his confidants to me, to persuade me to lend my help to the arranging of the affair; but each time I absolutely refused to touch it. Then Ferdinand wished to profit by a journey which the Minister of Finance, Todorov, was going to take to St. Petersburg—on business connected with his department—and he gave him a statement, which he hoped would be passed on to M. Sazonoff, and which showed the absolute necessity for Bulgaria to possess the town of Rodosto as an outlet on the Marmara. The King

availed himself of this opportunity also to send letters on the same subject to his friends and exalted patrons in St. Petersburg, and Todorov himself was to endorse the aspirations of his master in our country. As may be supposed, all this was done behind my back; but Todorov, who has always been sincere with me, confided the secret to me, and in exchange I gave him the friendly advice not to make himself the advocate of the King's claims on the subject of Rodosto in St. Petersburg, as these claims could not fail to create an unfavourable impression amongst us. As was to be expected, the reply to the King from St. Petersburg was to the effect that there could be no question of Bulgaria annexing Rodosto or any other point on the Marmara.

The King, however, would not acknowledge himself beaten. Some time after he dispatched to St. Petersburg the victor of Lule-Burgas, General Radko-Dmitriev, who was considered by us—and rightly so—to be quite devoted to Russia. The General was ordered to be persistent with the Russian Government and even with His Majesty the Emperor on the subject of Rodosto. He was also told to be careful, when leaving Sofia, that his journey and the object of this journey should not be known to me. To this end, the General was not even to have his passports *viséd* at the Russian Legation in Sofia, but by our consul in Rustchuk, and from there he was to travel by the Bukharest-Odessa line. Having carried out these instructions with regard to "Russian diplomacy," Radko-Dmitriev, however, did not think it possible to conceal his journey and the object of this journey from his comrade-in-arms, our military agent in Sofia; and the latter naturally informed me of it. Moreover, Radko-Dmitriev's journey was no more successful than the other steps taken by the King: in St. Petersburg every one turned a deaf ear to the subject of Rodosto.

When he had abandoned all hope, Ferdinand resolved to leave the town which had become so dear to him and where he had stayed several times during the

winter months of 1912–13. But befere his departure he visited the cemetery where lie the bones of some of the unsuccessful actors in the Hungarian insurrection of 1848, who after the failure of their efforts had taken refuge in Turkey and were interned at Rodosto. Ferdinand prayed fervently on the graves of the Magyar national heroes. Sulking with Russia he thought it a well-chosen moment to remember his Kohary ancestors and his Hungarian possessions. . . . For want of something better Rodosto at least gave him an opportunity of parading his Magyar sympathies: who knows but that he might derive some profit from this parade?

It is easy to realise that Ferdinand's behaviour after the battle of Lule-Burgas and his obstinate proceedings on the subject of Rodosto should have aroused the displeasure and distrust of the Russian Government: his insatiable ambition and his secret schemes, incompatible with the historic problems and vital interests of Russia, stood revealed. In mentioning all this political intrigue here, I am anticipating events a little. The journeys of M. Todorov and General Radko-Dmitriev only took place in 1913, but Ferdinand's intrigues and the steps he took in St. Petersburg form the natural sequel to the attitude adopted by him ever since November, 1912.

From December, 1912, when the success of the allied arms was clearly proved, the Turks entered into negotiations for peace. For this purpose, by common consent of the belligerents and of the Great Powers, a Conference was convened in London, at which Bulgaria was represented by M. Danev. An armistice was decided on, and concluded on most advantageous conditions for the allies and particularly for the Bulgarians;[1]

[1] Thus the Bulgarians were authorised to send trains full of provisions by the railway line which goes through the fortified place Adrianople, whereas the Turks could not obtain the right to provision the garrison, which was already beginning to suffer from hunger!

afterwards the clauses of the Peace were discussed. The Turks consented to give up the whole of Thrace to the Bulgarians, as far as the line of Midia, Adrianople, Dedeagatch. The forts of Adrianople were to be razed to the ground, and the Turks even yielded to the Bulgarians the railway line and station situated three or four kilometers from the town. In this way Adrianople would only be nominally in the power of the Turks. Nevertheless, the Ottoman plenipotentiaries clung tenaciously to this nominal possession, being well aware of the bitter humiliation which would be felt in the Mussulman world if the ancient capital of the Osmalis in Europe with its celebrated mosque and the tombs of the Sultans, ancestors of Mahomet II., were to be handed over to the *giaours*.

The negotiations in London coincided with the reawakening, on the part of the Central Empires, of the desire to limit as much as possible any territorial acquisitions of the Balkan Allies. The idea of an autonomous Albania was suggested and, in support of this idea, Austria began to bar the outlet to the Adriatic to the Serbians, an outlet which they had just conquered at the cost of enormous sacrifices. She also vetoed beforehand the annexation by Montenegro of the town of Scutari, still being besieged and around the walls of which streams of the noblest Montenegrin blood had been shed. In Rumania an agitation was setting in on the subject of the "rectification of frontiers" in Dobrudja, and even amongst the Allies dangerous dissensions had begun and were increasing day by day. I am not speaking of the misunderstandings between Bulgarians and Greeks; these had broken out almost simultaneously with the war; the question of Salonika was not yet settled and the Bulgarian chauvinists upheld claims which enraged the hearts of the Greek chauvinists. Even in Serbia every one was agitating and laying down the principle that the Serbians had a right to supplementary compensations in Macedonia in exchange for what they

were threatened with losing on the Adriatic; that Bulgaria by laying a hand on the whole of Thrace had received more than she expected to receive, and that in return she ought to give up to Serbia a part of the territory she had acquired by the treaty of February 29th, 1912. In short, one foresaw clearly and in the immediate future a conflict of interests between the Bulgarians on one side and the Serbians and the Greeks on the other.

In view of this tangled situation I strongly advised the Bulgarian ruling powers to moderate their demands regarding the Turks, and to patch up a general peace as quickly as possible. The Bulgarians could insist on all their territorial claims in Thrace, but by allowing the Turks free access to Adrianople, which would represent an Ottoman *enclave* within the actual limits of the town. At the moment the Turks would have been glad to conclude peace on this condition. Gueshov shared my opinion and acted on it, but without success. He was confronted by the opposition of Danev, of the military, and of the King himself, who was willing to give up Salonika, but who wished for the whole of Thrace with its ancient capital and ardently coveted Rodosto and Samothrace. At last the Turkish plenipotentiaries in London were induced to resign themselves and to yield. The Bulgarians received Adrianople and the whole of Thrace up to the line Midia–Enos. But alas! this diplomatic success was essentially ephemeral and only existed on paper.

The intense humiliation undergone by Turkey at the London Conference was the signal for a new *pronunciamento* from Enver-Bey, for the assassination of Nazim-Pasha, for the downfall of the Grand Vizier Kiamil-Pasha, and for the annulment of the peace conditions which the latter was already prepared to sign.

On the 21st January (4th February), 1913, the London Conference paused in its labours and the Balkan War broke out afresh. I had then a very strong feeling that this foreboded no good either to Bulgaria or to the Slav

cause generally. The unbounded ambition of King Ferdinand and the exaggerated claims of his subjects were at this moment preparing the destruction of the brilliant edifice of Bulgarian power, which had been erected with the rapidity of a fairy-tale, and which was to fall down just as rapidly.

CHAPTER X

THE BALKAN WAR, 1912 (*continued*)

At the beginning of February, 1913, the situation was as follows: the war between Turkey and the Balkan Allies had begun again, and the peace conference had suspended its sittings; but the ambassadors of the Great Powers in London continued to confer on the questions relative to the future peace and to the definite distribution of the Balkan territories.

In reality at that period only Bulgaria and Montenegro had any interest in the prolongation of the war. The Bulgarians wished to take Adrianople, the Montenegrins Scutari. The two other allies had already gained the objects for which they had taken up arms. Greece, with Crete restored to her, had laid hands on all the islands of the Archipelago—except those taken by the Italians in 1911—and was occupying Salonika, Chalcidice, part of Southern Macedonia, and Epirus, the capital of which, Janina, surrendered to the Greek Army shortly after the resumption of hostilities. The Serbians held all the rest of Macedonia and Northern Albania with the ports of San Giovanni, Medua and Durazzo; and they knew perfectly well that the result of their efforts and sacrifices did not depend on the prolongation of the war and on Turkish demoralisation, but on Austrian claims and chicanery. Already in December, 1912, when the irreconcilable opposition of Austria, backed up by Germany, to the establishment of the Serbians on the shores of the Adriatic became apparent, Serbia began to contemplate the possibility of an outlet on the Ægean Sea; for that, it would be necessary to occupy the whole of Western Macedonia, with Monastir, and to come to

an arrangement with the Greeks for absolutely free transit to Salonika. Such a combination would naturally constitute a violation of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement; but Belgrade justified this by saying to herself that the Bulgarians would be compensated to a great extent by the annexation of Adrianople and of the whole of Thrace, as far as the Erghen, a conquest they had not dared to dream of when they signed their agreement with the Serbians.

I remember perfectly well the day on which, for the first time, I heard my colleague Spalaïkovitch state these claims. It was a foggy afternoon in December, and I was taking my usual walk along the highroad of Tsarigrad, and near the "fourth kilometre"—the usual goal of my walks—I met Spalaïkovitch and we walked back together towards the town. It was then that Spalaïkovitch, complaining bitterly of the behaviour of the Bulgarians towards the Serbians, described the above-mentioned combination to me. I was very unfavourably impressed by it; I realised the fanaticism with which the Bulgarians looked on and maintained their right to that part of Macedonia allotted to them by the agreement of 1912, and I could picture the storm of indignation which the new Serbian claims would raise in Bulgaria, and how the relations of alliance between the two countries would immediately change into bitter hostility. Moreover, a treaty is a treaty, and to the one signed by the Serbians and Bulgarians in February, 1912, Russia had morally set her seal; this agreement had been made under our ægis, and we had taken part in it, if not formally, at least by lending the support of our sympathies and consent. I mentioned all these considerations to my Serbian colleague and entreated him—and his Government—not to "start that hare." But Spalaïkovitch did not appear to be too willing to listen to reason.

Some time after, when the *coup d'état* of Constantinople had occurred and hostilities were beginning again, the trend of opinion mentioned above became

more pronounced in Serbia. The Serbians had to make fresh sacrifices in men and money for an object to which they were supremely indifferent—for the siege of Adrianople. The Bulgarians had hardly any heavy artillery; the Serbians, on the contrary, owing to the wise foresight of M. Pachitch, were fairly well supplied. The Bulgarians could not even think of taking Adrianople without the help of Serbian artillery, and without the co-operation of their troops, because the Bulgarian Army was scattered between the positions of Chataldja, Bulair, and the numerous garrisons in Southern Macedonia, where they had to oppose the Greek allies. Also, before the armistice the Serbians had placed at the disposition of the Bulgarians before Adrianople about 100 of their big Creusot guns and two divisions of infantry, which held the trench against the bastions north of the town, which were by far the strongest of the whole defences. With the resumption of hostilities, the question naturally arose as to whether the Serbians would leave these forces before Adrianople.

At this moment the Serbians could realise clearly that the outlet to the Adriatic would be barred to them by the irreconcilable opposition of Austria-Hungary. Russian diplomacy, which for a long time had supported the legitimate aspirations of the Serbians, and at the London conferences had upheld Serbia's right to an outlet on the Adriatic, was forced at last to give in to the hostile mood not only of Austria-Hungary, but also of Germany. M. Sazonoff evidently did not wish for a repetition of 1909, when a thinly-veiled ultimatum from Berlin forced us to change our course abruptly, and to recognise Austrian claims. In the person of our Ambassador in London, Count Benckendorf, Russia possessed a plenipotentiary who was energetic as well as extremely well-informed. At the conferences of the Ambassadors, for a long time the Count stubbornly upheld the vital interests of Serbia; but when he saw that affairs were taking an acute turn, and that the Cabinet of Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward

Grey, determined above all to maintain peace, was not disposed to uphold to the end the just aspirations of the Serbians—then he did not conceal from St. Petersburg that henceforth all his efforts in Serbia's favour would be futile. On which there was nothing left to us but to persuade the Serbians themselves that it was necessary to yield in the cause of universal peace.

The position of the Russian Minister in Belgrade became almost impossible. Whatever his personal influence over the Serbians, and his intimacy with the Court and the party in power may have been, it was a very arduous task to make the Serbians give up the long-wished-for outlet to the sea—after the sacrifices they had made, and the victories they had gained! In such an undertaking M. Pachitch's authority, firmly established though it was, the popularity of the new dynasty, and Russian influence in Belgrade might well be shipwrecked. Therefore it would be unfair to blame M. Hartwig too much if, in order to get out of such a terribly difficult situation, he promised the Serbians to uphold, by all the means in his power, their schemes for obtaining an outlet to Salonika and the Ægean Sea. It was then that Serbia's stern resolve took shape, to keep for herself Southern Macedonia, and to remain on that side in close proximity to Greece. One must also admit that during the whole period of military operations, the Bulgarian authorities by their greed, their lack of any conciliatory spirit, and their domineering attitude, had roused the indignation, not only of the Greeks, but also of the Serbians. The latter had every reason to hope that, once masters of Monastir, and neighbours of Greece, they would easily obtain free and direct transit to Salonika; on the other hand, if it was a question of establishing this same transit through Bulgarian territory, one might justly fear perpetual difficulties and quibbles. Hence, a community of interests and a natural solidarity bound the Greeks and the Serbians with regard to Bulgaria.

Already, in the middle of January, that is to say

before the resumption of hostilities, Spalaïkovitch had come one day to tell me that he had made the following suggestion to Belgrade: the Serbian Government should warn the Bulgarian Government that, having no longer any interest in the continuation of the war, Serbia would only consent to leave her troops and her guns before Adrianople in return for supplementary compensations in Macedonia. I must confess that this suggestion pleased me enormously: such a warning from the Serbian Government might force the Bulgarians to make the necessary concessions, and thus hasten the conclusion of peace. I foresaw already that the prolongation of the war might become fatal to Bulgaria first, and then to the Slav cause in general.

Such a prolongation would constitute a menace to the peace of Europe. In the course of about six weeks, the Balkan Allies, astounding Europe by the rapidity of their successes, had managed—*incredibile dictu*—to drive the Turks definitely out of Europe, with the exception of Constantinople and a restricted hinterland of the Straits. It was imperative to confirm these results without delay: more especially because, during the short space of time that the armistice had lasted, Germany and Austria had pulled themselves together and had presented, almost in the form of an ultimatum, their demands, which were so unfair to Serbia and to Montenegro. How would it be, then, if war broke out afresh, and if the differences already existing in the heart of the Balkan Alliance were to become more acute and more palpable? No, it was high time to confirm the results obtained, in comparison with which the differences of the Allies appeared to me to take a secondary place.

It was by virtue of these considerations that I approved so thoroughly of Spalaïkovitch's idea, and I awaited his answer from Belgrade with great impatience. A few days later my worthy Serbian colleague, in a very unhappy frame of mind, came to call on me: M. Pachitch did not approve of his idea

at all, and told him very emphatically not to mention it to any one. Evidently Pachitch considered the taking of Adrianople to be indispensable. This town, and Thrace as far as the Ergene, to Serbian eyes apparently, represented for the Bulgarians the equivalent of what they would have to give up in Macedonia. I concluded from this that in Belgrade they had irrevocably decided to obtain a modification of the demarcation agreement of 1912, and especially to insist on the Serbian and Greek frontiers joining.

News came very soon that M. Venizelos, then omnipotent Prime Minister of Greece, was going to Belgrade to confer with M. Pachitch. This news caused great alarm in the political circles of Sofia, because the relations between the Bulgarians and their Greek allies were already very bad, and those between the Bulgarians and Serbians were palpably changing for the worse. Before Adrianople the Serbian and Bulgarian soldiers still fraternised willingly enough; but the officers already looked askance at one another, and ended by forbidding their men to associate mutually; but I ought to mention that the initial step of this odious measure was taken by the Bulgarian Headquarters Staff. At the same time, in Sofia, Spalaïkovitch no longer refrained from expressing his displeasure and his suspicions with regard to the Bulgarians. He was extremely outspoken on the subject, especially when he was talking to the representatives of the Entente. One of the conversations I had with him at this period engraved itself deeply on my memory. I was trying to persuade him that it was not to the interest of the Serbians and that it was even very dangerous for them to be at daggers drawn with the Bulgarians. "I admit," I said to Spalaïkovitch, "that Serbia has been cruelly wronged compared to Bulgaria. They have taken from her the outlet to the sea, to which she had every right to aspire, and which she purchased with her blood. I admit also that the Bulgarians have made territorial acquisitions

in Thrace, which they did not even dare to hope for when they took up arms. All that is quite true. But one must also look to the future. The Bulgarians will have nothing more to gain, whereas the Serbians will have all their historic goals before them. These goals are situated in the west. Sooner or later, the Serbians will aspire to unite all Serbian lands, and then, if successful, they will possess a splendid coast, inhabited by Serbians of the purest race, and who have been experienced sailors, from father to son, whereas, in this respect, the Bulgarians have to depend on Greeks and Turks. If at the present moment you contrive to keep intact the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance—even at the cost of real sacrifices—the achievement of your great national aims is already half guaranteed."

"All that would be quite true," replied Spalaïkovitch sharply, "if the Bulgarians were not Bulgarians and if their Tsar was not Ferdinand. Do you seriously think that, if we yield to them in everything to-day, they will come to our assistance when the moment arrives for us of a decisive national contest?" "No, that I could not guarantee," I agreed; "and it would be particularly difficult to expect such noble behaviour on Ferdinand's part. It is as you say. But on the other hand, if to-day you violate the agreement and if you succeed in keeping Southern Macedonia, to the detriment of the claims so long matured by the Bulgarians, you may be quite certain that at the moment of the supreme and decisive contest, Bulgaria *will attack you from behind*. And in doing so the Bulgarian people will be one with Ferdinand, for you know the essentially vindictive character of the Bulgarians."

I had no idea at the time that my prediction would come true so quickly.

I took care to inform M. Sazonoff of my conversations with Spalaïkovitch, and to warn him of the storm which was brewing and of the frame of mind of the Bulgarians with regard to it.

During the first week in March M. Venizelos really

went to Belgrade and held long conferences with M. Pachitch, with Hartwig and with the members of the Royal Family. From Belgrade the Greek President of the Council, with the tact and courtesy for which he is noted, announced his visit to Sofia, undertaken in order to confer with Bulgarian statesmen. He was only to stay exactly one day, from the morning to the evening. I greatly wished to make the acquaintance of M. Venizelos and to converse with him, but I foresaw that the Bulgarians, under pretext of the too short duration of the visit, would try to *conjure away* the Greek President of the Council from the foreign representatives, more especially from the Russian one. Consequently I wrote a note beforehand to my worthy Greek colleague, M. Panas, to beg him to arrange an interview for me with Venizelos. We arranged that after the luncheon that the Bulgarian Ministers were going to give in honour of their guest at the club in Sofia, Panas should escort Venizelos to the reading-room of the club, where he would find me installed. This was done. At the hour agreed on, the Greek Minister led M. Venizelos up to me, introduced us to each other, and then left us alone. We began our conversation without losing any time.

I have rarely seen a man who, at the first meeting, has produced such a favourable impression on me as M. Venizelos did. An astonishing simplicity, an absolutely frank and open way of expressing his opinions and convictions—which one feels to be deep—constituted and still constitute the strength and the prestige of this true statesman. I felt at once that I was in the presence, first, of a perfect gentleman and then of a scrupulously honest politician. No phraseology, no desire to deceive his questioner were apparent in the clear, precise and modest expression of his thoughts. The very fact that he, promptly and without any preamble, broached the principal question—that of Greco-Bulgarian demarcation—predisposed me enormously in his favour.

Venizelos began by telling me quite openly that he had not yet concluded any separate alliance, nor any convention with the Serbians. Such a convention would only be necessary in the event of the Bulgarians becoming unreasonable in their demands. Then on a large map hanging on the wall of the room we began to examine the possible line of the future frontier. In discussing this frontier M. Venizelos laid stress only on the absolute necessity for Greece to possess, north of Salonika and of Chalcidice, a large enough hinterland adapted to the efficacious defence of these new territorial acquisitions; west of Salonika he thought it would be fair to extend the Greek frontiers as far as Florina, inclusive. Such a frontier was strategically sufficient and had the advantage of forming a fairly straight line. It is true that it left to Greece part of the Slav population of Macedonia, south of Monastir; but in return the Bulgarians, at Seres, Drama, Kavala, etc., were taking over populations which were entirely Greek, and their celebrated tobacco plantations, which represented the great riches of those parts.

I promised Venizelos to endorse as far as possible his opinion among the Bulgarians, and more especially his outline of the frontier; but I made a few reservations on the subject of some localities which it would be difficult to persuade the Bulgarians to give up. "Oh! but that can always be settled during negotiations," remarked Venizelos judiciously. "What is bad, and what makes me anxious, is the fact that nothing on earth will induce the Bulgarians to enter into negotiations with us, as we have repeatedly suggested they should do. They always elude the subject, as if they were on the watch for fresh occurrences or some new situation; and yet amongst us public opinion is very much excited over the tone of the Bulgarian Press, which even disputes our possession of Salonika!"

All this was absolutely true. But on this we had to close our interview, M. Venizelos being expected at

the Palace. The meeting and conversation with this eminent Greek statesman left not only an agreeable impression on me, but also a tranquillising one.

The next day I went to see Gueshov, and had a long conversation with him on the subject of what Venizelos had said to me the evening before. I impressed most emphatically on the Bulgarian President of the Council the necessity of starting negotiations in due order as soon as possible with the Greek Government, and of responding to the wise moderation of Venizelos by prudent concessions.

"If the policy pursued by you here at the moment is continued for two or three months more, you will be surrounded by irreconcilable enemies," I said to Gueshov. "You complain of the Serbian claims and of their intention to violate the treaty signed hardly a year ago. But if you settle the demarcation question definitely and in a friendly way with the Greeks, the Serbian claims will naturally diminish; in the opposite case you are actually threatened with the danger of a defensive and even offensive alliance between the Greeks and the Serbians, an alliance not yet concluded, for I have complete trust in Venizelos' word—but which might be concluded in the immediate future. Besides this, you seem to have completely forgotten your relations with Rumania, who looks on the increase of Bulgarian power as a real menace to her. And you must surely realise that even after the conclusion of peace, the Turks will bear malice for ages, not against all their conquerors collectively, but almost entirely against the Bulgarians, as being the strongest and the nearest—hence the most dangerous of their neighbours. Do try to divide the difficult political problem with which you are faced into several parts, and to solve at least *one* definitely. It is lucky for you that at the head of Greek policy at the moment there should be a man so essentially moderate and wise as Venizelos. You ought promptly to take advantage of this good luck before Greece gets into such a state of ferment that neither Venizelos nor King George

himself—also an essentially moderate man—will be able to calm her."

M. Gueshov, who was listening to me with bowed head, was silent for a while, and then replied: "M. Nekludoff, I have thought over all this myself for a long time, and I must confess that I entirely share your opinion. . . ." "Then it is King Ferdinand who is against an arrangement with Greece?" I interrupted. "No," replied M. Gueshov somewhat sharply; "as far as I know, His Majesty would be very willing to converse and to come to terms with Athens. But Danev, whose attitude to London is so irreconcilable; and some of his partisans here . . . and the military. Do not forget that the present Cabinet is a Coalition Cabinet. On such a serious question I cannot dissociate myself from Danev."

"But surely," I exclaimed, "the question is so serious that you have every right to appeal to the King, as to a supreme authority. If His Majesty the King and you, as President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs, can agree on this question, Danev will be obliged to give in! As you know, I should be the last person to encourage the perpetual and uncontrolled interference of King Ferdinand in questions of the Home and Foreign Policy of Bulgaria; but given the exceptional circumstances an appeal to the King's decision would be quite natural; it is done in most constitutional countries."

"It is easy to talk, M. Nekludoff," replied Gueshov with a deep sigh, "but do you know that it is more than six weeks since I have seen my constitutional sovereign? Under one pretext or another he avoids interviews and conversations with me. When he wants anything, he writes me a little note, or even sends me his question or his opinion verbally through his private secretary, M. Dobrovitch, and I am expected to answer in the same way. No business can be done like that, and I am more and more inclined to send in my resignation!"

I tried fervently to dissuade Gueshov from taking such a step; but in my heart of hearts I could not help agreeing that indeed things could not go on like that, and that such an abnormal situation would finally lead to disastrous consequences for the country.

King Ferdinand was not hiding himself only from Gueshov at this period. I have already mentioned the curious state of things existing at his headquarters, which he hardly left at the beginning of the war. During the month of December he began coming more frequently to Sofia, but he remained invisible and inaccessible there. More especially did he hide himself carefully from the diplomats accredited to his person, thinking—and not without foundation—that these latter would endeavour to give him the advice of their Governments, which he was not at all inclined to listen to.

Since the King's Jubilee and the festivities at Tirnova (in August, 1912) and up to April, 1913, I had the honour of catching sight of the King twice only, and both times in the cathedral; the French Minister saw him once at the Palace, and the German Minister once also at the Royal villa of Vrana (near Sofia); all the other Ministers also saw him once in the cathedral, and that is all. My two meetings with Ferdinand took place as follows: on the 1st (14th) January, 1913, I went to the Sofia cathedral, according to the Orthodox custom, to attend High Mass and the *Te Deum* for the New Year. In previous years all the Diplomatic Corps appeared in full dress at the *Te Deum*, by special invitation from the Court; after the *Te Deum* the King came to talk to the foreign Ministers and to exchange with them good wishes for the New Year; in the evening a dinner at the Palace was given to the Diplomatic Corps, at which the senior member made a congratulatory speech to the King. On this occasion there was no invitation from the Court, and we were not even certain if His Majesty was in Sofia.

Just before the *Te Deum* began the King made his

entry into the cathedral in a khaki uniform, which, by the way, did not suit him at all! The service over, he hurried up to me, shook hands with me and said that he greatly regretted not to see my colleagues.

"We have received no official invitation, sir," I said to the King.

"Oh! there has doubtless been some mistake," replied Ferdinand sharply. "Please tell all your colleagues this, and convey to them my best wishes for the year just beginning."

Having exchanged congratulations and good wishes with me, the King left the cathedral.

The second time I saw Ferdinand was at the Requiem Mass for King George of Greece, who had been assassinated at Salonika by an insane Greek anarchist on the 6th (19th) March. When this sad news was known, the Court of Sofia ordered a Solemn Mass to be held in the Sofia Cathedral, to which all the Diplomatic Corps, in full dress, were invited. The service over, the King, who appeared to be genuinely moved, went up to the Greek Minister, and talked for some time with him, expressing his condolences. Then passing the other Ministers by, Ferdinand sprang towards me, seized my hand, and keeping it in his, repeated: "M. Nekludoff, it's horrible! . . . it's horrible! . . . horrible! . . . horrible!"

Now, for some weeks and even months, I had tried in vain to obtain an audience of the King, or at least to seize an opportunity to present to his Majesty my newly-appointed Counsellor to the Legation, M. Sabler. Very little impressed by the King's manner, I was not going to allow the opportunity to escape of at last introducing my chief collaborator to him: "Sir, allow me to present to Your Majesty the new Counsellor to the Russian Legation, M. Sabler."

The King, with an angry frown, drew his hand away from mine and held it out to M. Sabler—who bowed low—and went on repeating: "It's horrible . . . horrible! . . . horrible!"

"M. Sabler is the son of the Procurator of our Holy Synod"; I went on with my introduction without allowing myself to be the least perturbed.

"Horrible! . . . horrible! . . . horrible!" continued the King, casting at Sabler, who was much disconcerted at this reception, such stern glances that one would have thought that he suspected him—or even his pious and illustrious father—of having participated in the abominable assassination at Salonika. Then calling out to me once more his "horrible! . . . horrible! . . . horrible!" the King hurriedly left the cathedral.

In February, 1913, after the election of M. Poincaré, the French Minister was to present to the King—according to etiquette—an autograph letter from the new President of the Republic. After three weeks of negotiations and delays, M. de Panafieu was at last granted an audience. I naturally was interested to know what the King would tell him during this audience, and my French colleague, with whom I was very intimate, promised to call on me on leaving the Palace.

"Well, and how did your audience go off? What did the King say to you?" I asked M. de Panafieu, who came to me at the hour agreed on.

"His Majesty was excessively kind and amiable," replied my colleague, smiling. "He kept me for half an hour, and this half-hour was taken up by a monologue, bright and charming, from the King! He spoke of his recent journey to Paris (in 1910), of M. Fallières, of the way in which he had made the acquaintance of the present President, even of the scientific studies of the President's cousin, Poincaré the mathematician; in short, he tried not to let me get in a word, afraid evidently that I might try and put in a question or a remark of a political nature. When the half-hour was over, he dismissed me with the same studied friendliness; and here I am!"

The German Minister, Herr von Below, was invited by the King to a *tête-à-tête* luncheon with him at Vrana,

his new country house near Sofia: this was in April, 1913. My German colleague, who was on the best of terms with me throughout our time in Sofia, told me about this himself, adding that the object of his interview with the King and of their conversation had been the affairs and private concerns of Queen Eleanor, *née* Princess of Reuss.

I think, however, that I am justified in asserting that von Below's interview with the King, which took place at Vrana, on purpose so that the Sofia public should not know about it or comment thereon—was of quite a different nature from the forced meetings of His Majesty with me and with M. de Panafieu. If the information I received on the subject from a strictly confidential source is true, Herr von Below received from Berlin the order to communicate to the King that Germany was willing to uphold the Bulgarian cause against the Serbians and the Greeks, if only the Bulgarians would consent to come to friendly terms with the Turks on the subject of Adrianople, and would lessen, generally and in a tangible way, their claims in Thrace. This is what the German Minister had discussed with the King after luncheon at Vrana. This proposition, coming after the capture of Adrianople by the Bulgarians, was declined by Ferdinand as well as by his Government, who had been much startled at it. When the Bulgarians were beaten by their former allies Germany remembered this refusal of Ferdinand's, and not only prevented Austria from going to his assistance against the Serbians, but further lent her most essential political support to Turkey, who had just occupied Adrianople and Kirk-Kilisseh without striking a blow. But the information on the subject of this German step only reached me long after it had been taken—that is to say, during the winter of 1913-14.

As I said above, Bulgaria during the last months of the year was the object of the suspicions and complaints not only of her allies but also of Rumania. For the Rumanians, the sudden rise and increase of power of

Bulgaria not only constituted a sharp blow to their *amour-propre* but also an undoubted menace. During the whole Balkan war Rumania had unflinchingly performed her duties as a neutral, allowing free passage through her territory for all munitions which the German and Austro-Hungarian works sent to Turkey *viâ* the Black Sea, where the Bulgarians, whose naval forces were inadequate, could not sink or seize the Turkish transports. It can easily be imagined that such a way of proceeding would not exactly predispose the Bulgarians in Rumania's favour, even if between the two nations there had not been another cause for rivalry and mutual displeasure. But this cause existed.

In 1878, at the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish Peace, the Bulgarian chauvinists had expressed their displeasure at Russia giving part of the Dobrudja as far as the forts of Silistria to the Rumanian Principality in exchange for that part of Bessarabia close to the Danube which had been taken from Russia by the treaty of 1856. According to the Bulgarians, Russia, although taking back all the southern part of Bessarabia, ought to give the whole of the Dobrudja to Bulgaria and thus become, across the mouths of the Danube, the immediate neighbour of the Slav Principality which she had just created. The Rumanians, on the contrary, were of opinion that Russia ought to leave Southern Bessarabia to them, adding to it, as a reward for having "saved the Russian Army at Plevna," the whole of the Dobrudja with Silistria and Tutrukan and nearly as far as Varna. The two sides founded their exclusive claims to the Dobrudja on ethnographical principles. According to the Bulgarian version, nearly the whole of the Dobrudja is peopled with Bulgarians; according to the Rumanians it is inhabited solely by Rumanians. In reality, this province represents the same motley mixture of population as Southern Bessarabia: Turks, Gagaüzi, Tatar-Budjaks, Tziganes, and—in the towns—Armenians, Greeks and Jews, make up with Rumanians, Bulgarians and Russians of the Old Faith, the population of the Dobrudja, which in its

northern part suffers from scarcity of water and is very thinly populated, but on its southern side possesses beautiful fertile slopes and many forests. In 1879 the Bulgarians received just this fertile part of the Dobrudja —the forest of Deli-Orman—where there are a few rich Turkish villages. Gradually, in consequence of the usual migration of a Turkish population from places where it has ceased to be the predominant caste and in consequence of all kinds of administrative trickery practised by the Bulgarians, the larger part of Deli-Orman passed into the hands of Bulgarian peasants, of which many had become fairly wealthy proprietors. When this land passed into these grasping but hard-working hands the fertility of the soil increased to such an extent that about 1910 the department of *Dobritch* (Hadji-Oglu-Pazardjik) produced nearly one-sixth of the Bulgarian cereals. One can understand that, as good neighbours, the Rumanians would in no way have been against appropriating such fertile ground. At the same time they considered that it would be only fair if the Bulgarians—having in 1912 acquired such a considerable portion of the coast with ports situated not only on the Black Sea but also on the Ægean—were to give up to Rumania a small part of their former coast, if only up to the port of Kavarna inclusive. It could not indeed be denied that Rumania did effectually suffer from a lack of maritime outlets and had consequently a natural desire to enlarge her coast line. These were the reasons why the Rumanians in 1913 considered themselves morally authorised to present claims to Bulgaria on the subject of the cession of Silistria and of a strip of land as wide as possible in the Dobrudja.

The fulfilment of the Rumanian wishes naturally mainly depended on the attitude of the Great Powers, for, since the convocation of the London Conferences, the definite settlement of the Balkan imbroglio had passed into the hands of Europe, and the further successes of the Allies could only effect slight modifi-

cations in the final results of the war. It was to the interest of those amongst the Powers who displayed goodwill to the Balkan Allies that the differences between Bulgaria and Rumania should not culminate in a collision which might rekindle the fire which fortunately had been dying down. A great deal depended on the position taken up by Russia on this question.

During the last ten years which preceded the Balkan War, our relations with Rumania had begun to change—although in a way as yet imperceptible to the public at large and to the Press—and to show steady improvement.

Since the year 1890, the post of Rumanian Minister to St. Petersburg had been held by M. Rosetti-Solesco who, while still Secretary to the Legation, had married the daughter of our former Foreign Secretary, M. N. de Giers. Rosetti, an intelligent and energetic man (although sometimes rather restless in his energy), enjoyed the confidence and the protection of King Charles, who had entrusted him with the task of improving Russo-Rumanian relations as much as was possible.

His wife, who was a Russian, did all in her power to support her husband in this, and made great use of her large circle of relations and friends. But this was not all: in 1902 Madame Rosetti's brother, M. Michel de Giers (Ambassador to Constantinople since 1912 and at the moment in Rome), was appointed Russian Minister to Bukharest. During ten consecutive years the work of M. de Giers—work which was persevering, silent and earnest—was directed to the same object: that of the improvement of Russo-Rumanian relations. Michel de Giers, who throughout his career remained imbued with feelings of absolute devotion to the person of the Monarch (he had inherited these feelings from his father), in return justly possessed the special goodwill and confidence of Nicolas II. Under these conditions

it is not surprising that the opinions of our Minister in Rumania were often adopted and towards the end of his stay in Bukharest he could prove with legitimate satisfaction that he had not laboured in vain.

At the beginning of 1912 M. Michel de Giers was given the exalted post of Russian Ambassador to Constantinople, and was succeeded in Bukharest by a young and brilliant diplomat, M. Nicolas Schebeko. Schebeko, who belonged to the most influential aristocratic circles of St. Petersburg, had begun life in a regiment of Guards, and then, entering the diplomatic service, had been appointed Secretary to the Embasy in Vienna, where Prince Lobanoff was then Ambassador. Undoubtedly gifted and possessing moreover the advantage of very firm convictions, Schebeko, after a few years in the diplomatic service spent in the capitals of Western Europe, was appointed Counsellor to the Embasy in Berlin, where our venerable and respected Ambassador, Count Osten-Sacken, was now ending his career and his days. The young Counsellor often had to replace his chief for months at a time, and this gave him an opportunity of proving his real capabilities. The appointment of M. Schebeko to Bukharest, and more especially the fact that he had accepted this appointment, proved that St. Petersburg set a price on good relations with Rumania and the Rumanian Court. The matrimonial schemes of which Sazonoff had spoken to me had evidently taken root in Rumania as well as in our country and, in this case, no one could be of more use than Schébéko and his charming wife as authorised and discreet intermediaries between the two Courts.

The appointment of the new Russian Minister to Rumania coincided, it is true, with a somewhat disagreeable incident from the diplomatic point of view—the commemoration of the Treaty of Bukharest of 1812 and of the annexation of Bessarabia. Amongst us, this jubilee was only an occasion for a few local ceremonies of an administrative character and for a few articles in the newspapers. But in Rumania there were some

fairly important patriotic demonstrations and the Rumanian Press sounded its loudest trumpets to protest against Russian spoliation which had deprived Rumania of one of her most beautiful integral parts! All this, to be sure, was rather far-fetched; in 1812 there was as yet no "Rumania," but only "Danubian Principalities," abominably governed, exploited and often invaded by the Turks, and where the earlier mediæval patriotism had given place to complete atrophy and demoralisation. In a word, the inhabitants of the part of Moldavia annexed by Russia were congratulating themselves very heartily on this change of thraldom: the Russia of the beginning of the nineteenth century seemed to these poor people a real paradise of political liberty, in comparison with the yoke and despotism they had borne up till then. Moreover Alexander I., with his usual coquetry towards every *new arrival*, had heaped privileges on the annexed Bessarabia: exemption from several taxes, complete exemption from military service, nobility-rights, titles in profusion and high official posts given to the governing classes of the country, etc., with the result that a few short years had sufficed to make Bessarabia into one of the Russian provinces which was the most faithful and the most devoted to the Imperial autocracy. The Rumanian chauvinist Press, of course, ignored all these details. For their ends it was necessary to describe this taking possession—accomplished so peacefully and almost imperceptibly on the spot, as every one was so accustomed to seeing the Russians occupying the country—as a kind of Mongolian invasion, or as the conquest of Gaul by the Franks or (as we should say now) the Boche occupation of Belgium.

Fortunately these demonstrations in no way affected our relations with Rumania. Our Government and particularly our Foreign Office pretended not to notice all this fuss, knowing perfectly well that it was not serious, and that after these chauvinist fireworks we

could resume the cultivation of good and even intimate relations between the two countries.

The new Russian Minister wrote and acted on these lines, and was successful. During this same year, H.I.M. the Emperor sent the Grand Duke Nicolas Mikhaïlovitch (brother officer and intimate friend of M. Schebeko's) to King Charles of Rumania to present to him the *bâton* of Russian Field-Marshal. The old King was much flattered by this high distinction, which carried him back to the glorious days when he was in command at the siege of Plevna and made the celebrated Osman Pasha prisoner.

This whole episode proves that in our country we were quite capable of smoothing away difficulties and avoiding causes for discord based on exaggerated nationalism, *when we wished to.* When we did not do so, it was because we did not care to.

At the beginning of 1913, when the Rumanian claims with regard to Bulgaria were taking shape, M. Sazonoff thought it opportune not to contest fundamentally the Rumanian point of view, but, on the contrary, to support it up to a point, and then, taking the question into our own hands, to solve it in a way which, while not wronging Bulgaria too much, would procure some compensations for Rumania. Consequently, I received instructions to obtain the Bulgarians' consent to the action which the Rumanians were bringing against them being examined in St. Petersburg by the Ambassadors of the Powers, presided over by M. Sazonoff. This was no easy task for me; the Bulgarians not unreasonably retorted that no litigation existed between them and the Rumanians; that Rumania, merely profiting by the fact that the whole Bulgarian Army was in Thrace, was claiming without any justification the cession of a portion of the Bulgarian territory. Gueshov alleged among other reasons the constitutional impossibility for the Government—without the authorisation of the Chamber, which was not sitting at the time—to

enter into negotiations which might end in the metamorphosis of a portion, even though a minute one, of the Bulgarian population into subjects of another State, and that, moreover, without any wish on their part.

"One of the regiments which has distinguished itself most in the present campaign," said Gueshov to me, "is the regiment of Silistria, composed of citizens of that town and its environs. How could we suddenly say to the soldiers of this regiment, which is before Chataldja: 'You are no longer Bulgarians, you are Rumanians!'" Truly an unanswerable argument.

However, I employed my best efforts and all means of persuasion to accomplish the object proposed by our Foreign Office, and at the crucial moment when the question was to be settled by a Council of Ministers presided over by the King, I wrote Gueshov a letter which he could and should show to His Majesty, and to his colleagues, in which—in the name of the higher interests of Bulgaria—I insisted on the necessity for her to accept the Russian proposition and to refer the question to the judgment of a conference of Ambassadors in St. Petersburg. My arguments finally prevailed; the Bulgarians bowed to our advice, and after a few sittings, the conference, presided over by M. Sazonoff, announced the result of the arbitration: Rumania was to receive the town of Silistria and some territories along the frontier, but these latter were so insignificant that as a matter of fact they were not worth the trouble taken by Rumania in raising this whole question. The two sides accepted the award, but Rumania resolved *in petto* to raise her claims afresh with regard to Bulgaria at the first favourable opportunity. From this moment the Rumanian Government sought to draw closer to Belgrade and Athens, estimating very judiciously that the "allies" would end in coming to blows, and that then Rumania would have the chance of obtaining from Bulgaria far more substantial concessions than those which had just been awarded to her.

CHAPTER XI

QUARRELS BETWEEN THE ALLIES

On the 12th (25th) March, M. Gueshov telephoned to me in the morning to say that the attack on Adrianople had begun, and that the Bulgarians had taken all the advanced positions on the eastern side of the place. At noon I heard that the operations had been successful, and that the Bulgarians were already occupying several of the principal forts. And at four o'clock, the beautiful big Russian bells, which had been put up a few days before in the belfry of the cathedral which was being built—the cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky—began their deep and solemn pealing to announce the great victory to the inhabitants of Sofia. The last rampart of Ottoman domination in Thrace had fallen: the Bulgarian and Serbian troops, who had vied with one another in courage and self-sacrifice, had taken this formidable fortified place by assault, thereby displaying to the whole world what Slav patriotism was capable of. From that moment one could consider the war with the Turks to be ended, to the complete advantage of our Slav kinsman and our Greek co-religionists.

Although latterly I had been a sorrowful spectator of the rivalries and of the hostility which divided these same kinsmen and co-religionists, yet I could not repress a deep and joyful emotion when I heard the symbolic pealing of the Russian bells in honour of the Slav victory. Likewise in Russia the taking of Adrianople produced a profound impression. The Duma was the scene of a great ovation in honour of the Bulgarian hero, Radko-Dmitriev, who was in St. Petersburg at the time.

The taking of Adrianople virtually concluded

hostilities. For five weeks more the definite winding-up of the war was discussed in London—with the help once more of delegates of the belligerents—but an armistice was soon concluded, and one foresaw clearly that military operations would not begin again. Henceforth the relations of the Allies with Turkey took a secondary place, while the interest of the moment was centred on the relations of the Allies amongst themselves.

The capture of the powerful defences of Adrianople will remain for ever one of the most glorious pages in the military annals of Bulgaria. Just as they had done throughout the war, the Bulgarians distinguished themselves by their courage, their *sang-froid*, and their will to win at all costs. Unfortunately, side by side with these admirable traits of the Bulgarian character, the taking of Adrianople revealed some very ugly ones.

The Bulgarians generally appeared to deny any Serbian participation in the taking of Adrianople, whereas the Serbians had not only helped them with their big guns, but had also finally carried the place by a brilliant sally. If Ferdinand had had any true political perception, he would have used all his efforts to clear up these mutual misunderstandings. He should have come to Adrianople, reviewed the Serbian and Bulgarian troops collectively, have made a cordial speech to the Serbian officers, have mentioned in dispatches to both armies the courage of the Serbians, and the enormous services they had rendered their allies, and a great many things would thus have been smoothed over and forgotten. But Ferdinand was not contemplating anything of the kind. He was preparing to come from Sofia to Adrianople to make his triumphal entry into the conquered town, leaving the Serbians completely out of this exclusively Bulgarian festivity. The festivity never took place: cholera having broken out at Adrianople, Ferdinand—who is afraid of many things, but particularly of all epidemics and infection—

countermanded the triumphal entry into Adrianople, and postponed it *sine die.* It was the Turks who entered it four months later!

Meanwhile, the Bulgarians displayed another trait of their national character in Adrianople—cold and relentless cruelty. Forty thousand Turkish prisoners had been put in a camp on an island, which is formed by the two arms of the Maritza below the town; they were to be taken from there into the interior of the country. But when cholera broke out, the removal was postponed. Huddled together in an almost incredible way on the island, which was encircled with a network of barbed wire, and within range of the guns on the other side of the river, the wretched Turks had soon eaten all the bread they had with them, and began to suffer from hunger. It should be mentioned that, prior to the surrender of the town, the Turks had had time to set fire to fairly large quantities of flour and grain, which were still in the town, and the Bulgarian military authorities, who bore a grudge against the Turks for this destruction, could find no better means of revenge than that of refusing, with heartless cruelty, to supply provisions to the unhappy prisoners of war. "But what can we do?" replied the Bulgarians to those who came to plead the cause of these miserable wretches, "it is the fault of the Turks. Why did they set fire to their grain stores? Now we have nothing to give them to eat." And for eight or ten days one heard the plaintive cries of thousands of famished men coming from the prisoners' camp on the island. To keep body and soul together these poor wretches gnawed the bark of the trees, and drank the water from the river. As was to be expected, in a few days cholera was raging among the prisoners, and the dead and the dying lay next to those who were still immune. Finally, rumours about this abominable behaviour with regard to the Turkish prisoners of war reached Sofia, and from there got through to Europe, and the Bulgarians were forced to remove the poor wretches; but during the

removal they were so inhumanly treated that more than half of them died of cholera and of other diseases.

Yes, the Bulgarian is coldly cruel! All the same, one must not see in this cruelty an inborn trait of the Bulgarian character. It is the product of the whole history of this unhappy people. One must not forget that throughout the five centuries of Turkish domination, the Bulgarian nation formed a human agglomeration deprived of all representation of the people, and of all governing classes.

The Serbians subjected to Turkey had their own national clergy and their convents. On the other side of the frontier they had brothers who were not subject to the Turks, and centres of Serbian culture, such as the towns on the coast of Dalmatia, and later on Karlovtzy, Novy-Sad, and the monasteries of the "Fruschka-Gora," in the land of the Serbian "Granitchars" of Austria.

The Greeks possessed a powerful spiritual hierarchy extending over the whole Ottoman Empire, with the Universal Patriarch at its head, who continued to reside in Constantinople. The numerous and cultivated class of the families of the *archons* shared with the clergy the influence, not only over their kinsmen, but also over the Turkish authorities.

In the provinces in normal times, Turks and Albanians of distinction were often on a friendly footing with Greek notabilities. The *knezes* (heads of villages) and *kmets* (mayors of Serbian small towns) kept company and drank their "tzrno vino" with the local Mussulmans, Serbians like them by birth and language, but converts to Islamism. Up to to-day, the Serbian Mussulmans remaining in Bosnia and Herzegovina are proud of their extraction and still speak the purest Serbian. "So you also are *a leaf out of our forest*," I heard an old Bosnian Mussulman say to a young Serbian to whom I was introducing him.

The Bulgarian people have existed for five centuries

without any moral or intellectual support; their *bojars* (the nobility) were swept away or converted to Islamism, or reduced to fleeing to Rumania. The national hierarchy was abolished. All the higher clergy had become Greek, and the Greeks, who from time immemorial had had an organic hereditary hatred for the Bulgarians, now literally trod them underfoot. For centuries the Bulgarian pope was a being deprived of all rights, completely unpolished, often illiterate, whose business it was to extract pence from the peasant in payment for certain religious rites, and then to pass almost all these pence on to his inexorable master—the Greek bishop.

However, some localities existed in which the Bulgarian inhabitants, by virtue of certain economic conditions or of certain traditions, enjoyed relative comfort and seemed to possess some rights. For instance, in Southern Bulgaria there was a whole district of which the male population from father to son was employed in Constantinople and at the Padishah's Court as syces (grooms). Naturally these people could save money, and having powerful protectors among the domestics of the Palace, could keep this money, which enabled them to live in comfort at home. There were also a few villages and small towns in the mountain, far removed from the Turks and where local conditions favoured the development of some small lucrative industry: these spots formed oases in which up to a certain date the ancient Christian and Slav culture was preserved. Such were the districts of Gabrova, Elena, Karlovo, where the native type is even now finer and purer than in the rest of the country. If it had not been for these happy and rare exceptions, the name even of the Bulgarian people would have been lost in the course of the centuries, for all the rest of the country showed such an utter lack of culture, such degrading slavery, that it is wonderful that even the consciousness of nationality could exist there.

Thus amongst an enormous majority of the nation there was no conscious religious feeling, no civilisation, a complete absence of rights, and to all money was the sole means of procuring a semblance of a decent existence; add to this, stubbornness and a certain strain of materialism which had filtered into the blood of the Slav population of the country with the blood of the former Ugro-Finnish conquerors—the Bulgarians, properly so-called—and no one can wonder that in the modern Bulgarian soul there is hardly any room for finer feelings and ideal aspirations.

During my first stay in Bulgaria at the outset of my diplomatic career, I had had an opportunity of seeing a very interesting document: the letter which the Emperor Alexander II. had written to his nephew by marriage, Prince Alexander of Battenberg, when the latter was elected the first Prince of Bulgaria at the Tsar's wish. This letter, very perfect on the whole, concluded with touching and profoundly true words, which ran something like this:—

"But above all things, my dear nephew, never forget in your relations with your new people the complete slavery in which they have lived for centuries. Be generous and indulgent towards the failings which are the natural consequence of this slavery. Be patient with your people and endeavour by kind deeds to raise them to your level and to draw them nearer to you."

Prince Alexander of Battenburg did not appear to have been created for such a beautiful mission—but still less was Ferdinand of Coburg. During the thirty-five years that Bulgaria had existed much had been done to give her a surface polish, and to provide her with modern State machinery, but nothing was done for the souls of the people, to soften their natural dispositions and their manners. On the contrary, national fanaticism was encouraged and stimulated as a virtue. And as no people can exist without religion and without ideals, the Bulgarians in place of religion had their national policy, and as supreme moral ideal

the work of the "Great Bulgaria"; the creed of this religion was "the Bulgaria of San-Stefano."

The roughness of the Bulgarian manners and the absence of all humanitarian feeling among them became strikingly apparent during the Balkan War. I do not mean the cruelties inflicted on the Mussulman population wherever the Bulgarian armies penetrated. These cruelties, practised in cold blood and as "lawful vengeance," were fortunately tempered by a certain fear of the public opinion of Europe. But even for their own people the Bulgarians demanded no mercy, no pity. In no other army in the world is the work of tending the wounded so neglected as it is in the Bulgarian Army. Thousands of soldiers fell wounded on the battlefield and lay there, without any one paying any attention to them; to pick them up during the fight was considered a crime; but even when the battle was over there was not much time to devote to them. The wounded dragged themselves as best they could to the ambulances near the front, where the Bulgarian military surgeons hacked at them with the coolness of a butcher or hurriedly bound up their wounds with dirty cloths, and then sent them in buffalo waggons to the hospitals in the rear. And these poor wretches never thought of complaining of such treatment; according to their own ideas a soldier, wounded and unfit to fight, is only a burden to the Army and to his country; so that nothing more need be done for him; much has already been done when his wound has been bound up, and he has been put on a waggon!

It was only when a Bulgarian wounded soldier had the luck to get to a foreign hospital, especially a Russian one, where he became the object of the refined and tender care of the sisters and doctors, that the poor wretch began to discover and understand a new world of human solidarity and of Christian love, hitherto completely sealed to him. "Yes, now we understand what pity is, what charity is!" These were the touching words that I often heard from the

lips of the wounded who were being nursed in our hospitals.

Woe to the sovereigns! woe to the statesmen! who have not understood that a people cannot live exclusively for their material welfare and the aims of their national policy unless at the same time their hearts are opened to other feelings, more especially to those of justice and of human solidarity!

I address these words to the Palace of Sofia, but with the humble prayer to pass them on to German Headquarters![1]

As I said above, with the taking of Adrianople all interest was centred on the relations between the Allies, and in the first place on the relations between Bulgarians and Serbians. When in November, 1912, the result of the war become fairly apparent and negotiations between the Allies and Turkey were already in sight, I twice submitted a project to our Foreign Secretary which, in my opinion, might facilitate and accelerate the conclusion of peace and prevent a clash of interests between the Allies, a clash that I dreaded from that moment. This project consisted in the creation of a Macedonia which was to be completely autonomous but of restricted dimensions, for it was only to include just those districts which might be disputed between the competitors. The remainder of the territories conquered from the Turks would be easily divided by the Allies. I foresaw at the same time the creation of an autonomous Albania of which the limits would be fixed by an agreement between the Great Powers.

I realised perfectly that such a compromise would in no way offer the definite solution of the Balkan question; but in the first place I have never been able to understand why one was to ask of the present generation the solution of *all* the most difficult questions; and then I feared above all things that events would drag

[1] These lines were written in June, 1918.

on too long and would lead to acute differences between the groups of European Powers. My idea, however, was rejected without appeal: for our Foreign Office, the temptation to have done once for all with the Macedonian question, which had bored the whole world to distraction, was far too great.

When military operations had begun again, and especially after the fall of Adrianople, it would doubtless have been still more difficult to bring forward the proposition of an autonomous Macedonia. But if this combination could nevertheless have been accepted and realised, we should have avoided the sad spectacle of the fratricidal war of 1913; and Bulgaria certainly would have been less accessible to Austro-German intrigues. Unfortunately our Foreign Office would not even go into these considerations; there optimism reigned supreme under the influence of the victories of the Slavs and Greeks; it already foresaw the failure of German policy on the Bosphorus, the question of the East reduced to that of the Straits, and all this without any sacrifice on our part! How could one be anything but joyful?

About two months later a very distinct threat of a clash between the Allies was apparent in the Balkans. But everyone was still optimistic. At first a word from Russia appeared to St. Petersburg to be sufficient to obtain the necessary concessions from the Bulgarians; if they refused to listen to our kind advice, they would have all the other Balkan States against them; and then instead of a very precarious alliance between Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, we should have to deal with the far closer league between Rumania, Greece, Serbia (with Montenegro), a league which would be obliged to seek Russian direction and to listen to our advice.

This idea of a Balkan alliance with an anti-Bulgarian foundation certainly did not emanate from M. Sazonoff. who was unaware of it at the beginning. It was M. Hartwig who, in his sincere indignation against the

Bulgarian proceedings, made himself the initiator and the champion of this new political combination. He quickly found a sympathetic echo from our representative to Bukharest, to whose interest it was that our good relations with Rumania—which he made his own—should redouble in weight in the scales of our policy. The Russian Minister to Athens naturally followed his two colleagues; and as to the Foreign Office—M. Hartwig took charge of that: his ascendency over the friends he had left there—over those who formerly, in the Asiatic Department, were "the shadow of his shadow"—sufficed to alter completely the course that M. Sazonoff had adopted at the outset of his term of office. It is true that the Bulgarians and their august master, on their side, contributed powerfully to this, the former by their proverbial obstinacy, the latter by his breach of faith.

Hartwig's influence—exercised through the channel of his friends and admirers at the Foreign Office—made itself felt in Balkan affairs beyond the period of which I speak. It only ceased at his sudden death, which occurred only three weeks before the general conflagration of 1914. He was a true and faithful friend of the Serbians; he was just as sincere and ardent a Russian patriot; he displayed in the service of Russian politics and of the Slav cause, an intelligence above the average, much learning and unremitting work; but his vehement and domineering character, his intolerance of any opinion differing even slightly from his own, prevented him from forming an equitable judgment on men and matters, and from seeing the terrible dangers accumulating on the horizon.

But let us return to the spring of 1913. Serbia and Greece ended by concluding a formal alliance, directed against the encroachments of Bulgaria; Montenegro also acceded to this alliance; and Belgrade, like Athens, conferred actively on the subject with Bukharest.

I was not at all surprised to receive, towards the end of April, a voluminous telegram from the Foreign

Office ordering me to urge the Bulgarian Government to make some concessions to the Serbians with respect to the demarcation of Macedonia. All the arguments used by the Foreign Office were cleverly constructed and admirably expressed; but alas! I had good reason to foresee that they would not produce the desired effect, and that the actual fact of our taking this step would cause a formidable outcry from Bulgarian public opinion. It was perfectly well known to the public in Sofia that our representatives in Belgrade, Athens and Bukharest shared the prejudices of the countries to which they were accredited against Bulgaria, and in consequence were quite ready to lend their support to all the Serbian and Greek claims in Macedonia and also to those put forward by the Rumanians with regard to the Dobrudja. From that moment the partition of Macedonia became for the Bulgarians not only a cause of dispute with the Greeks and the Serbians, but it also involved them in a struggle with a current in Russian diplomacy at the head of which, according to Sofia, was M. Hartwig, our Minister in Belgrade.

The Bulgarians were certainly mistaken in attributing such exaggerated importance to the opinions and the activities of my colleague of Belgrade. Hartwig's influence was due to the fact that he was in Serbia at the time and expressed the Serbian point of view in his dispatches to St. Petersburg. Now, throughout the course of these last Balkan events, the behaviour of the Serbians with regard to Russia was marked by perfect sincerity and deferential confidence in our advice. Unfortunately one could not say the same of the Bulgarians. King Ferdinand's behaviour—as I said above—was such as to inspire us with well-founded suspicions; and even the actions of the celebrated "Russophile" Danev aroused justifiable displeasure amongst us and amongst our allies.

When the situation became still more acute, that is towards the end of May, 1913, the whole of Russian public opinion had veered round to the Serbian side,

with the sole exception of M. P. N. Miliukoff, who upheld my point of view that a treaty is a treaty and that the Serbians would be better advised to desist from their new claims in Macedonia than to provoke sentiments of hatred in the Bulgarians by which all the enemies of the Slav cause would immediately profit.

It was easy to write from St. Petersburg: "Try to persuade the Bulgarians of the necessity to yield and to make concessions to the Serbians," but it was difficult to do it on the spot!

I remember a scene I witnessed in the large Bulgarian military hospital which had been set up during the war in the huge building of the Military School of Sofia. From the beginning the head of this hospital was Madame Karavelov, widow of the celebrated Petko Karavelov; on the death of her husband she had remained the recognised leader of the Radical party, M. Malinov only taking a second place. In the early eighties I had been well acquainted with both M. Karavelov and his wife, who was young, beautiful, and intelligent. Both of them Russian students, both fiery enthusiasts for liberty, they gave one the impression of having come to life out of the pages of Turgeneff's celebrated novel, "On the Eve."[1] Years had gone by since then: Petko Karavelov having incurred the persecution of Stamboulov, was shut up in the "Black Mosque" of Sofia, underwent real tortures, and, his health being completely ruined in this hell, died soon after his release. But his widow—guardian of the creed of her martyred husband—had remained the same enthusiast, the same political woman full of energy. From our arrival in Sofia my wife and I had kept up relations of mutual sympathy with Madame Karavelov. But since the beginning of the war we only saw each other at rare intervals; the reason being that this

[1] The hero of this novel, the imaginary Bulgarian Insarov, has done more to make the Bulgarian name and cause popular in Russia than all his fellow-countrymen who really existed and who one met at this period in our country; *habent sua fata libelli.*

energetic woman was entirely absorbed in the management of the work she had undertaken and into which she was putting her whole heart; she never left the enormous hospital, and we often wondered whence she drew the physical strength to bear all this unceasing work.

Towards the middle of May an old acquaintance of mine, Mademoiselle Pauline Milutin,[1] arrived in Sofia. Always interested in politics and in good works, Mademoiselle Milutin expressed the wish to make the acquaintance of Madame Karavelov, and in order to fulfil this wish I gladly escorted her to the large hospital in the Military School.

Madame Karavelov received us amongst her invalids, of which at this time the number had considerably diminished. There were few seriously wounded, but on the other hand many maimed men, who were finishing their treatment and trying to get accustomed to doing without the missing limbs: some were in bed, some sitting up, and others hobbling about on crutches; and in small, low invalid chairs some poor wretches with no legs were helping themselves along with their hands and appearing to take pleasure in this enforced sport. We went through all the wards, and when we returned to the visitors' room, we began to talk politics; or rather it was Mademoiselle Milutin who talked and I—foreseeing what might occur—who only listened. My companion began to try and convince Madame Karavelov of the necessity of giving up Southern Macedonia to the Serbians. It was interesting to see the emotion and even the indignation with which Madame Karavelov was seized when she understood what the speaker was driving at.

"What? Give up Macedonia to the Serbians? Macedonia which was given to us by the Treaty of San Stefano? Macedonia which has been the goal of all our

[1] Daughter of the Secretary of State, Nicolas Milutin, one of the best known men at the grand epoch of the reforms of the Emperor Alexander II.

home and foreign policy for more than thirty-five years. But that is impossible! Do you hear me, impossible! Children, children," she called in Bulgarian to the wounded who were lying in the ward, "listen to what they say in Russia: that we ought to give up Macedonia to the Serbians! Do you consent?" "No, no," about ten voices answered in chorus; the cripples hobbled towards us; the men in the invalid chairs crawled along, all calling out: "No, never! It is not for that we shed our blood!" Faces began to display emotion, eyes to flash. . . . Seeing that the tumult was likely to increase, I led the two ladies into the next room—which happened to be the dispensary—and there I thought it my duty to explain in a few words to Madame Karavelov the true state of affairs. She calmed down a little, and appeared to understand up to a point that our advice was well-founded and not directed against the real interests of Bulgaria.

"Now you can see whether it is easy to convince Bulgarians?" I said to Mademoiselle Milutin when we were walking from the hospital to the Legation.

"Yes," she replied, "it is not easy! But how interesting all this is; I shall certainly tell Sazonoff all I have seen and heard when I return to St. Petersburg." (Mademoiselle Milutin had become very intimate with M. Sazonoff during the years when they were both in Rome.)

"Oh yes! tell him, do tell him, that always does good!" I replied; "but do not be too much impressed by the scene you have just witnessed. *Amica Karavelov, sed magis amica veritas.* Besides, if *justice* is not entirely on the side of the Serbians, it is yet imperative in the interests of *truth* that we should recognise and reward in some way their perfectly correct attitude to us. My sole fear is that they will do themselves immense harm some day by setting the Bulgarians literally *against* them."

Towards the middle of May, as every one had been

expecting for some time, a serious collision between Bulgarians and Greeks occurred in the southern theatre of military operations.

The Bulgarians declared that the *Euzones* (Greek territorials) had attacked some Bulgarian garrisons; the Greeks swore by all the gods of Olympus that the initiative of the attack came from the Bulgarians. However that may have been, the collision assumed the proportions of a real battle, during which the Bulgarians—as they asserted and firmly believed themselves—routed an *allied* force ten times larger than their own. This account, extremely exaggerated if not completely untrue, had disastrous consequences a few weeks later for the Bulgarians themselves: when war broke out between the former Allies the Bulgarian Commander-in-Chief, General Savov, only left a very small force to oppose the Greeks, convinced that it would be sufficient to bar the way to the entire Greek Army. But the Greeks, superior in numbers and equipment, and animated by their historic hatred of the Bulgarians, beat them completely at the first decisive encounters and obliged them to retreat across the mountains, leaving their guns and ammunition behind.

But let us return to the "inter-allied" collision of the month of May. A few days after it had taken place, the Emperor of Russia went to Berlin to be present at the marriage of William II.'s daughter with the Duke of Cumberland (afterwards Grand Duke of Brunswick). King Constantine profited by this meeting of his two powerful relations to submit the Bulgarian aggression to their judgment, and to beg them to put an end to these very regrettable and dangerous incidents. Following these complaints from the King of Greece, my German colleague and I received identical instructions from Berlin to transmit immediately to King Ferdinand the warnings and most solemn advice of both Emperors.

I must confess that it was not without a distinct feeling of pleasure that I insisted on having an audience of the King, who since the beginning of the war had

so persistently avoided all opportunities of conversing with the Russian Minister. This time the King was forced to comply, and against all expectations received me with a great deal of friendliness. I told him of the communication I had received from my august Master, but I avoided anything that might have wounded his pride; I availed myself also of this opportunity to touch on the question of the relations between Bulgarians and Serbians. On this Ferdinand complained bitterly that the Serbians had already concluded a formal agreement with the Greeks which was directed against Bulgaria—which was to a certain extent true. In answer to that, and without entering into an examination of the Serbian and Greek claims, I revealed the fears I entertained for Bulgaria herself occasioned by the tendencies of some of her politicians, who persisted in an irreconcilable line of conduct. I was alluding to certain generals and to M. Danev. The King did not dispute my point of view, but he did not acquiesce in it either. At this time he could still see things from a wholesome standpoint, and he dreaded a collision with his neighbours; but as ever he did not wish to commit himself in a clear and precise manner.

The month of April and half the month of May, during which an armistice had put an end to hostilities between Turkey and the Allies, were spent over conferences and difficulties. At last, on the 20th May, N.S., a definite peace was signed in London. In Europe the Turks were only to keep the hinterland of the Straits up to the line Enos—Midia. It then remained to divide between the Allies the territory conquered by them. As I have already said, the Bulgarians had no troops in the southern and western part of Macedonia, except three thousand men that they had succeeded in getting into Salonika. This town and district, the peninsula of Chalcidice and a few other places east of this peninsula, were occupied by the Greeks; the rest of Macedonia, as far as the course of the Bregalnitza, was in the hands

of the Serbians. Hence in the competition that was beginning the Serbians and the Greeks had on their side the argument of actual possession: *Beati possidentes;* as to the Bulgarians, there were only two alternatives remaining to them—either to come to terms with their competitors, or to take from them the disputed territories by force.

I spent the whole of May in conferences with M. Gueshov on one side and Spalaïkovitch on the other. Both sincerely wished to prevent the violent solution of the dispute; Gueshov through a spirit of prudence and moderation, Spalaïkovitch mainly through devotion to the cause of Slav solidarity. Our mutual efforts ended in the arranging of an interview between M. Gueshov and M. Pachitch, which took place on the 2nd June at Tsaribrod (a frontier station between Pirot and Nish). The two Presidents of the Councils spent a whole day there conferring in a saloon carriage. Both men of experience, wise and inspired by the best intentions, they succeeded during this interview in establishing the basis of a friendly solution; they decided to meet again and to convene shortly a conference of the four Prime Ministers of the allied countries. And if at this conference they could not arrive at a complete understanding, the points under discussion were to be submitted to the arbitration of Russia, an arbitration which had been provided for in the text of the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty.

I remember vividly the enthusiastic frame of mind in which Spalaïkovitch returned from Tsaribrod.

"All is settled!" he exclaimed, clasping me in his arms.

A few days before the interview at Tsaribrod, Spalaïkovitch and I had busied ourselves with the question of Russian arbitration. As I have just said, this arbitration was mentioned in the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty, although neither the Russian Government nor its representatives in Belgrade and Sofia had taken the

initiative about this clause; it was well known in our country, but we had not formally adhered to it. Consequently it was necessary above all things to ask St. Petersburg whether the Imperial Government would consent to become the arbitrator of the Serbo-Bulgarian litigation if the case arose. But Spalaïkovitch and I went further: I sent M. Sazonoff a telegram[1] which we composed together, and in which I suggested to our Government that it should itself propose to arbitrate, and not propose this only to the Bulgarians and the Serbians, but also to the Greeks. I concluded my telegram by expressing the opinion that such a step taken by Russia would be the best means of preventing a fratricidal war in the Balkans. For more than ten days no answer to my suggestion came; then I received from Moscow, where the Court was at the moment, the telegram of His Majesty the Emperor to the Kings of Bulgaria and Serbia which I was to transmit immediately to King Ferdinand, and in which H.I.M. the Emperor proposed to both sides that he should arbitrate. I was told later that this telegram of the Emperor's was not dispatched on the initiative of M. Sazonoff, who, moreover, had already returned to St. Petersburg, but on that of the Marshal of the Nobility of Moscow, M. Alexander Samarine, who at the moment was *persona gratissima* at the Court, and who, as the representative of the best traditions of the Russian nobility as of the Slavophile traditions of the Samarine family, thought it incumbent on him to suggest to his Sovereign that he should generously offer his arbitration in order to prevent the scandal of a new war between people of a common origin and Orthodox. The Emperor at once approved of this idea, and the telegram was sent off. That would show that my telegram on which Spalaïkovitch and I were building so many hopes was not submitted to His Majesty at a good moment, but was merely put away in the archives

[1] If my memory does not deceive me, it was on the 15th (28th) May, or the 16th (29th) May.

of the Balkan section of our Foreign Office. It is a matter for sincere regret, for the generous proposition of the Emperor came a little too late: M. Gueshov was already on the point of resigning, and pending the early return of M. Danev the vacillating will of the King was guided by M. Rizov, who had been sent for from Rome on purpose. As soon as Danev returned Rizov took him in hand also and bent him to his will, until the catastrophe of July, 1913.

Of course, I transmitted His Majesty's telegram to the Palace the same day, and I also informed M. Gueshov of its contents. He, however, did not evince much pleasure, or any wish to impress on his colleagues the enormous significance of the Emperor of Russia's generous step. The aged President of the Council, who felt that the King wished to get rid of him at all costs, and who perceived that his conference with Pachitch was criticised even in the bosom of the Council, was only awaiting Danev's return from London to hand in his resignation.

Hence, I was reduced to going to Todorov, and to the King's Secretary, Dobrovitch, to insist on an immediate answer in the affirmative being sent to the Emperor's telegram. Todorov at once realised the gravity of the matter; Dobrovitch did not dare to pronounce any private opinion, but I knew that he had transmitted most accurately to the King all that I had said to him. As regards the Bulgarian Foreign Office, every one there was apparently waiting to know what impression the telegram had made on the Serbians, and how they would look on the Russian proposition.

As a matter of fact, the Emperor of Russia's telegram had produced dangerous friction in Belgrade. King Peter hastened to answer the Emperor, in a manner as respectful as it was cordial, that personally he could only thank His Majesty for this fresh proof of his solicitude with regard to Serbia and the Slav cause, but that the constitution of the country did not allow him to answer, with respect to the substance of the question,

without the previous consent of the *Skupchtina*. If, as was much to be hoped, the Skupchtina gave an affirmative answer, then the Royal Government would hasten to send its delegates to St. Petersburg. M. Pachitch was convinced of the necessity of accepting the Russian proposition immediately, and without any discussion; but amongst a section of the Skupchtina he met with serious opposition, and days were spent in discussions and negotiations with influential members of this assembly, for, before submitting such a proposition to the Skupchtina, Pachitch wished to be assured that it would pass without opposition.

At last, after two or three days spent in waiting and in taking active steps, I received the Bulgarian answer in the form of a draft of the King's telegram to His Majesty the Emperor. In it the Bulgarian point of view on the Macedonian question was expressed, not without dignity, and in a somewhat explicit manner.

I knew later that the King's telegram, thus drawn up, had aroused displeasure in St. Petersburg. In our country every one was so accustomed, when addressing the Monarch, to using a semi-biblical, semi-servile language, taken from the litanies of the Church, that a similar style was expected of the Slav and Orthodox *clientèle* of the Great Empire and the "White Tsar" when addressing him. I never could enter into this style of thing, and so I found nothing to criticise in King Ferdinand's telegram, except perhaps its unnecessary length. Hence, it was thus drawn up and dispatched to St. Petersburg.

I was profoundly astonished when, a few months later, and after the Bulgarian shipwreck, King Ferdinand began to circulate the report that his telegram to the Emperor had been suggested to him by me, with the perfidious design of exciting the displeasure of the Tsar and of Russian public opinion against the Bulgarians, and against their King! This fantastic explanation was, however, believed by the editorial staff of the *Retch* (the organ of the *juniors*), and thus presented to the Russian

public. I had missed the article in the *Retch* at the time, and when I was told of it, it was too late to have an explanation with M. Miliukoff, who, up till then, had entirely shared my point of view on the subject of Bulgarian affairs. Moreover, I did not see Miliukoff after Sofia till about six months before our Revolution, that is to say, at a time when one no longer had leisure to think of past events or to talk about them.

The Emperor's telegram to the King was soon followed by instructions from M. Sazonoff as to the way in which the generous proposal of our august Master was to be carried out.

The Bulgarian and Serbian Governments were invited to dispatch to St. Petersburg, with the least possible delay, memoranda presenting their arguments on the question; these memoranda would be carefully studied by our Foreign Office, after which the Prime Ministers of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece[1] were to come to St. Petersburg; the respective Russian Ministers were to accompany them. I transmitted these conditions to M. Todorov, who at this moment was acting *ad interim* for the Foreign Secretary. Two or three days after he telephoned to beg me to come to the Foreign Office to confer with him and a few other people, who had just been at a conference convened at the Palace, to discuss my last communication. On arriving at M. Todorov's house, I found General Savov, whom I had never met before, M. Rizov, and another member of the Cabinet. These gentlemen told me that it had been decided at the Palace to beg me to telegraph to St. Petersburg that the King and the Bulgarian Government gratefully accepted the programme of the Russian arbitration, and were ready to dispatch their delegates to our country, but that, on the other hand, they wished to have an assurance that the award of the

[1] Greece had in the meantime expressed the desire to take part in the Russian arbitration, and we consented to this without any difficulty.

arbitration would be given not later than six days from the opening of the conference; the explanation of this strange demand being the continued arming of the Serbians and Greeks, who were sending all their armies into Macedonia, were erecting fortifications there—which was true—and were profiting by each day that passed to make the scales turn in their favour.

We spoke in Russian, which was the only foreign language that General Savov understood and spoke well. I replied, addressing the General in particular, that I did not think it possible to pass on to St. Petersburg what these gentlemen had just told me. In our country such a condition would be considered to be incompatible with our dignity. Moreover, as a diplomat of some experience, I could not even imagine a conference limited to a fixed date; but I could assure those present that we on our side should expedite matters, and should wish to arrive at a satisfactory result with as little delay as possible. In conclusion, I invited these gentlemen to assimilate thoroughly the idea that it was Bulgaria and Serbia that needed our arbitration, and that we were only undertaking it for their good; hence it would be our place, if necessary, to impose conditions, and to make our arbitration depend on them. On this I took my leave. The following day Todorov came to see me, and told me that my answer had had the desired effect, and that in all probability there would be no further question of a time limit; concerning the journey of the Bulgarian Prime Minister to St. Petersburg, all would depend on the choice of the person entrusted with the formation of the new Cabinet.

CHAPTER XII

BULGARIA ATTACKS HER ALLIES

M. Danev returned from London, having signed the treaty of peace with Turkey only a few days after the interview between Gueshov and Pachitch at Tsaribrod, and the reception of the telegram from H.I.M. the Emperor. Meanwhile I had a long interview with M. Gueshov, in the course of which I pressed him to carry out as quickly as possible that which had been agreed on between him and M. Pachitch.

"I understand perfectly," replied he, "that no time must be lost. But I do not know yet if M. Danev agrees to our arrangement with Pachitch. Do not forget that the present Cabinet is a Coalition Cabinet, and that I do not possess the right to make such an important decision by myself."

"But if Danev does not agree with you I hope that you will maintain your opinion all the same, and will force him to give in."

"No, Monsieur," replied Gueshov; "I warn you quite openly that I have already handed my resignation to the King, and that I shall only withdraw it if Danev comes round sincerely to my opinion. I am old and I have worked enough for my country and my people. I could not participate in decisions I disapproved of and which might be fatal to Bulgaria."

Two days after Danev arrived, at six o'clock in the morning. By half-past seven I was at his house in order to find him alone, and before he had come in contact with all sorts of friends and ardent admirers of his extreme and "essentially Bulgarian" policy. Danev was somewhat disagreeably surprised at my

matutinal visit; but not allowing that to perturb me in the least, I outlined a sketch of the political situation as I saw it, and of all the dangers which were threatening Bulgaria; I expressed the earnest hope that Danev, who always described himself as the friend and proved admirer of Russia, would listen in this solemn hour to our most benevolent advice and would above all approve of the principles of the entente drawn up by Gueshov and Pachitch.

Alas! I realised on the spot that I had to deal with preconceived ideas and irreconcilable obstinacy! Danev would not perceive the dangers that his country was incurring. According to him nearly all the plenipotentiaries at the Conference of London were his personal friends and sympathised with him. The Rumanian Minister, M. Misu, the Turkish Plenipotentiary, Osman-Nizami Pasha, and the representatives of the Great Powers—all were supposed to have yielded to the irrefutable arguments of Danev. True, the Greek and Serbian Plenipotentiaries held opinions diametrically opposed to his — but what did that matter? I listened in blank astonishment to this more than ingenuous claptrap. Through the dispatches forwarded to me from the Foreign Office, and through conversations I had held with my foreign colleagues, I knew perfectly well that poor Danev had become the *bête noire* of the whole Conference of London, and that his obstinacy and presumption had made a very unfavourable impression on the ambassadors of the Entente with regard to Bulgarian policy. Concerning the Rumanian and Turkish Plenipotentiaries, these gentlemen could derive no advantage from reconciling the Bulgarians with the Serbians and Greeks, and consequently from contradicting their Bulgarian colleague. I concluded my interview with Danev by warning him that at the present moment he was assuming very heavy responsibility towards his country and the whole Slav cause, and that the day would dawn when he would remember the conversation he had just had with me,

and when he would regret not having listened to my earnest advice.

Two days later Gueshov's resignation was accepted by the King, and a short ministerial crisis set in.

I was convinced that the definite turn of events depended on the solution of the ministerial crisis, by which I mean as to whether an armed collision was to take place between the Bulgarians and their former allies, or whether the matter could be settled amicably. The Bulgarian National Assembly was not sitting at the moment, and besides, according to the laudable custom of constitutional countries such as Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania, no one dreamt under the circumstances of taking the opinion of the parliamentary majority into consideration. The King could calmly entrust any one he liked with the formation of the new Cabinet, and the latter—in the event of the opposition of the Chamber, or even without any opposition—could just as calmly dissolve the Chamber and proceed to fresh elections in the complete assurance that these elections would yield a crushing Government majority. Hence the choice of the new Ministers depended solely on Ferdinand's good pleasure.

From the day following Gueshov's resignation the report spread in Sofia that Malinov and the Radicals had the best chance of returning to power. I expected this, and some time before Gueshov's resignation I had had two or three interviews with Malinov, and we had discussed the serious topic of the hour—that of the Serbo-Bulgarian and Greco-Bulgarian demarcation.

At the beginning Malinov—just like Madame Karavelov, whom I was calling on again—gave vent to very extreme opinions. But, having listened to all my arguments, and further weighed all the dangers which threatened Bulgaria from all sides if she absolutely refused to make certain concessions, my two friends came round to my opinion up to a point, and Malinov promised me that if he came into power he would

make the party pay the greatest attention to the advice of Russia and her representative. On the actual day of Gueshov's resignation, I went again to see Malinov, revealed the situation as it had developed in the past few days, told him about my recent conversations with Gueshov and Danev, and expressed the hope that he himself, if he did come into power, would begin by approving of the Tsaribrod arrangement and would hasten his own departure for St. Petersburg as much as possible. Malinov, who at the moment was summoned to the Palace by the King, reiterated his promise to influence his friends in favour of an immediate and reasonable decision.

Unfortunately the formation of a Radical Government came to nothing. After two days of evasions and procrastinations the King—under whose influence is not quite clear, but most probably under that of Rizov, who was very much agitated at this time and continually engaged in conversation with the Austrian Minister—decided to entrust the formation of the Cabinet to M. Danev, in other words to leave the former Government in power, but excluding Gueshov and two or three of his political friends. But the King persuaded M. Todorov to remain in the Cabinet, as well as his brother-in-law, M. Madjarov. In this way the Government's link with the "Narodniak" party—the Conservatives of the former Eastern Rumelia—was not severed; and in the person of M. Todorov I was assured of a sincere advocate, imbued with my ideas, in the bosom of the Council.

But the direction of affairs of foreign policy belonged more especially to M. Danev, and I noticed with increasing anxiety that he, becoming daily more influenced by Rizov and the military, was heaping mistake on mistake and multiplying his tactless deeds, till his patriotic petulance seemed bound to bring Bulgaria to grief.

I have a very vivid recollection of one of my conversations with Danev during the first days of his

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presidency. When I was laying stress on the dangers of a collision between the former allies, Danev, with a sceptical smile, expressed his conviction that Serbia and Greece would never dare to attack Bulgaria or to force her to go to war, because the Greek Army was practically non-existent and the Serbians were infinitely less strong than the Bulgarians. "But you are forgetting Rumania," I remarked, "and her claims to fresh territorial acquisitions in the Dobrudja—claims which are becoming more clearly outlined and more persistent every day." "From the side of Rumania, I see no danger," replied Danev sharply; "you know how intimate I have been with M. Misu;[1] and we have drawn even nearer to one another in London, and from the interviews that I have had with him I have acquired the firm conviction that Rumania has not entered and will not enter into any combination with Serbia and Greece which would be directed against us. What I am telling you is a fact. I have seen it in black and white."

It was quite true that at that period Rumania was still avoiding the conclusion of a formal agreement with Serbia and Greece; but that did not in the least mean that Rumania would not present her claims to Bulgaria on the day when war would be declared between the former allies.

"And what are you doing about Turkey?" I exclaimed. "Do you really believe that Turkey, in the event of a collision between her late conquerors, would not endeavour to take back Adrianople and the whole of Thrace from you?"

"On that subject I feel absolutely easy," replied Danev, and he continued in a confidential tone: "I became very intimate in London with the second Turkish Plenipotentiary, Osman-Nizami Pasha.[2] We are corresponding at the moment, and quite lately I

[1] Formerely Rumanian diplomatic agent in Sofia; at the moment Rumanian Minister to London.

[2] At that time Turkish Ambassador to Berlin.

received a letter from him in which he assures me most explicitly that in Turkey no one is even thinking of the possibility of a fresh war; that every one is only concerned with one thing—tending the wounds inflicted on the Ottoman Empire by the disastrous campaign of last year."

"But do tell your Osman-Nizami Pasha in answer," I exclaimed, using the expression so common in the East, "that he is the *father of lies!* If he writes these kind of things to you, it is solely in order to lull your vigilance and to encourage you to a collision by which the Turks would most certainly profit!"

Danev merely tossed his head and his face assumed an eminently Bulgarian expression of obstinate incredulity.

As I said above, King Ferdinand in his telegraphic answer to the Emperor had in principle accepted the Russian arbitration, and the Bulgarian Government had sent its justificatory memorandum to our Foreign Office. But it was still imperative to carry out the arbitration, that is to say to make the Bulgarians and Serbians send their plenipotentiaries in the persons of their two Prime Ministers to St. Petersburg as soon as possible. The situation in Bulgaria was becoming daily more threatening. The troops of the three occupiers of the country were concentrated at certain points, fortifications were hurriedly erected in the open country. The former allies took up their positions opposite each other, protecting themselves by outposts. To be quite impartial I must mention that the Serbians were preparing for the eventual collision far more seriously than the Bulgarians; they covered the position of "Ovtché-Polié" with concrete fortifications and they maintained their Army at full strength, whereas the Bulgarians released certain classes in turn so that these could return to agricultural labour. It does not follow, however, that the Serbians wished for a collision more than the Bulgarians did; occupying nearly the whole of Macedonia

they had no reason whatever for attacking their rivals, and if they were arming so thoroughly it was because they were certain of being attacked by them. As to the Bulgarians, they continued to look on the Greek Army as an absolutely negligible quantity, and they were so sure of the superiority of their own forces over those of the Serbians that they allowed themselves the luxury of releasing some of their troops for agricultural purposes.

Just then fate seemed to be sending an alarming warning to the Bulgarians: on the 2nd (15th) June, towards noon, a violent earthquake occurred in the central part of the Balkans. Although it was felt very much in Sofia, nothing was ruined there. But at Tirnova and in the villages and small towns situated north of it, there was a terrible amount of destruction and a considerable number of victims. Dreadful scenes occurred in some places, as for instance at Tirnova itself, where about fifty children were buried under the ruins of a school, and their cries and groans were heard for more than twenty-four hours, for there were not enough people to do the rescue work: half the town was destroyed and all the eligible men were with the Army!

But alas! Bulgaria paid no heed to this warning.

On the 14th (27th) June, M. Todorov informed me that in the evening a council presided over by the King would be held at the Palace in order to settle definitely the question of sending the Bulgarian Plenipotentiary to St. Petersburg. Todorov promised to telephone the result of this conference to me the same evening. I sat up waiting till nearly one o'clock in the morning, and was just going off to bed when at last the telephone bell rang; then I heard M. Todorov's voice saying: "I have good news for you: the council has decided to send a delegation to St. Petersburg immediately, with M. Danev at the head of it. I will come round the first thing to-morrow morning to tell you the details." By eight

o'clock in the morning Todorov was with me and he told me how everything had gone off! At the King's wish Todorov had spoken first and advised the sending of the Bulgarian Plenipotentiary to St. Petersburg at once. Danev did not contradict him in the main, but he observed that the Serbians had not yet decided to send their plenipotentiary and that consequently the Bulgarian Government might find itself in a humiliating and ridiculous position if its plenipotentiary found himself all alone in St. Petersburg. General Savov argued in a decisive manner against the sending of any plenipotentiary at all; he argued that the Russian arbitration could be entirely dispensed with; that it was only necessary to make the Serbians and Greeks see that the Bulgarians were not in the least afraid of them and were ready and quite determined to occupy at once and by force the territories which were theirs by right. Serbia and Greece would be most careful not to face such danger and would end by yielding. To close the debate King Ferdinand declared that he entirely shared M. Todorov's point of view, which he considered to be the wisest and which, moreover, tallied with the King's answer to the Emperor of Russia's telegram. These words of the King's ended the discussion, and Danev's immediate departure was decided on!

Two hours after Todorov had left, M. Danev came to see me to inform me officially of the Government's decision. Naturally he gave me to understand that this decision had been arrived at thanks to him. I was careful not to let him see that I knew what had really occurred, thanked him cordially, and then asked: "Well! M. Danev, then when are we going? This evening or to-morrow? I have already ordered my portmanteaux to be packed."

Danev replied that it was impossible for him to start that day, but that he would try to be ready by the following evening; he warned me that for various reasons he did not wish to go by the ordinary way, that is to say by Belgrade and Vienna. There only remained

the way by Bukharest, which was far longer and less convenient, or that by Varna, the Black Sea and Odessa.

Towards mid-day the King's private secretary, M. Dobrovitch, came to see me to convey to me the grateful thanks of his master for all my efforts which had ended in the wise decision arrived at by the Government the evening before. The King added that he hoped that I should uphold the legitimate rights of Bulgaria in St. Petersburg. I replied to Dobrovitch that I was aware of the decisive part the King had played at the council the evening before, and that I would use my best efforts to make the conference about to open in St. Petersburg truly beneficial to Bulgaria.

The following day, 16th (29th) June, which was a Sunday, I had several talks on the telephone with Danev about our departure. Danev asked for a further respite, and suggested going by Varna, whence the Russian boat was leaving for Odessa in two days. I rebelled at such a delay and suggested starting for Varna that evening and embarking on a Russian torpedo-boat which had been stationed there since the war and was always at my disposal. But Danev, who—just like his colleague of the Forum, Cicero—was terribly afraid of sea-sickness, refused my proposal and ended by promising me to be ready to start on the Tuesday by any route I might choose.

To induce Danev to start as soon as possible, I represented to him that as soon as it was known in Belgrade that our departure was settled, M. Pachitch would immediately step into the train and would precede us by a few days in St. Petersburg. This childish argument had a great effect on Danev! However, by Monday morning I realised that Danev was escaping me again, and that his beautiful enthusiasm had given way to some ulterior motive which he was concealing from me.

Our journey, as is well known, never came off.

On Monday morning, towards nine o'clock, two of

my young colleagues, who had come to the Legation to write in cipher, told me that they had just met the military attachés of Austria and Germany (the latter was a particularly repulsive specimen of the Teutonic race), and that these worthies, rubbing their hands and displaying exuberant joy, had told them that the Bulgarians and Serbians had been fighting since the evening before, and that there was violent firing all along the Macedonian front. As one of my two informants was M. Doubiagsky, who was intelligent and eminently truthful, I was bound to believe the report he brought, and I promptly telephoned to M. Danev to demand an explanation. Danev replied that he knew nothing for certain, but that he had heard something about an *incident* between the Serbians and Bulgarians, and that at the moment he was busy talking to the Palace, and to the Minister for War, in order to arrive at what had actually happened. Two hours later, when the rumours had been confirmed through other sources, I telephoned to Danev, and entreated him most earnestly to take immediate steps to stop the firing on the Macedonian front. Towards five o'clock, I went to see him to get news, and I reiterated my entreaties that he should do all in his power to stop the firing. Danev seemed very much upset, and avoided looking me in the face; he assured me that what had occurred was not serious, and that the military authorities would take all necessary measures to settle amicably the "misunderstanding" which had arisen between the Bulgarian and Serbian troops.

However, by the evening the whole town knew that Bulgarians and Serbians were fighting on the Bregalnitza, and telegrams arrived simultaneously from Salonika saying that *there also* the Bulgarians had been attacked. I realised that events were taking a disastrous turn, and I ordered my portmanteaux to be unpacked. But I was still far from suspecting that the Bulgarians alone were guilty of the bloodshed.

The next day—Tuesday morning—Danev came to

me and, much disconcerted but more sincere in his manner, informed me that on Sunday night, a collision had actually taken place between a section of the Bulgarian and Serbian troops, but that no one knew for certain what had caused this regrettable incident; unfortunately, the collision had spread along the whole front, and at this very moment the Government was dispatching peremptory orders to General Savov to stop the firing at once, and to take the troops back to their former positions, without worrying as to whether the initiative of the shots fired came from the Bulgarians or the Serbians. Of course, I could not but approve of this measure. But the orders of the Bulgarian Government could no longer stop the bloodshed. Military operations spread still further, and two or three days later no one any longer thought of stopping them.

Meanwhile, I received information from Belgrade that the Serbians, having taken a whole Bulgarian regiment prisoner, had found, amongst the regimental papers, the order to attack the Serbian outposts during the night of Sunday, 16th (29th) June, to Monday, 17th (30th) June, to destroy them, and to advance on such and such positions. The order was quite authentic, and there could be no doubt whatever about it! During the first three days of the hostilities thus begun, the rumour was circulated in Sofia that in Salonika the Greeks had, in the night, suddenly attacked the Bulgarian brigade and had massacred it. When the document which the Serbians had captured from the Bulgarians was made public, and recognised as authentic, no one any longer believed in the "St. Bartholomew" of Salonika. It was afterwards conclusively proved that there, also, the initiative of hostilities came from the Bulgarians.

A few days after I learnt from reliable sources how all this had occurred.

On Saturday morning, I had not been the only one

to be informed of the decision arrived at the evening before at the council held at the Palace. The same information was received by the Austrian and German Ministers, who had their clients in the bosom of the council. The whole of Saturday was spent in secret meetings between the "Macedonians," the military of Savov's camp, and the agents of the two diplomats in question. The next day, after a council held at Count Tarnowski's, the "Macedonians," Rizov, Gennadiev, and Colonel Nerezov (Chief of the Headquarters Staff), went to the Palace and approached the King with humble prayers—which sounded sometimes like threats—not to allow Danev's departure for St. Petersburg, and to force the Serbians and the Greeks to make the desired concessions by immediately commanding the Bulgarian troops to advance.

"But this is war!" exclaimed Ferdinand. "Not at all, sir," was the answer, "we have a right to occupy Macedonia conjointly with the Serbians and the Greeks; neither of them have the right to stop our army of occupation advancing wherever it may be necessary. Yet, nevertheless, if they wished to oppose it by force, we should overthrow them, and should occupy such strong positions that there would be nothing left to them but to submit to our will. And then the conferences at St. Petersburg might begin."

Strange as it may seem, it was this inconceivable argument—that such a treacherous aggression did not constitute an opening of hostilities—which had a decisive effect on Ferdinand's mind. This subterfuge exactly suited his character. And added to this there were the thinly-veiled threats of the speakers. Ferdinand, who was never remarkable for much courage, already saw revolvers levelled at his head and bombs strewing his path, through the heads of the Macedonian bands who were infesting his capital, and who would murder him without pity if he were inclined to give up certain parts of Madedonia to the Serbians and Greeks.

However, before giving his consent, the King sent for General Savov to ask him his opinion. Savov went at once to the Palace, and declared to the King, before his accomplices, that he entirely shared their point of view.

"In that case," said Ferdinand, "I authorise you to give the necessary orders to the Army." But the General, who had never sinned through excess of ingenuousness, told the King that he did not think it possible to give such an important order without a *written* authorisation from His Majesty. After much discussion and hesitation, Ferdinand was at last obliged to sit down at his writing-table, to write and to sign a document in Savov's name, in which he authorised the Commander-in-Chief to take all necessary measures for the advance of the Bulgarian troops on such and such positions. The General put this document in his pocket, but he did not keep it there long: very soon this precious document was sent to repose in a safe in a bank abroad. If Savov had not taken this precaution, Ferdinand, at the first reverse, would have had him arrested, and, having obtained possession of the compromising document, would have summoned the General before a military tribunal for having attacked the Allies of Bulgaria treacherously and without authorisation; and finally twelve bullets would have silenced the former Commander-in-Chief of the Bulgarian Army for ever.

But, thanks to the wise precaution of General Savov, he escaped such a fate, and Ferdinand could not make him shoulder the whole responsibility for the treacherous deed of the 16th (29th) June.

The King thus assumed a considerable share of responsibility for this deed, which still weighs on his conscience and marks him with a stain of blood and felony.

It ought to be mentioned that the sudden aggression directed against the Serbians assumed, in consequence of the preceding circumstances, a particularly odious character. On the 16th (29th) June the news was

circulated on both army fronts that the two Governments had definitely accepted the Russian arbitration, and that in consequence all danger of war was over. This news produced the most joyful impression in both camps. Both sides began to fraternise, officers as well as men. From the outposts they assembled together, drank together, embraced one another. After the curfew each man returned to his post. Yet this same evening General Savov's order to advance was received by the Bulgarian troops. And lo! and behold! towards dawn the Bulgarians suddenly attacked the Serbian outposts, where the men were peacefully sleeping under the influence of the fraternisation of the day before, and . . . massacred their would-be brothers. But this cowardly attack availed the Bulgarians nothing. The very next day the Serbians succeeded in concentrating their reserves; and the enemy detachments who at the outset had made a certain advance were stopped and thrown back with serious loss after two days' fighting. It was then that the Bulgarian Government and the King decided to follow my earnest advice, and on the 19th June (2nd July) they sent a peremptory order to the whole front to regain their former positions immediately. But it was too late. The Serbians, exasperated at what had occurred, did not allow the Bulgarians to retreat quietly they themselves began to advance, and to fall on any Bulgarian detachments that were retiring without fighting. It was in this way that almost a whole Bulgarian regiment was taken with all its supplies and its papers. Among these papers was found the famous order-of-the-day of General Savov.

On Sunday, the 23rd June (6th July), the Serbian and Greek Ministers officially broke off relations with Bulgaria and left Sofia. At the same time the proclamations of the Kings of Serbia and Greece were issued to their armies. Thus the Bulgarians were at war with their former allies. And on the 21st June (4th July) mobilisation was ordered in Rumania.

In Macedonia the plateau of *Ovtche Polie* and the bend of the Vardar near Krivolak were already the scene of sanguinary battles. At Krivolak the Bulgarians had at first succeeded in surrounding a whole Serbian division, but Prince Alexander arriving at the last moment with a portion of the Serbian First Army retrieved the situation and freed the surrounded division. And from that moment success was decidedly on the Serbian side. The Bulgarians were forced to retire gradually towards their former frontier, that is to say, in the direction of Kustendil. Two weeks later, the Serbians had already conquered strong Bulgarian positions on the frontier, and it only depended on them to occupy the whole district of Kustendil; moreover, by then complete demoralisation had set in amongst the Bulgarian troops; whole companies were deserting from the front with their arms, and were going into the interior of the country and in the direction of Sofia, which might become very dangerous for Ferdinand and the members of the Government.

Generally speaking, during this miserable war the Bulgarian soldier displayed much less courage and endurance than during the glorious campaign against the Turks; and the reason is quite simple and quite natural. Whereas the Bulgarian officer was impelled by the ambitions of a rigid and exaggerated nationalism, the soldier vaguely felt that he was being exposed to death in order that he might shed the blood of his Serbian brothers without plausible reasons and for unacknowledged ends. Besides, in going against his will to fight his former allies, the Bulgarian soldier's thoughts were centred on other things: he was perpetually thinking of his native village left at the mercy of a Turkish or Rumanian invasion. In this respect the Bulgarian peasant showed far more common sense than his rulers, who seemed utterly unable to view matters correctly.

I have been told that when the order was issued to retire the Bulgarian troops who were occupying the

position of Bulair (near the Dardanelles) and to send them to Macedonia, the soldiers of several regiments refused to obey. They answered the reproofs and threats of their officers with threats, and finally drove the officers away. Then, to persuade them to obey, some superior officers of the reserve were sent to them; among them was the colonel who told me all this, and who formerly had been an artillery officer in Russia.[1] When these officers began to persuade the mutinous soldiers not to commit such a breach of discipline and not to dishonour the name—illustrious all the world over—of the Bulgarian soldier, the *voïniks* (soldiers) replied, "But how can we retire from here? The Turkish Army faces us; we know perfectly well that it is not being disbanded: on the contrary, fresh contingents are arriving daily. If we leave, the Turks will promptly advance, will reoccupy all the territories and all the towns which we have wrested from them with our blood; then they will go to us, within our borders, will burn and plunder our villages, violate our women and butcher our children. And meanwhile we shall be amusing ourselves by fighting our brothers and co-religionists the Serbians! We will never consent to this." The soldiers could only be persuaded to obey and to consent to being led away when the reserve officers gave their word of honour that by virtue of a formal agreement recently concluded the Turks were going to demobilise their Army. And this agreement had not been invented by the reserve officers; they themselves had received official assurance of it from their superior officers!

[1] The officers on the reserve were far more highly thought of among Bulgarian soldiers than the officers on the active list. The common people looked on the latter as janizaries and agents of Ferdinand's that were little liked and generally despised in the field. These officers had become strangers to the people, whereas the officers on the reserve, who had shown themselves to be quite as brave, if not braver, than those on the active list during the Turkish war, belonged to classes of society which the Bulgarian peasants generally esteemed: rich peasants, lawyers, schoolmasters, former Russian officers, etc.

But a still greater disaster overtook the Bulgarian troops who were operating against the Greeks. The army of General Ivanov (the victor of Adrianople), which occupied Southern Macedonia only, consisted of two reduced divisions,[1] that is to say, of about 30,000 to 35,000 men. The Bulgarian commander considered this number quite sufficient not only to hold back but even to defeat the Greek Army, which the Bulgarians treated with supreme contempt. They were cruelly mistaken. King Constantine had under his command 80,000 men, experienced soldiers, better armed than the Bulgarians, and animated by innate and historic hatred of the latter; General Ivanov's army was completely beaten and he had to retire, without his artillery and supplies, across the mountain range of Balachitza, already famed in history by the decisive defeat inflicted by the Emperor Basil II., *the Exterminator of the Bulgarians*, on the last armies of the Bulgarian Tsar, John Samuel Schischman.

During this retreat the Bulgarian second division accomplished feats of tenacity and courage; but at the same time the Bulgarians, exasperated by defeat, disgraced themselves by deeds of savage cruelty towards the Greek population and prisoners of war. The Greeks repaid them in their own coin, and the war between the two co-religionist peoples so recently allied assumed a thoroughly odious character.

However, at the close of this brief but bloody campaign the Greeks had crossed the Bulgarian frontier in several places and had no longer any important barrier before them.

When the first reverses against the Greeks were known and the retreat of Belachitza began, Danev, who now came to see me nearly every day, confessed the Bulgarian defeat very openly. This happened—if my

[1] A Bulgarian division usually comprises six regiments, hence about 24,000 bayonets.

memory does not fail me—two or three days before the Rumanian troops crossed the Danube.

"Very well," I said to Danev, "*you are undone!* And here is a friend's advice which I offer in all sincerity: stop the Rumanians immediately, giving them all the concessions they demand, and also immediately ask for peace in Belgrade and in Bukharest. Otherwise the Turks will soon be falling on you. M. de Giers has just informed me that whereas the Grand Vizier is repeatedly assuring him that Turkey is not dreaming of moving or of joining in the new Balkan war, the Russian Embassy possesses positive information that the Turkish troops are advancing *by night* ever nearer to the new Bulgarian frontier, and that a fairly considerable force is already concentrated there. Hence I reiterate my most earnest advice: make peace with your former allies at once and at any cost, otherwise you will suffer the worst disasters; for *you are undone*."

Danev would not accept my extreme but strictly logical deductions. He replied that the Bulgarians would not oppose any resistance to the Rumanian troops—that had been decided on; they had only to occupy the Dobrudja and a part of Danubian Bulgaria. The present object of the Bulgarian Army was to hold the Greeks, and, by stopping the Serbians on the Bregalnitza, to enter Serbia from the other side, that is to say, from the side of the north-eastern frontier, where the Bulgarians to this end had mustered special and fairly considerable forces. When a success should be apparent on this new side, the Rumanians would be forced to stop and to become more conciliatory. As to the Turks, Danev persisted in not believing in their intention to re-take Adrianople and Thrace. I did not conceal from the speaker that I did not share his opinion in any way, and I drew his attention to the fact that by not heeding my advice he was assuming a very heavy responsibility towards his country.

Two days after, however, the Bulgarian Government, in view of the crossing of the Danube by large

Rumanian forces, addressed to me and directly to St. Petersburg an entreaty to stop military operations by our all-powerful words, and conjointly with the other Great Powers to elaborate the conditions of peace. St. Petersburg recommended the two sides to take as a basis for negotiations a frontier passing by the Bregalnitza, the Vardar, the range of Belachitza and the lower course of the Struma—a frontier which would have left to Bulgaria the towns of Kotchana, Petchovo, Drama, and Kavala. At the same time we suggested to the Prime Ministers of the Balkan States to assemble at Nish and to begin peace negociations. The Bulgarians promptly accepted our proposals, and through me informed Belgrade that General Paprikov—former Minister to St. Petersburg—was going to be sent to Nish to enter into a parley about an immediate armistice. Paprikov was to be accompanied by our military agent, Colonel Romanowski.

The Serbian Government agreed to the coming of General Paprikov and Colonel Romanowski; but when they arrived, having submitted to all the formalities of crossing the two fronts near Pirot, they found no Serbian plenipotentiary in Nish, and in the meantime I received a notice from Belgrade that the Serbians could not begin any conversation with the Bulgarian delegate without the participation of Greek and Montenegrin Plenipotentiaries, who were expected shortly in Uskub and not in Nish; I was informed that Greece would be represented by M. Venizelos himself. All this signified that the adversaries of the Bulgarians wished directly to broach the peace negociations and not parleyings about an armistice. This exchange of telegrams between me and Belgrade took four days, during which Paprikov and Romanowski were kept waiting about in a hotel in Nish, the latter surrounded by every care and attention, the former under the strictest supervision. On the fifth day, Paprikov, who had not got full power to arrange the peace terms with the heads of the Serbian and Greek

Governments, returned to Sofia from his fruitless errand.

I must mention here a very characteristic detail of General Paprikov's journey. The Serbians complained that the Bulgarian command near Pirot had profited by the short opening on the front to advance the troops in certain places and to alter the disposition of the batteries. And Colonel Romanowski having made inquiries about this accusation found it to be true.

While Paprikov was in Nish, the military position of the Bulgarians became still worse: the Serbians, as I said before, broke through their enemies' second line of defence and were on the point of occupying Kustendil; the Greeks had taken the positions of Rilo-Dagh and were hence on Bulgarian territory, with all the possibility of descending the Rilo range either on the Philippopolis side or on the side of Samakov and Sofia. Meanwhile the Rumanian Army, not at all content with the occupation of the Dobrudja, having made three bridges over the Danube, occupied the whole of Northern Bulgaria at one stroke, crossed the Balkans by the Arab-Konak Pass — the way taken by the Russians in December, 1877 — and began to descend into the plain of Sofia. By this rapid advance the Rumanians threatened to cut off the Bulgarian forces that had entered Serbia from the side of Belogradchik and of Trn, so that there was nothing left to the Bulgarian command but hurriedly to recall these troops; one division, which could not possibly retire in time, fell into the hands of the Rumanian Army; the soldiers cried treason, laid down their arms and surrendered to the Rumanians; complete disorder was beginning in the Bulgarian Army.

On the 1st (14th) July, the Turks definitely threw off their mask, and an *irade* of the Sultan's ordered the Ottoman troops to cross the frontier and to re-occupy Adrianople.

Exactly a week after the conversation reported above, Danev, pale and upset, came to see me, and when

I begged him to sit down, he threw himself into an armchair, exclaiming: "M. Nekludoff, we are done for! What is to be done? Doubtless you already know that the Turks have crossed the frontier and are marching on Adrianople, where we have only 1500 soldiers."

"M. Danev, it is exactly a week ago to the day that I said to you: '*you are undone*'; you refused to believe it and you only half listened to my earnest advice. What can I say to you now?" Nevertheless, I comforted him a little, and I proceeded to investigate with him the steps to be taken to obtain an armistice as quickly as possible, to be followed by peace. I was truly filled with pity for this man at bay describing his country as completely shipwrecked! As concerning the advance of the Turks I could as yet say nothing to Danev. I felt sure that in St. Petersburg we should do all in our power to stop the Turks, but I also knew that from Berlin they were being encouraged and urged on.

This was my last conversation with Danev. The following day the whole Cabinet resigned, and on the 7th (20th) July, after a ministerial crisis lasting five days, Ferdinand entrusted the formation of a new Cabinet to the Stamboulovists with Radoslavov and Tontchev at their head. The Foreign Office was given to Gennadiev, a "Koutzo-Wallachian"-Macedonian by birth, with a more or less European appearance, intelligent, cunning, rather agreeable, but unfortunately labouring under the onus of a formal accusation of embezzlement. It was clear that by this change of Government Ferdinand, at this critical moment, thought he could buy the goodwill of Austria and her intervention in favour of the Bulgarians, an intervention he had been impatiently awaiting for some weeks, in fact ever since the beginning of the Bulgarian reverses. My French colleague and I attached even more importance to Ferdinand's choice: we thought it signified an intervention by Austria already agreed on; but we

were mistaken. As was proved later by Italian revelations, Austria did in fact wish to intervene and to attack Serbia, but she was stopped firstly by Italy's flat refusal to be associated in such a policy, and secondly, and more especially by the *veto* of Germany. The latter had a more important and pressing object in view—that of restoring Thrace to the Turks, and of reconquering her own former influence in Stambul. And from Berlin the Austrians were told: "Wait. The time is not yet. Our day will come."

The day came exactly a year later, in July, 1914.

On the 9th (22nd) July, Adrianople was retaken without a blow being struck by the Turkish troops, who after that never thought of pausing, but advanced rapidly, retaking all the territory which the Bulgarians had taken from them.

We were going through sad times in Sofia then. The Rumanians were camping only 15 kilometres from the Bulgarian capital; driving one day along the Orkhanie highroad about ten kilometres from the town, with my glasses I could see the silhouettes of the Rumanian patrols in the plain beyond the Isker. During the day the Rumanian *aeroplane*[1] flew over Sofia and threw out harmless pamphlets. Alarming news came from Kustendil: mutinous soldiers were threatening a march on the capital. And meantime the Greeks had approached Samokov and were proclaiming reprisals for the Bulgarian atrocities. Finally the rumour spread that the Turks had crossed the former frontier of Bulgaria and were beginning to plunder and set fire to the villages. The Bulgarians belonging to the leisured and ruling classes lost their heads and sent letters to us begging for refuge if necessary in the foreign legations. In the courtyard of the Palace, near the back door, two royal motor cars stood ready day and night to take the King and his family away from the capital. The foreign Ministers met at the house of our senior to discuss

[1] There was only one in the Rumanian Army!

the situation and the measures to be taken to preserve order in the town. After a short discussion we agreed to telegraph to our respective Governments to suggest that they should beg the Rumanians to occupy Sofia with their troops if the town was really threatened with the entry of the Greeks or with an inroad of mutinous soldiers. It was to be distinctly understood in this case that the Rumanians were to confine themselves to keeping order, without interrupting the working of the Bulgarian Government.

The day after this meeting we were invited to go and see the King in the evening. Evidently His Majesty wished to review the situation with us. Our arrival at the Palace was originally fixed for seven o'clock and then postponed till ten. The night was dark; a strong, cold wind was blowing from the Vitosch Pass,[1] when one after the other we glided like conspirators into the dimly-lit courtyard of the Konak of Sofia and entered the Palace. Up half-dark staircases and corridors we threaded our way and were shown into a room just as dimly lit, where we were received by the private secretary, Dobrovitch, with his customary black coat and amiable giggle, who begged us to wait patiently for a few minutes as the King was still conferring with his Ministers. We were all disposed to be indulgent, and we lit cigarettes and began to talk in whispers. The clock struck eleven, then twelve, and still the King did not send for us. We had all imagined that he had summoned us so as to receive us in his study, and there laying aside all etiquette, so superfluous at such a time, to discuss with us the critical position of the country and the capital. And we all were disposed to listen attentively and to help him with our advice and our intercession with our Governments. But this protracted waiting began to annoy us; we considered that Ferdinand

[1] The summer of 1913 was in general extremely cold, and this was very much felt in the high plain of Sofia where the summer evenings are always cool.

was being too high-handed with Ministers to whom he would soon have to address entreaties.

"Listen, gentlemen!" whispered one of the Ministers to two intimate colleagues in a corner: "all this has a truly lugubrious appearance. First that door will open, then another, and we shall be led into an inner court and there by torchlight we shall see either Danev or Savov having his head cut off!" "Or else," replied some one else, "the door will open and dear Dobrovitch will appear with his usual amiable giggle to inform us that the King has bolted and that we shall never see him again!" At last the famous door opened, and Dobrovitch really appeared, and begged us to follow him. We went through two or three half-dark rooms and suddenly found ourselves in the state saloon, which was brilliantly lit up and quite empty. We were asked to stand up in order of seniority and we did so. The senior at this time was the German Minister von Below; I took the second place, then came the Minister of Great Britain, then the others; we were placed far apart. Two or three minutes after the door at the far end of the saloon opened and the King entered in full dress with decorations (whereas we had been invited to come in morning-dress!). His Majesty was preceded by his Lord Chamberlain and his aide-de-camp, and followed at a distance of ten feet by his new Foreign Secretary Gennadiev, in evening clothes, with a white tie and all his Bulgarian and Saxe-Coburg decorations. The King, making a bow which included every one, took up his position in the middle of the room and made us a speech obviously prepared beforehand, in which he revealed the critical situation of Bulgaria. Having alluded, somewhat pointedly, to the so-called hostility of the Great Powers towards Bulgaria as being the cause of this situation, he entreated us to transmit to our Governments his earnest prayer not to allow the total shipwreck of the country to ensue.

All this artificial setting and this pretentious speech—somewhat unseemly from Ferdinand's lips—ended by

shocking us all without any distinction of political camps: on each face surprise and displeasure were depicted. Having finished his speech the King went straight up to the French Minister and talked to him in a low voice, then he came up to me and in a voice so low as not to be overheard by my neighbours asked:

"What do you think of the situation, M. Nekludoff? Will Russia really allow the Turks to plunder Eastern Rumelia and to enter Philippopolis? Will she really not come to our assistance? If it is I who ought to be punished, why punish the whole Bulgarian people? What have you to say to that?"

These last words exhausted my patience and instead of answering the King in a low voice as etiquette demanded, I replied quite loud, so that each of my words could be heard by my colleagues: "Sir, with respect to the advance of the Turks, Your Majesty may rest assured that we shall be able to stop the Ottoman troops and shall not allow them to trample that soil which was Bulgaria *before the war;* concerning everything else, Your Majesty already knows my opinion: that Bulgaria's sole salvation lies in the conclusion of an immediate peace with her former allies and with Rumania; we are ready to co-operate in this good work with all the means in our power; we cannot do more." The King looked at me with an evil expression on his face, was silent for a few minutes and then asked:

"And you feel *sure* that you will stop the Turks?"

"Yes, I am quite sure of it, sir," I took on myself to answer.

The King bowed to me and then turned to my neighbour, the Minister of Great Britain, and asked him what he thought of the situation.

"I share the opinion of my Russian colleague, sir," was the answer.

Ferdinand exchanged a few words with the other Ministers, but he treated the Austro-Hungarian and German Ministers with studied coldness. He probably

knew that he could no longer count on active support from their countries, and consequently he was sulking with them. Having talked to every one the King returned to the middle of the room, made a general bow and walked away with the same ceremonial towards his private apartments.

From this day, and in spite of my abrupt answer, Ferdinand sent for me repeatedly during the succeeding weeks and consulted me about all the questions which were being discussed at the peace conference of Bukharest. I had returned to favour, and this lasted until the day when the final result of the negotiations of Bukharest had deprived the Bulgarians and their master of all hope of improvement in the situation in which they had placed themselves by their inordinate ambition and their insane obstinacy. Moreover, when this *lasciate ogni speranza* moment arrived Ferdinand was already preparing to leave Bulgaria for a time and to go and spend a few weeks on his Hungarian property; and I, having been informed of my early transfer to Stockholm, had been granted a holiday and was starting for Paris, where I was to meet M. Sazonoff.

I only saw Ferdinand once more, at the end of December, O.S., when I returned to Sofia for a few days to make arrangements for my departure and to hand in my letters of recall. At this interview Ferdinand behaved in a most unseemly manner to me; I will relate this further on.

The efforts of Russian diplomacy checked the advance of the Turks who were stopped at the former Bulgarian frontier, and thanks to our prompt action in Rumania, the Rumanian troops left the town of Varna which they had occupied.

When I told Sazonoff about the Bulgarian Government having sought our help, he suggested that a conference of the Prime Ministers of Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Greece should be held in Nish, in view of the immediate conclusion of peace. But as Ferdinand

had not confined himself to entreating our intervention but had also sent an imploring telegram to King Charles of Rumania, the latter proposed convening a conference of the belligerents at Bukharest, in order to proceed to the simultaneous conclusion of an armistice and of peace. Our Foreign Secretary readily agreed to the change of place for the negotiations, the belligerents also agreed, and on the 17th (30th) July, the first sitting of the peace conference took place in Bukharest under the presidency of the Rumanian Prime Minister, M. Majoresco; the next day, the 18th (31st) July, an armistice of five days was signed. All the efforts of the Bulgarian delegates to make the peace conditions imposed by their enemies less hard for Bulgaria—efforts in which we supported them—met with no success. And under pressure from Rumania, who absolutely refused to prolong the armistice, the Bulgarians on the 24th July (6th August), were forced to accept the peace conditions dictated by their adversaries.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PEACE OF BUKHAREST

The stipulations of the Peace Conference of Bukharest, to be properly understood, must be studied with due regard to the conditions of the peace concluded by the Balkan Allies with Turkey in London, on the 20th May of this same year, 1913. In London, Turkey had been obliged to abandon all her territories situated north and west of the line Midia—Enos, and to renounce her rights of sovereignty over the island of Crete. After which, the fixing of the frontiers of the future independent Albania, as well as the question of the islands of the Archipelago, were referred to the decisions of the Great Powers, whereas the demarcation between Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Greece was left to the decisions of these four countries.

There was another clause in the London Peace Treaty which did not seem to evoke any controversy or excitement, but to which I personally attached a special importance. This clause stipulated that the territory of Mt. Athos should become an independent state, except for the spiritual supremacy of the Universal Patriarch. "The Republic of the Twenty Monasteries"—as this original agglomeration of Orthodox monks has been described for centuries—was recognised by Europe, and declared free from all temporal supremacy. The idea of this clause, which I greeted with sympathy, was entirely M. Sazonoff's. Strictly Orthodox by education and having learnt during his long stay in Rome not to neglect anything relative to the political sphere of the Church, Sazonoff, although not possessing personal experience of the Near East,

understood better than any of those around him what the "Monte Santo" represented to the Orthodox populations of Russia and the Levant.

As we know, Mt. Athos from time immemorial had rejoiced in autonomy and special privileges, which the Turks had respected. The twenty oldest monasteries, from which the other convents depended, each sent a representative to the *Protat,* that is the Superior Council which sat at Karea, a small borough built around an ancient cathedral; the Protat represented the high court of justice for all the convents of the Monte Santo, and the organ through which the republic of monks communicated with the outside world, that is to say, with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Turkish authorities. The latter were represented at Karea by an Ottoman official, who had under him a dozen soldiers, who possessed a mosque but could not bring their families with them. Besides this minute armed force, the Protat kept up a score or so of armed guards recruited from among the Greeks and Orthodox Macedonians. These *palikars*, chiefly quartered on the narrow isthmus [1] which connects the long peninsula of Mt. Athos to Chalcidice, protected the monastery-land from the incursions of wolves and bands of brigands; women are strictly forbidden to enter this territory by all the statutes of the Monte Santo.

But if the cenobites were thus protected from the ferocity of beasts, the violence of men, and the charms of women, they were always exposed to another great temptation of monastic life—internal dissensions. And during the last few years, a new subject for discussion had been added to those which had always existed—political questions.

The Greco-Bulgarian ecclesiastical conflict was the signal for the first serious tension in Greek and Russian relations. The protection accorded to the Bulgarians by the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople, General

[1] The isthmus which Xerxes originally cut through ; the traces of the canal can still be seen.

Ignatieff, had greatly alienated all the Greeks, even those who up till then had remained sincere partisans of Russia. Since this, the Greeks of Constantinople, like those of Athens, began to perceive Russian intrigues everywhere, and to denounce them to Europe. As one of the proofs of these dangerous intrigues, they liked to quote Mt. Athos, "that admirable strategical position," where General Ignatieff kept, in monkish garb, a whole division of Russian troops! Europe half believed this; in any case, the Russian monks of Mt. Athos were looked on with a somewhat unfavourable eye, and they were recommended to the vigilance of the Porte. The position of these unfortunate people became especially critical during the last Russo-Turkish war, and at the time of the Congress of Berlin.

But there is no calumny that does not die out, and there are no difficulties that cannot be surmounted when one knows how to set about it. During the sixteen years of M. de Nelidoff's memorable time as Ambassador to Constantinople, the position of the Russian cenobites of Mt. Athos became stronger, and the absurd accusations brought against them died down. Generally speaking, M. de Nelidoff's work and that of his equally wise successor, M. Zinovieff, cannot be sufficiently appreciated in the history of our relations with the Near East. In spite of the lack of a ruling principle in St. Petersburg, in spite of the progressive increase of German influence on the shores of the Bosphorus, these two eminent diplomats managed—first, to keep intact the honour and prestige of the Russian name in the East, and then to restore the confidence in us of all the Orthodox nationalities of the Balkan Peninsula. This confidence, which had been shaken for some time, under the influence of the rivalries and conflicts of these nationalities, had to be regained by an impartial line of conduct—benevolent and at the same time prudent—with regard to their real needs and their just rights. The two Ambassadors had also managed to gain the personal sympathies and

the deep respect of the Turks, and that was naturally a source of strength to them in their mediations and measures.

During the course of M. de Nelidoff's term of office, the position of our compatriots at Mt. Athos was strengthened, as I said before; and the monastery of St. Panteleïmon became, with the support of the Russian Embassy, the representative and recognised guide of all the Russian monks of the Monte Santo. Excellent relations were established between these monks and the Universal Patriarchate. The eminent Patriarch, Joachim III., a personal friend of M. de Nelidoff's, and who more than once occupied the Chair of St. John Chrysostom, and in the interval retired to Mt. Athos, was the special protector of the Russian monks. The relations of the latter with the Turkish authorities were excellent. Even amongst the Greek monasteries, several kept up close relations with the great Russian monastery, especially those in which the cenobitic rules had been preserved intact.

The faith of the Russian people has always borne a monastic rather than hierarchical stamp. Frequently and outrageously deceived in his trust by unworthy monks, the Russian man of the people was nevertheless perpetually in search of examples of true cenobitism, and of monasteries which should fulfil his ideals of ardent asceticism and constant prayer.

Mt. Athos attracted the thoughts and the pilgrimages of Russians from the earliest days of their conversion to Christianity. And when in the last fifty years Russian monastic life flourished again on the Monte Santo, and when, at the same time, journeys in the East had become infinitely easier and possible for the most modest purse, our pilgrims began to stream there in considerable numbers. They found in our monasteries of Mt. Athos all that had always seemed to them to be the ideal of monastic life: a truly frugal way of living, severe cenobitic rules, magnificent services, and more especially almost incessant and

strictly conscientious prayer for the living and for the dead.

The idea of profiting by events which had developed in the Balkan Peninsula to stipulate for the independence of Mt. Athos was consequently an essentially Russian idea. It offered no direct political advantages, but it constituted a striking recognition of the Russian religious ideal, and should yield beneficial results of a cultural and political order. From the time of Peter the Great, and until the present day, Russian policy has striven at every favourable opportunity to enhance and glorify the name of the autocratic monarch, to strengthen the naval and military power of the Empire, to further the interests of commerce, and, finally, either to free the Christian nationalities of a common origin of the East or to ameliorate their lot. But it was the first time that our diplomacy had thought of the defence and the glorification of the Russian popular ideal, and had recognised the importance of the work of simple men of the people, who had brought the leaven of their faith to the East, and had accomplished a real spiritual conquest there.

When I received from St. Petersburg the account of the stipulations of the Conference of London, I heartily congratulated M. Sazonoff on his idea concerning Mt. Athos.

The peace treaty of Bukharest presents quite a different structure. It does not constitute a definite settlement of the troubles of the Near East, but only a settlement of the war of 1913 between the Christian nationalities of the Balkan Peninsula. Bulgaria, as the initiator of this fratricidal contest, was to undergo just punishment, and her former allies had a right to territorial gains at her expense, gains which would have made them more powerful and less exposed to Bulgarian greed and ambition. But, if this condition could and should be admitted with regard to Serbia, Greece, and even Rumania, it was in no way to the

interests of the Powers of the Entente and of Serbia, to see Bulgaria deprived of nearly all her conquests in Thrace. And even in settling the demarcation question of the Bulgarians with the Serbians, Greeks, and Rumanians, it would have been good policy to spare the self-esteem of the Bulgarian people a little, and to consider their real interests.

It was precisely in this way that at the beginning we viewed the task of the Peace Conference of Bukharest. *In the first place, I received the order to declare to the Bulgarian Government from His Majesty the Emperor that we would not tolerate any humiliation or excessive weakening of Bulgaria.* Then M. Sazonoff protested most vehemently against the advance of the Turkish troops in Thrace and their reoccupation of Adrianople, Kirk-Kilisseh, etc. When the Ottoman Ambassador, Turkhan Pasha—in parenthesis, a worthy and respectable old diplomat—went to see Sazonoff, by order of the Porte, in order to obtain our benevolent consent to the retaking of Thrace by the Turks, the Minister answered that he refused to discuss that question with him; that he would discuss it most thoroughly with his Russian colleagues at the War Office and the Admiralty. Finally, the Russian Minister to Bukharest, M. Schebeko, when receiving the Bulgarian delegates, gave them some hope, and promised to do all in his power to secure to Bulgaria part of the acquisitions purchased with so much Bulgarian blood in 1912. During the nine days that the Conference lasted, M. Schebeko played a prominent part in the negotiations, or rather the *attributes of the part* were willingly assigned to him by both sides, who frequently applied for his intervention, but who did not follow his advice.

Shortly before the Bukharest Conference, Russian diplomacy had suggested taking as a base for demarcation between the former allies a frontier line following the course of the Bregalnitza, that of the Vardar (to a certain point), then the chain of Belachitza, and finally the lower course of the Struma, a line which

would have left to Bulgaria the towns Kotchana, Radovitch, Petchevo, Drama, and Kavala. But in Bukharest we could not succeed in getting this line accepted. The frontier between Bulgaria and Serbia crossed the line of the watershed of the Vardar and of the Struma, so that Kotchana and Radovitch returned to Serbia; and the frontier between Bulgaria and Greece followed the course of the Mesta, so that the towns of Demir-Hissar, Seres, Drama, and Kavala returned to Greece. It is true that on the subject of Kavala a reservation was made, aiming at the possibility of a revision of that clause in the treaty, and on this question Russian diplomacy was on the Bulgarian side. But when Austria-Hungary began to demand the revision of the whole Bukharest treaty, Russia naturally would not support such a proposal. At the same time, and in consideration of the energetic intercession of France in favour of the Greeks, we finally abandoned our intention of soliciting the return of Kavala to the Bulgarians.

Concerning the occupation of Thrace by the Turks, our protests became rarer and feebler day by day, and soon ceased completely. Bulgaria, who on her side had persisted for ages in the point of view that the question of Adrianople and of Thrace was a European one, and who consequently sought the intervention of the Great Powers to settle this question, ended by giving in on this point and herself began negotiations with the Porte. It was easy to realise by the choice of the Bulgarian negotiators that King Ferdinand and his Ministers were now only counting on the protection of Austria-Hungary and that of Germany, become all-powerful again in Constantinople. It was old M. Natchevitch, former Stamboulovist, long since retired from politics, who was persuaded to return to Constantinople, where he had been diplomatic agent of Bulgaria for many years, while M. Tontchev and General Savov—reinstated in Ferdinand's good graces—acted as special plenipotentiaries to conclude the definite settlement with the Porte.

After long and arduous parleyings—during which the support of the Russian Embassy was nevertheless lent to the Bulgarians—the latter had to give up all Thrace situated between the sea and the left bank of the Maritza, and the district of Demotika on the right bank of this river. Altogether Bulgaria, of all her conquests, only kept that part of Thrace ending at the port of Dedeagatch and the block of the Rhodope Mountains, which are more of an obstacle than a link between Bulgaria and that bit of coast of the Ægean Sea. And the Bulgarians also lost a large portion of the Dobrudja and of Deli-Orman, with the towns Tutrukan and Dobritch, and the ports of Kavarna and Baltchik on the Black Sea.

Finally, neither at the Conference of Bukharest nor afterwards was one word said about the independence of Mt. Athos, which had been proposed in London. The Monte Santo—"that appanage of the Holy Virgin," as the local legends say—became merely the appanage of King Constantine XIV. Even the canonical rights of the Patriarchate of Constantinople were not specially specified.

I was deeply astonished at the time that M. Sazonoff could allow such complete shipwreck of the principles that he had himself propounded with so much fairness and feeling for the definite arrangement of the Balkan imbroglio. I knew later that there had been reasons for this; some of which had real weight, but others, in my opinion, only deserved very relative consideration.

Concerning the occupation of Adrianople and Thrace by the Turks, M. Sazonoff met with stubborn opposition from Germany in all attempts to reinstate the Bulgarians in their rights of conquest. Our Foreign Secretary was confronted anew by the humiliating vista of a semi-ultimatum from Berlin; while from all his colleagues of the Council he heard one and the same refrain: "Do what you like, as long as we do not have war. War would be the undoing of Russia!" The voice of the

President of the Council, M. Kokovtzoff, made itself particularly loudly heard in this chorus. Subsequent events have proved how right he was!

As to the demarcation between Serbians and Bulgarians, M. Hartwig's influence was very discernible in the question, as were also our very natural feelings of special sympathy with the Serbians. We Russians are generally prone to prefer the soft outlines of sentiment to the rigid lines of justice. Moreover, one must allow that the events which occurred later and the noble behaviour of the Serbians have completely justified—from a historic point of view—the preference we showed for them in 1913.

On the question of the Greco-Bulgarian frontier we, with good reason, adhered to the principle that, after all that had just occurred between Greeks and Bulgarians, it was impossible to give the Bulgarians any territories and towns with a Greek population. This principle alone ought to have been sufficient cause for us not to insist on the idea of leaving Kavala to the Bulgarians; but in addition there was the insistence of our faithful friend and ally, France, who was guided in the matter by her consistent and traditional philhellenism.

No doubt in giving in to the somewhat exaggerated territorial claims of Serbia, Greece, and Rumania, our Foreign Office was subject to certain Court influences. The Royal Family of Greece, doubly related to our Imperial Family, had latterly acquired a new advocate for Greece in the person of the captivating Grand-Duchess Helen—daughter of the late Grand-Duke Vladimir—who had just married Prince Nicolas of Greece. The Serbian Court had as a delegate in St. Petersburg the intelligent and sympathetic Princess Helen, daughter of King Peter, lately married to a prince of the blood, John Constantinovitch. Finally, at the Rumanian Court the matrimonial schemes of M. Sazonoff seemed to be thriving, and we were already anticipating ties of relationship with Bukharest in the

near future. Nothing of this sort existed in Ferdinand's favour. After his reprehensible conduct during the last Balkan events, none of us dreamt any longer of the possibility of sacrificing one of the daughters of the Emperor by placing her under the despotic yoke of a hostile and extremely disagreeable father-in-law. In this matter also Ferdinand had lost his stake, and was once again the cause of the definite check to Bulgarian ambitions.

Far less comprehensible were the reasons by virtue of which we allowed M. Sazonoff's project and the stipulations of the Conference of London on the subject of Mt. Athos to drop completely. In our country the chief reason was supposed to be the regrettable dissensions that broke out among the Russian monks of the Monte Santo in the spring and early summer of this same year 1913. These dissensions, which arose out of a theological controversy of an essentially secondary and unimportant nature, unfortunately attracted the exaggerated attention of the Universal Patriarchate, and even drew forth cries of heresy! I have no doubt that in doing this the Patriarchate was submitting to the influence of a few politicians who wished Mt. Athos, with its hallowed spots for pilgrimages, to become simply Greek territory. It was most important for the intriguing politicians—for those very men who, clustering round Constantine XIV. two years later, sold Greece to William II.—to be able to prove the danger there would be in allowing the monks of Monte Santo a complete independence without precedent in the history of the Orthodox East. And the disputes of the Russian monks happened most opportunely to support their theory.

All this game was so apparent that even now I do not understand how our Foreign Office, and our Embassy in Constantinople, could have been taken in and have attached such exaggerated importance to the differences of opinion of a few cenobites!

But in any case extraordinary measures were taken on our side. We sent to Mt. Athos a Russian bishop, Mgr. Nikon, a member of the Foreign Office, M. Mansuroff, known for his great piety and thorough knowledge of ecclesiastical affairs of the Orthodox East, and finally our Consul-General to Constantinople as representative of the "executive" power. Proceedings opened with free discussion, then came canonical and dogmatic arguments; but as spirits became ever more heated and as the dissentient monks gradually exceeded all the limits of obedience and respect, it ended in the fire hose being played on the turbulent cenobites (*argumentum ad hominem*, *argumentum ad Deum*, *argumentum ad baculum*); after which they were seized and sent to Russia under an escort . . . there they were received with affection and respect into monasteries, and the ecclesiastical authorities found no taint of heresy in their opinions!

It would seem as if, after such an essentially "spiritual" peace-making, one might feel reassured as to the uprightness of our cenobites' faith, and could take up M. Sazonoff's scheme again. But the carrying out of this scheme would have raised endless difficulties for our Foreign Office as well as for our Embassy in Constantinople. So it was infinitely simpler and easier to retire from the field definitely, consoling oneself with the thought that a monastic republic at Mt. Athos might all the same have held disagreeable surprises for the order and the doctrine of the Orthodox Church.

Thus gradually all M. Sazonoff's splendid ideas collapsed and came to nothing, and finally our Balkan diplomacy was in the same position as the hero of the popular tale, who had exchanged a lump of gold for a saddle-horse, the horse for a beautiful milch cow, the cow for a pig, the pig for a goose, and the goose for a grindstone which was so very heavy and cumbersome that when it fell into the water the good lad was inordinately relieved and intensely happy!

The Treaty of Bukharest, in place of all that had been so well thought out and drawn up by M. Sazonoff at the time of the Conferences in London, yielded us one result only as a consolation: the one I mentioned above and which at the beginning had been so contrary to M. Sazonoff's way of thinking. This result was the alliance binding Serbians, Rumanians and Greeks into one sheaf, and directed mainly against the Bulgarians. We liked to think that this new Balkan league would mainly serve as a curb to Austria's designs for expansion, and would henceforth obey our wise guiding hand. This was how it was viewed in a certain set in our Foreign Office. Contemplating the punishment of the guilty and the renewal of Russian influence in Greece and Rumania, where this influence had been in jeopardy for so long, some young and impetuous members of our Foreign Office proclaimed the great victory of Russian policy in the Near East, a victory gained without bloodshed (*Velikaya bezkrovnaya pobéda*). When a young colleague, who had come as a messenger to Sofia, reported this talk to me, I told him to take a message from me to all those who had indulged in it to the effect that either this triumph would not last and we should be obliged to renounce the largest share of our illusions concerning the results of the Treaty of Bukharest, or that blood would be shed and in such quantity as had not been shed since the conquest of the Mongolians and the grave disorders of the *smoutnoye vremia*.

When the terrible events of the world-war came to put the solidity of the new system to the test it was found that the Serbians alone remained entirely faithful to the moral engagement into which they had entered with us. In Greece and Rumania only a section of the politicians considered that the events of 1913 bound these States to Serbia and to Russia; others only saw in them a triumph of diplomatic opportunism, after the recording of which one could boldly resume former sympathies and former engagements. Indeed, at the moment of the great trial neither of the two States

thought of going at once to the help of Serbia when she was attacked from behind by the Bulgarians; and the desperate efforts of conscientious men of worth in both countries were required to lead them back into the path of honour and self-sacrifice!

I could not rid myself of the obsession that the two Central Empires would never be reconciled to the results of the Balkan War and of the Bukharest Treaty. Germany having caused Adrianople to be restored to the Turks and having herself regained all her influence in Stambul, now had to fulfil her engagements to Austria-Hungary, that is to say she had to contribute to the humiliating and weakening of Serbia, whose victories and political successes were making her a centre of attraction to the Slav populations of the Empire of the Hapsburgs.

From the signing of the Treaty of Bukharest I was daily expecting either that we should be forced to enter into conversations — most humiliating for us — with Vienna and Berlin and to allow the two Central Powers to seize advantages on the political ground of the Balkans which would annul all the successes of 1912 and 1913, or else that we should be attacked by the Central Empires. As far as I know Sazonoff did not share these fears. Resolved to oppose a calm and dignified resistance to all attempts at political blackmail on Berlin's part, reckoning steadfastly on the support of France and England, he believed that this attitude and this support would suffice to check German policy on the dangerous slope which could only lead to the formidable abyss of a world-war. Subsequent events proved the futility of these calculations. The Treaty of Bukharest had singularly reinforced the arguments and the propaganda of the Pan-Germans. And at the same time the active co-operation of Turkey was again assured to Germany in the event of a conflict, and to this co-operation that of Bulgaria was added *in spe.* From that time the military party in Berlin was only concerned with precipitating matters, with injecting energy and courage

into Austria, and causing war to break out before Russia had got on with her armaments.

The fortnight that the negotiations of the Peace of Bukharest lasted as well as the succeeding days were a troublous and critical time for the capital of Bulgaria. The reservists returning from the front were hurriedly taken by railway lines which crossed at Sofia, and they were often guilty of undisciplined and disorderly conduct on the way. One of these skirmishes occurring at the station of Sofia nearly took a serious turn. Luckily most of the reservists were so glad to return to their fields, their vineyards and their live-stock that they became docile at once when the train that was to take them back to their "home" was ready for them.

In Sofia itself one felt that the public was in a state of ferment, exasperation even: on one side against the King and on the other against Danev, who at the moment was looked on as the chief culprit in the troubles which had befallen Bulgaria. For a few days it was to be feared that the crowd might gather round the ex-Prime Minister's house and attack him. Night and day the police guarded this house, which seemed to have been deserted by every one. I thought it my duty—just at this dreadful time—to call on the wretched Danev. He appeared to have gone all to pieces and it was piteous to see him. The gossip in town was that he had attempted to commit suicide, but that his servants had stopped him in time. Ferdinand, of course, was in a terrible state of anguish and always had motor cars in readiness for his instant flight from Sofia. However, gradually the state of ferment calmed down, and when I left Sofia at the beginning of October the King had already left for his Hungarian property.

In Russia much surprise was felt that the defeats and disasters of Bulgaria should not have served as the signal for the downfall of Ferdinand. The fact that after all that had occurred, he had calmly remained at the head of the country made some—and the most

intelligent—people believe that the Bulgarian nation had been so accustomed to servitude that Ferdinand could lead it whither he would. But I have always considered this theory absolutely false. Throughout the events of 1912 and 1913, the greater number of the Bulgarian people were as completely one with their King as the German people of to-day are with William II. The whole of Bulgaria at this period was seized with an ardent desire to put the Treaty of San-Stefano into force, and would not hear of anything else. The Bulgarian people knew that nearly the entire Russian Press—in other words Russian public opinion—had taken the part of the Serbians, the Greeks and even the Rumanians against Bulgarian claims. And the Bulgarian people began *to sulk* with Russia, like a spoilt and naughty child sometimes sulks with its own mother.

Ferdinand had never been popular in Bulgaria, and one of the causes of this unpopularity lay in the people's deep conviction that this "*Swabio-Latin*" could not rejoice in the sympathies of the "Great Mother Liberator" (*velika Maïka Osvoboditelka*). Since they thought they had been wronged by this same *Maïka Osvoboditelka*, and since certain politicians and "intellectuals" had dared to attack her publicly, and others in the inner recesses of their souls criticised her bitterly, the Bulgarians by that self-same fact became one with their dismal master and were inclined to submit to the direction that Ferdinand henceforth sought to give to Bulgarian policy. Up till then there had been but one Tsar for the Bulgarians, the *White Tsar*, Orthodox, Russian; now, indulging more and more in their worst sentiments, the Bulgarians began to recognise another "Tsar," he who personified deep-rooted and ill-concealed vengeance.

On the 5th (18th) August, only a few days after the signing of the Treaty of Bukharest, the Bulgarian capital celebrated the solemn return of her troops. The Bulgarian soldiers, in their brown service uniforms, spoilt

by sun and rain, wearing their *opankas* (leather sandals), bore traces of extreme fatigue on their emaciated and sunburnt faces, but nevertheless they marched with spirit and pride. Behind the infantry ghost-like horses dragged the guns. Most of the generals whose names had become so popular in 1912 were with their troops. And the population of the town greeted them calmly and sympathetically, recognising that they had done their whole duty, and had deserved well of their country. Most of the soldiers taking part in the march-past were adorned with flowers, and so were King Ferdinand and his two sons, who headed the procession on horseback, and who were greeted by the crowd without the slightest show of hostility. A *Te Deum* of thanksgiving was held in the Cathedral, to which the whole Diplomatic Corps was invited. It was most painful to me to take part in this *Te Deum* and to witness the march-past of the troops. Whatever the responsibility of Ferdinand, and of the majority of the Bulgarian politicians for all that had occurred, I could not rid myself of the feeling that each of the Bulgarian soldiers passing before me had, by his ardent patriotism and undaunted courage, earned a less piteous result for his country, and deserved a really triumphal entry into his home. I knew that the Bulgarian people had their share of guilt in the sad events which had occurred, but, nevertheless, I could not help wondering whether others should not bear some of the blame, and whether I myself had done all I ought to prevent this melancholy ending to our influence in Bulgaria.

A few days later I sent off a letter to Baron Schilling, begging him to tell me whether the question of my recall from Bulgaria was not being revived at the Foreign Office. I added that I thought myself that, after all that had occurred, I could no longer render efficient services in Sofia.

I promptly received the reply that there was a question of making me exchange with M. Savinsky,

whose position in Stockholm had become equally difficult.

Being thus situated, I asked for a holiday of a few weeks, and at the end of September, 1913, I went to Paris on private business, and to meet M. Sazonoff, who was due there then.

CHAPTER XIV

MY TRANSFER TO STOCKHOLM

When I left Sofia, communication with Belgrade had not yet been re-opened, and I had to take the Orient-Express at Bukharest. It was a hot autumn day when I did the journey between Sofia and Rustchuk. In the evening, when I reached Rustchuk, a violent storm occurred, and at dawn, when my travelling companion and I went on board the small steamer which was to take us to Giurgevo, on the other side of the Danube, the weather had suddenly become so cold that we seemed to have passed unexpectedly from September to December. It was getting light; above the grey waves, and under a leaden sky, a cutting north wind was blowing, chasing a large flight of cawing crows. "What do you prognosticate, you birds of ill-omen?" I could not help thinking. "What fresh carnage? What new calamity?"

On the short trip between Giurgevo and Bukharest, we enjoyed the pleasant company of the Prefect of Giurgevo. At Bukharest I found that M. Schebeko had already left for St. Petersburg, having received the notice of his appointment as Ambassador to Vienna a few days previously. When I joined the Orient-Express at two o'clock in the afternoon, I met M. Majoresco, then still President of the Council of Rumania, and I had a long talk with him about the political events that had just occurred, and in which we had both taken such an active part. From the few hours that I thus spent with Rumanians, I was able to gather the impression that we enjoyed great popularity in Rumania. I have no doubt whatever that the

recollection of Russian sympathy in 1913, and of the support that we then lent to Rumanian policy, greatly influenced the decision taken by the Rumanians in 1916, when they finally ranged themselves on the side of the Entente against the Central Empires. Unfortunately, no good came of it, at least as far as Russia was concerned!

The following day, during the picturesque journey between Vienna and Munich, the sun was so bright and hot that I forgot my flight of crows and the gloomy thoughts which had perpetually assailed me during the latter part of my stay in Sofia.

Two or three days after my arrival in Paris, I called on M. Sazonoff, who, as usual, received me with great friendliness. The Minister appeared tired but content, and on the whole optimistic. This optimism spread to those around him, and thence naturally reflected itself back on him, increasing his confidence in the political situation. M. Sazonoff questioned me at some length on my opinion about the situation in Bulgaria; nevertheless, I had the feeling that he already possessed fairly precise ideas on the subject, and that these did not agree fundamentally with my opinion on the men and affairs of the post that I was leaving. I was careful not to lay any stress on this, and our conversation turned naturally to questions concerning the post of Stockholm, to which I was shortly to be appointed. It was only then that I learnt from M. Sazonoff's lips the reason why M. Savinsky could no longer stay in Sweden: the Grand-Duchess Marie (daughter of the Grand-Duke Paul of Russia), who six years before had married Prince William of Sweden (second son of the King), was on the eve of separating from her husband. Profiting by a journey to foreign parts, the Grand-Duchess, on her arrival in Berlin, informed her husband that she did not wish to live with him any more, and she left to join her father in Paris. There was no scandal, no romance even, to cause the divorce of the Grand-Duchess! It was merely that this young Russian

Grand-Duchess, familiar from her earliest youth with the sight and the principles of the free and unrestrained life of all the members of the Russian Imperial Family, found her existence too narrow in the rigid environment of the Royal Family of Sweden. The life seemed to her petty, boring, and finally unbearable. Her husband, who had a very youthful mind, did not possess the necessary ascendancy over his wife, and for some time the young couple had been contemplating the possibility of a separation; they had remained "good comrades," and discussed their future divorce together. Nevertheless, when the Grand-Duchess actually left her husband, he was much vexed, and to a certain extent sincerely grieved. The Royal Family and society at the Court of Stockholm were also somewhat hurt in their pride. Savinsky, who during the eighteen months that he stayed in Sweden had gained the complete confidence of the young Grand-Duchess, and become what the old comedies call "the confidant"—but absolutely nothing more—and who was aware of the project of the divorce long before it took place, could not decently remain at the Swedish Court. So it was considered a good moment to send him to Sofia to King Ferdinand, who had always liked him and paid him marked attention. There were people in our country who were convinced that Savinsky would be able to accomplish what I had not been able to do, that is to acquire the confidence and the sympathies of Ferdinand, and to lead him, and naturally all his people with him, back into the path of obedience and devotion to Russia. A truly childish notion, but it was upheld by certain influential persons in M. Sazonoff's set!

It was agreed between the Minister and me that I should not take up my new post till the Royal divorce had actually been pronounced, otherwise my position would be disagreeable and difficult from the outset.

Never before had Paris impressed me so strongly as the town of pleasure and thoughtless luxury as she did

now. It was the time of the appearance of the famous *tango*, of "Persian balls," etc. There were "tango suppers" at Ciro's, and "tango teas" all over the place, at which, in the afternoons, evenings, and nights, professionals, amateurs, cocottes, women of the world, Grand-Duchesses even, swayed gracefully or fluttered comically about in new American dances. The best St. Petersburg society was well represented. All this Russian society filled the small theatres, the smart restaurants, and the new dressmakers' showrooms, where modern models with modern manners showed off startling toilettes, simplified and shortened, but far more expensive than the former trains and flounces; and the Russian painter Bakst gave the finishing touches to these toilettes by decorating them with weird flowers and arabesques, which were usually continued on the chest and back of the charming "patient." It was as if some one was urging on all these people by whispering in their ear: "Hurry up, hurry up, and enjoy yourselves; these are the last months of your thoughtless, brilliant, and luxurious existence!"

I was detained in Paris by private business, and stayed there over six weeks. Some time after the departure of Sazonoff (who stopped in Berlin on his way back), M. Kokovtzoff arrived in Paris. I went to call on him, of course, and had a conversation with him. The President of the Council gave me the impression that he did not share the optimism which seemed to reign in our Foreign Office. He seemed to dread complications from the side of Germany. On his way back to St. Petersburg he also stopped in Berlin, had an audience of the Emperor William, and interviews with Bethmann-Hollweg, Jagow and his colleague at the Treasury. Reports circulated in St. Petersburg society that these conversations had restored serenity to the political atmosphere; but I should not at all like to guarantee the authenticity of these reports.

From Paris I went by Vienna and Odessa to Yalta

in Crimea, where my wife and daughter, who had left Sofia in the meantime, were visiting my father-in-law. The Court as usual was spending the autumn at Livadia, and I meant to profit by my stay at Yalta to request an audience of the Emperor.

On my arrival I asked my wife if she had called on the Empress Alexandra.

"There has been no formal calling," was the answer. "The Empress is not receiving officially at Livadia; but I was invited to a dinner party followed by a reception. We dined at small tables presided over by the married Grand-Duchesses who are staying in the Crimea just now. After dinner the young people danced. The young Grand-Duchesses and the young ladies of Yalta danced gaily and without any formality with the young men, mainly officers from the Imperial yacht."

"Was the Empress amiable?"

"Her Majesty did not say a word to any of the ladies present; she remained seated all the time with a sullen, almost tragic expression, and her face only lit up a little when one of the young Grand-Duchesses came to talk to her; as to those delightful young girls, they were thoroughly enjoying themselves!"

"But what does all this mean?"

"Oh! it is a long story, alas! By the way, here is an invitation for us both to dine next Saturday, but I have just heard that the dinner will not take place."

Indeed, next day a messenger from the Palace brought a note cancelling the invitation on account of the indisposition of Her Majesty the Empress.

I was gradually initiated into all the gossip of Yalta and Livadia, and this is what I learnt:

That year the Emperor and his family were delighting in their stay in the Crimea. All were enjoying good health. There was a great deal of lawn-tennis and riding, and on Saturdays the young people danced. For a brief period only was this gay life saddened by the almost sudden death of Dedulin, the "Général du jour" to His Majesty the Emperor. He was a worthy,

honest man, not distinguished by any extraordinary ability, but who had never abused his position of intimate association with the Sovereign.[1] He was sincerely mourned; a few tears were shed at his funeral, celebrated with all military and official honours; but every one consoled themselves quickly, and his successor had already been chosen. . . .

My French readers will doubtless remember Edmund About's charming tale called "The Man with the broken Ear." This fantastic and amusing story, which verges on political satire, has as its hero a gallant colonel of the Napoleonic armies who in 1812, at the rout of his troops, is saved from certain death by an old German wizard who turns him into a mummy and bequeaths him to a learned society, with a description of the means to be taken to restore him to life. The mummy, after many vicissitudes, ends by falling into the hands of a French great-nephew; the means prescribed are adopted, and the hot-headed officer of the Grand Army is restored to life at the age of thirty in the midst of the Napoleonic France of 1860!

I remembered "the Man with the broken Ear' every time that I found myself in the presence of the worthy General Dumbadze, who since 1906 had been the military governor of the town of Yalta and its environs, that is to say the guardian and principal guarantee of the safety of the Emperor and his family during their frequent visits to Livadia. Only in Dumbadze's case the old German wizard had not cast his spell over a colonel of Napoleon's Grand Army, but over a young lieutenant of the gallant Caucasian troops during the mountain warfare of the 'thirties and 'forties, a period which has been described by the greatest Russian authors (Puchkin, Lermontoff, Tolstoï). Georgian by birth, of brilliant courage and unimpeach-

[1] I have never understood what the functions were of the "Général du jour," a barbarous term of Prussian survival. I believe that in reality he had no very defined functions, which meant that he had a hand in everything.

able honesty, almost insanely devoted to the Tsar and to military honour, but at the same time rather uncultivated and recognising no curb or limits to his despotism except his own conscience, this curious specimen of a bygone day attracted the particular attention of public opinion and of the Russian Press. Extraordinary stories were current of his administrative pranks, which recalled the good old times of the Kaliphat of Baghdad and of the Persia of Nadir-Shah. There was some truth in these tales, and many private individuals had cause for bitter complaint against the despotism of the Pasha of Yalta. But on the other hand they affected to ignore the highly respectable side—almost legendary for modern times— of Dumbadze's character and work. He was absolutely inaccessible to considerations of fortune and comfort. Father of a large family, he was satisfied during the long years of his despotic rule with a more than modest salary, and lived in four miserable rooms which were reserved for him in the offices at Livadia. During the last years only he was better paid, and received an apartment in keeping with his rank and functions. But during the whole period even his most inveterate enemies could not accuse him of any dishonesty with regard to money.

This was the man who was about to be appointed to the late Dedulin's post, and to be definitely attached to the person of His Majesty the Emperor. But at this moment an incident occurred which no one—except Caucasian officers of the 'forties—could have foreseen or understood.

At the height of his favour at Court, Dumbadze, who was still fulfilling the duties of military governor of Yalta, heard that the celebrated "old man," Gregory Rasputin, had just arrived at one of the most modest hotels in the town; and the very next day, by the governor's orders, the said "old man" was sent away from Yalta and its environs as "a person of no occupations and without visible means of subsistence." Given the small "state of siege" to which the town was

subjected during the visits of the Imperial Family, this expulsion was perfectly legitimate. But imagine the effect produced! The Empress's health declined immediately, and her good temper, resulting from the healthy climate of Crimea and the charming family life in the bosom of radiant nature, was changed to gloomy and nervous anxiety. The Vyrubova began to trot to and fro between Livadia, the church of the diocese, and the modest hotel where the wife (or rather *one of the wives*) and one of the daughters of Rasputin had remained. The people about the Court when they met Dumbadze stared at him as one stares at a lunatic or a dangerous criminal. Finally, after a few days of painful indecision and probably in consequence of violent curtain-lectures, the Emperor sent for Dumbadze and asked him by what right he had considered himself authorised to expel from Yalta "the excellent old man, Gregory"? Dumbadze replied most calmly and frankly that he looked on the old man as a suspicious and dangerous person, and that he had expelled him conformably with the law and duty imposed on him by his post.

"But all the same, how could you do it, knowing to what extent the Empress and I love and esteem Gregory? I beg of you, General, if it is possible, to authorise this poor man to rejoin his family at Yalta."

"Sir," Dumbadze then replied, to end this painful discussion, "Your Majesty is well aware that I would shed my last drop of blood for you and your august family; but I intend to preserve my honour as an officer up to the end, towards and against all. Moreover, Your Majesty can at any moment relieve me of the post which you have graciously confided to me."

The Emperor was silent, then passed to another topic, and dismissed the General with his usual kindness. Dumbadze remained military prefect, and of course never dreamt of allowing Rasputin to return. On the other hand, there was no more mention of the General's candidature for the high Court appointment which had been destined to him, and the persons of the

Emperor's suite, who shortly before had been speaking of Dumbadze with sympathy and respect, were one and all laughing at the Oriental methods of administration of the prefect of Yalta, at his love of fine speeches and his other little weaknesses.

The Empress could not recover from the blow to her dearest feelings; she ceased to receive and to show herself in public; one only saw her occasionally driving in a closed motor with her daughters, with a set and sad expression on her face.

In spite of all this tribulation, a few days after my arrival at Yalta I asked the Court Minister, Count Fredericsz, to obtain an audience of His Majesty the Emperor for me, and I soon received a command to go to the Palace of Livadia[1] on the 2nd (15th) December at noon.

I arrived at the appointed hour at the new Palace of Livadia, which I had not yet seen, and then had to wait for my audience for more than half an hour. The Emperor, contrary to his usual habits, was late, as he was out with his daughters. The Court lived most simply at Livadia. The Palace did not possess any special waiting-room, the aide-de-camp on duty usually accompanied the Emperor in his walks. So I spent half an hour in the pretty and fairly spacious hall of the Palace, in the porter's company (*the Swiss* as we still call him), an old and friendly servant who questioned me with great interest and some knowledge of the subject about the events that had just occurred in Bulgaria. This original colloquy between the porter and the Minister Plenipotentiary (and yet foreigners dare to doubt our democratic ways!) only ended with the arrival of the Emperor, who begged me to follow him. His Majesty received me graciously and addressed a few commonplaces to me; "as to business," he added, "we will turn to that after luncheon, we are rather late as it is."

[1] During their Majesties' stay at Livadia, persons of a certain rank who went to see the Emperor, were invited at the close of their interview to the family lunch.

Besides the Emperor and the four young Grand-Duchesses there were only about a dozen of the people about the Court at luncheon, among others the celebrated Vyrubova and the less celebrated Admiral Niloff. I was placed to the left of His Majesty between the Grand-Duchesses Tatiana and Anastasia. The four young princesses rivalled one another in charm and beauty, and the youngest, Anastasia, a child of twelve years of age, specially pleased me by her bright, intelligent and open expression; I began a short conversation with my delightful neighbour and was charmed by the childish and yet at the same time serious vein in all she said.

As I write these lines[1] nothing is known in the civilised world—or calling itself such—of the fate of these unfortunate young girls. One knows that their father was cruelly and brutally assassinated by the pack of brigands to whom Russia is obedient at the present time. Sinister reports are circulating as to the fate of these four delightful young girls, torn from the most brilliant heights of an existence in which they still only breathed an atmosphere of beauty and virtue and suddenly plunged into an abyss of treachery, total desertion, revolting physical and moral filth. Have they perchance been saved and hidden in some obscure retreat in the heart of the Siberian forests, or else—*horribile dictu*—have they also undergone a terrible martyrdom? No one in Europe knows for certain; and moreover no one seems much concerned with this embarrassing question; there are so many other things to think about and guard against!

Alas! who could have evoked such lugubrious pictures in the immediate future; who could have predicted such a terrible fate for those who on this beautiful December morning were gathered round the Imperial table at Livadia? Through the large bay-windows of the dining-room one saw a pretty white *patio* full of late autumn roses; every one's face reflected the pleasure of

[1] October, 1918.

exercise taken in the vivifying and scented air of the mountains opposite the boundless expanse of sea. The charming young Countess Hendrikoff was being very much teased because in the absence of her elders and betters she was occupying the seat of the Grand Mistress of the Court. Fresh plans were being made for expeditions on horseback. Between the Emperor and his daughters one noticed a very strong current of affection, of charming intimacy, almost of camaraderie.

When lunch was over and we had taken our coffee in the hall, the Emperor went round talking to every one in turn, and then coming up to me told me to follow him. The Emperor himself opened one door after another; passing through the big saloon he turned to me and said: "The Empress is generally to be found in this saloon when we come out of the dining-room and then we have coffee in here; but just now unfortunately she is indisposed and does not come downstairs." He seemed to be excusing himself to me—the guest of the hour—for the absence of the mistress of the house. When we reached the study the Emperor installed himself in an armchair and begged me to be seated.

"And now tell me everything," he said.

"I have indeed much to tell Your Majesty," I replied; "where do you wish me to begin?"

The Emperor thought for a moment and then said with a subtle smile:

"What were your relations with King Ferdinand, and what do you think of him?"

I disclosed quite frankly to the Emperor the course of my personal relations with Ferdinand and I did not conceal the unfavourable opinion I had formed of the King's character. Imperceptibly I passed on to the last Balkan crisis. When speaking of the negotiations which had ended in the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty of 1912, I allowed myself to draw His Majesty's attention to the fact that during these negotiations I had repeatedly laid stress in my confidential letters to M. Sazonoff on the danger of a Balkan war as the logical consequence of

the agreement between Serbians and Bulgarians, directed in substance against Turkey.

"Yes, yes, I know that; Sazonoff showed me your letters," said the Emperor. I passed on to subsequent events and, speaking of the recent Bulgarian disaster, I drew an accurate picture for His Majesty of the present situation in Bulgaria, not concealing that not only King Ferdinand but also the majority of the Bulgarian people were nursing bitter resentment against Russia.

"And yet," I added, "among the larger number of Bulgarians, this feeling has not completely obliterated the traditions of gratitude and devotion towards their Great Liberator and the 'White Tsar.' These traditions are dimmed, but they could and should revive. I allow myself to pronounce frankly the opinion that at the Peace Conference of Bukharest the Bulgarians were too hardly treated. If we could make the Bulgarians understand that at the first favourable opportunity we would cause at least a part of what they have just lost to be restored to them they would live on that hope. It is dangerous to denude a people of all hope: it humiliates them, depresses them and exposes them to the most hateful influences. . . ."

"But what do you think one could restore to the Bulgarians?" interrupted the Emperor rather sharply.

"Part of Macedonia, sir, if the Serbians could obtain the access to the Adriatic that has been so unjustly taken from them. But more especially, and above all else, Adrianople and Kirk-Kilisseh."

The Emperor reflected for an instant. "Yes," he said finally, "but at the present time it would be extremely difficult. . . . No, no! just now it cannot even be thought of; and how can we allow them to nourish unrealisable hopes?" A vein of sincere regret was apparent in this reply. After a slight pause I resumed: "I still have to crave your forgiveness, sir, for not having been able to carry out Your Majesty's generous schemes with regard to Bulgaria."

"Not at all, you have done your best; it is their own fault!"

"Yes, sir, but perhaps some one else would even so have been able to influence them and to prevent all that has occurred. . . ."

"No, no," broke in the Emperor again, "you have done all that was in your power to do, but against fate"—he immediately corrected himself: "*against the decrees of Providence*, one cannot struggle. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to you for all your services in Bulgaria." I made a low bow. "And now go to the Swedes," he added with a merry smile as he rose from his chair. For a few minutes still the Emperor talked about Sweden, King Gustaf, and the Royal Family, and he approved highly of what Sazonoff and I had arranged about postponing my departure for Sweden until the Grand-Duchess Marie's divorce had been definitely pronounced. I noticed that His Majesty spoke of Sweden and of the Royal Court with much sympathy. His last and fairly recent visit to Stockholm had evidently left a good impression on him. I was very graciously dismissed after an audience which had lasted an hour.

A few days later I left the Crimea and went, *viâ* Odessa and Vienna, to Sofia in order to make the final arrangements for my removal and to hand my letters of recall to King Ferdinand, who had left in September before my appointment to Stockholm was settled, so that I had not been able to take leave of him, as is customary on such occasions. I spent about ten days in Sofia. But I was not invited to go to the King till two days before my departure. Ferdinand received me in his study; he was in the undress uniform of his Russian regiment (I had been told to wear morning dress); I found Prince Boris with the King. Having invited me to sit down, the King, after a few trifling words, stared at me and said, "Monsieur, you have probably read the pamphlet written against me by your compatriot, the news-

paper correspondent,[1] So-and-so. . . . How did it please you?" The King spoke in French, but, as his custom was, he interlarded his sentences with Russian words and expressions; these expressions were generally apt and correctly used, but pronounced with quite a foreign accent. "As for me, I have read the vile book attentively, and I was *glouboko vosmouchten*.[2] I gave it to my son to read, and he will tell you his impression of it," he continued, turning to Boris.

The latter, with an expression of perfect obedience on his face, half rose from his chair, and turning to me stammered out, "Yes, monsieur, I too was *glouboko vosmouchten*."

"I believe you know the gentleman very well?" continued the King, turning to me again.

I realised that the King wished to appear to believe that the pamphlet in question had been inspired by me. I parried the thrust by replying in my most cutting tones that I did not know the correspondent; that I had once refused to see him, and that he had published something offensive about me as well—"a fact which Your Majesty, who knows all, cannot but be aware of." This was the absolute truth. I had actually forbidden my house to this gentleman, who had arrived in Sofia at the time of the mobilisation, and who had sent to his newspaper some absurd telegrams abusive of the Bulgarian Government and ill-natured about the Russian Legation. But I ought to mention that one of my minor subordinates—a contemptible and scheming individual—had allowed himself, unknown to me, to present this journalist to Danev, and had probably supplied him with a few details about the Court of Sofia, details which he himself had obtained through his intimacy with the servants at the Palace. This same individual spied on his chiefs—the Russian Ministers—on Ferdinand's behalf.

[1] Such an insignificant person that I have forgotten his name, nor do I remember to what second-class newspaper he was correspondent.

[2] Highly indignant.

My answer having cut short the topic of the correspondent and his pamphlet, Ferdinand turned the conversation on to political ground, and began in a tone of bitter sarcasm to ask me questions about Russia's ulterior intentions with regard to the stipulations of the Treaty of Bukharest. "What have you decided about Kavala? What about the left bank of the Vardar?" and how were we going to reconcile our manifest desertion of Bulgaria with the telegram in which, in the name of His Majesty the Emperor, the promise had been given to shield Bulgaria from too much humiliation and abasement? This time the blow struck home, and it was impossible for me to parry it with really plausible explanations. But being in my turn *glouboko vosmouchten* at the most unseemly tone which the King allowed himself to use to the Imperial Minister of Russia, I replied:

"Sir, the Bulgarians have drawn their misfortunes on themselves, and have forced Russia to give up all attempts to come to their assistance. And Your Majesty knows better than any one when the irreparable blow was struck at Bulgaria's interests: it was on the 16th (29th) of June last. Your Majesty knows as well as I do that I had nothing to do with that day of misfortune, of which I was the first dupe."

Ferdinand cast his most evil glance at me, but restrained himself, and after a short silence, without raising his eyes, he said: "Yes, that was a great mistake." Then he rose and took leave of me. I have not seen him since.

From the King's study I was led to the apartments of Queen Eleanor. There quite a different, but no less original, welcome awaited me. The Queen, almost while the customary greetings were being exchanged, abruptly asked me: "Do tell me, monsieur, how has all this happened?"

I answered Her Majesty quite frankly that I permitted myself to consider that the King's lack of confidence in me was one of the causes of the political

catastrophe in Bulgaria. In all our conversations, in all the advice which I had felt bound to give him, I was guided solely by the real good of Bulgaria. From the day of my arrival in Sofia I had always and absolutely refused to act against the King; and during this time His Majesty was working behind my back and often against me personally. . . .

"But in whom has he ever had confidence?" exclaimed the Queen. "He distrusts even me."

I no longer remember what my answer was, but involuntarily I raised my voice a little.

"Hush! in Heaven's name, speak lower," interrupted the poor Queen, casting a furtive glance towards one of the doors of the room; "*this is the most dangerous room in the Palace.*"

Eleanor then went on to make complaints about the conduct of the Rumanians in the environs of Varna, that town so truly dear to her.

"It is particularly painful to me on account of Queen Elisabeth. *We are two German princesses on Balkan thrones*, and in spite of that our respective people have become completely hostile to one another! You are doubtless aware of the horrors committed by the Rumanians in the environs of Varna against an unfortunate population that I know and love so well. . . . Some young girls, monsieur, some young girls! . . . No, if now we were to have a new and real war with Rumania, I should be capable of harnessing myself to a gun, so great is my indignation against them!"

At this point, in spite of the truly tragic tone of the Queen, I could hardly suppress my mirth; I pictured the poor speaker in the entirely new rôle of an artillery draught-horse, and from the opposite side I could see the respectable Carmen Sylva also perhaps obliged to assist in the transport of guns or ammunition. . . . I hastened to make the Queen turn to a less ticklish topic.

"When you see the Emperor," she said in conclusion, "pray convey to him my sincerest good wishes.

You know how much I like him and all his family; and I am still cordially devoted to them in spite of all that has occurred."

On this I took my leave of Queen Eleanor—and for ever; she died three years later.

On my way back to Russia I spent a few days in Vienna. I used to know this city very well, but since my long stay in Paris I had only passed through it. This time the gay Austrian capital, where the season was in full swing, had a depressing effect on me. There was an atmosphere of uneasiness, and the ingenuous and gay good temper which has always been a characteristic trait of the Viennese of all classes, seemed to have completely disappeared. I mentioned this impression to a few members of our Embassy.

"Is it really so?" I asked them, "or have I aged so terribly in the meantime that everything seems to me aged and tarnished around me?"

"Not at all," was the reply. "One can no longer recognise Vienna, and the cause lies in the profound anxiety reigning here. No one is sure of the morrow. All business is at a standstill, and heaps of people have been ruined on the Bourse. Every one is afraid of war. This began already in 1909, but now it has reached a state of paroxysm. Several great financiers say openly that it would be better if war actually broke out, for this awaiting of events and perpetual uncertainty are more ruinous than anything. But on the whole every one *fears* war."

By the middle of January, O.S., I was in St. Petersburg. Never had the rich world of St. Petersburg amused itself as it did during that *last* winter. In society, one entertainment succeeded another. Fancy-dress balls, balls where coloured wigs were worn, parties at the Embassies, and in the Grand-Dukes' palaces. Theatres and restaurants were filled every evening with a brilliant crowd. There was much

speculating on the Bourse among all ranks of society; all stocks were rising; the public generally won and anticipated fresh gains.

I still remember the magnificent fancy-dress ball given by the Countess Kleinmichel, the rooms filled with the most brilliant people of St. Petersburg, the beautiful hall with columns through which the Persian quadrille, the chief feature of the evening, made its entry. To the strains of a fine orchestra, there appeared on the staircase, like a many-hued serpent, the "theory" of sixteen beautiful young women and as many cavaliers holding hands, and showing off gorgeous brocades and beautiful furs, magnificent jewels and most costly Oriental weapons. The Grand-Duchess Cyril and the Grand-Duke Boris led the quadrille, in which—chosen from amongst the best—the prettiest and most graceful representatives of that set of young ladies whom I had nicknamed "the bayadères of the Order of the Grand-Dukes" took part. The men mostly belonged to the smartest regiments of the Guard. Six months later, half these fine young men—and many others who were dancing and enjoying themselves at this ball—fell dead or dangerously wounded on the first and glorious battlefields of Eastern Prussia.

As I was admiring this brilliant spectacle I found, on turning my head, that I was standing next to Count Witte, whom I had not seen since 1910.

"Ah! Good evening!"

"Good evening!"

"When did you arrive?"

"A week ago."

"What a beautiful sight!"

"Yes, enchanting! But tell me, my dear Count, do you not feel as if you were assisting at the 'Festivity during the Plague,'[1] or rather 'before the Plague'?" I had hardly spoken these words when Witte's face assumed a terribly serious expression. . . . He seized

[1] A very well known dramatic piece in verse by our celebrated poet, Puschkin.

me by the arm, exclaiming: "Then you also have that impression?"

"Most certainly. Ever since I have been in St. Petersburg, I cannot get rid of the feeling. . . ."

"I know! I know!" returned the Count excitedly. "We are going God alone knows where; God alone knows to what abyss! It is impossible to go on like this. . . ."

At this moment the mistress of the house came up to Witte, and asked him to go and play bridge at the table of one of the Grand-Duchesses present. I was put at another table, so I could not ascertain what constituted the object of the very sincere apprehensions of the celebrated statesman: was it war or a revolution? I personally dreaded war. This was, moreover, my last meeting with Count Witte, who died in St. Petersburg a year and a half later.

A few days after, a lovely ball was given by Countess Betsy Schuvaloff in the splendid setting of her mansion of the Fontanka, former palace of the famous Marie Narichkin, *née* Czetwertynska, recognised mistress of Alexander I.; a palace full of works of art of the eighteenth century, and combining the refined luxury of the Narichkins and the Schuvaloffs—the favourites of an epoch when the Russian nobility, suddenly become European, threw themselves heart and soul into the enjoying of the art and luxury of a century of refinement and beauty that were almost classical. Alas! What has become of this beautiful mansion? It is said to have been ransacked and plundered, like so many other palaces in St. Petersburg, the works of art broken, destroyed, or else sold to Germany or America. The insane bet made by Peter the Great seemed to have been won, and even beyond the dreams of this greatest of barbarian reformers. Midst snow and ice, in a marshy desert inhabited by some half-savage Finns, art and science, all the beauties and products of civilisation held a rendezvous; celebrated libraries and museums, famous theatres, threw

open their doors in a majestic and magnificent setting that was almost unique. . . . And suddenly darkness set in over all this beauty, a wind blew, an earthquake which seemed slight and harmless shook the country, and we do not even know what will still exist of all this wealth of culture and life, when at last a new day shall dawn on the desolation so often predicted and never believed in.

But I hasten to leave this lugubrious contemplation, set in the charming frame of such recent and yet far-away memories, and to return to the brilliantly illuminated rooms of Countess Schuvaloff. Amongst the august personages present I met Prince Alexander of Serbia, who had arrived in St. Petersburg a few days before. The Prince drew me aside, and after a few genuinely kind words, asked me the following question: "Pray, Monsieur, will you tell me your honest opinion: after all that has happened, can one still hope for the renewal of friendly, or at least neighbourly, relations between Serbia and Bulgaria? Or will the Bulgarians for some time still remain our most irreconcilable adversaries? You know Bulgaria better than any one, and that is why I am particularly anxious to know your opinion."

I thanked the Crown Prince for his flattering trust in me, and I told him very frankly that I thought that relations between Serbians and Bulgarians were radically compromised for many years; I added that Serbia, in carrying out her policy, must not for one instant lose sight of the fact that she had beside her an irreconcilable foe, only existing in the hope of a fierce revenge. "It is very sad, and the situation ought to be gradually remedied; but it is a fact, and in politics everything must be based on facts," I concluded.

"That is also my opinion," agreed Prince Alexander; "here I am assured on all sides that it would be easy to approach the Bulgarians again and come to terms with them; but I must confess that I do not believe it, and your opinion shows me that I am right."

When I recall these strange and significant conversations held in a festive setting, and to the strains of dance music, I say to myself that Madame Bovary was not entirely wrong when she imagined diplomats to be "people who with a smile on their lips and death in their hearts whispered terrible secrets to each other, midst feasts and festivities!"

The last great ball at which I was present was the one given at the German Embassy. When I entered those over-gilded rooms, full of valuable marbles and bronzes, and offering the most ostentatious specimen of the vilest Berlin taste, I could certainly not have imagined that less than six months later a furious yelling crowd would burst in, would break and shatter all these luxurious possessions, would stain the well-polished floors with blood, and would wreck even the marble facings of the palace, henceforth accursed.

I went, of course, to call on M. Kokovtzoff, and found him even more gloomy than at our last interview in Paris. Moreover, at the moment questions of foreign policy were relegated—temporarily at least—to the second place, because of the burning question of the spirit monopolies raised in the bosom of the Council of the Empire by Count Witte with the obvious intent to compass the downfall of Kokovtzoff, and—who knows—perhaps to get his post. With all his serious and respectable qualities of judgment and intelligence, Kokovtzoff did not possess the adaptability and subtle mind necessary for parliamentary struggles; he was too straight, too upright, and perhaps also too susceptible for this see-saw policy. He ought to have addressed to Count Witte the insidious question: how the former Minister of Finance proposed to make good the loss of revenue from the spirit monopoly in the Budget; he who had been the author of this monopoly, and who, like all his predecessors, had based a third of the Budget of the Empire on the revenue furnished by the drunkenness

of the people? Instead, Kokovtzoff set himself to defend the very system of the monopoly, and thus injured himself in public opinion, as well as in the mind of the Emperor, who at this period had already taken the firm resolution—alas! far too late—to put an end to the terrible disease of Russia—the alcoholism of an entire people. A few days later Kokovtzoff had to resign the posts of President of the Council and of Minister of Finance. On leaving he received the title of Count, and a sum of 300,000 roubles, a gratuity which nevertheless he promptly and absolutely declined, in spite of an almost entire lack of private means. He was replaced as Minister of Finance by M. Bark, an intelligent and experienced bank-manager, but nothing more.

In the person of Kokovtzoff the Emperor lost a sincere councillor, moderate and scrupulously truthful, and the State lost an earnest financier and a Minister who was absolutely upright and a gentleman. His departure still further increased the internal and external perils of Russia. On questions of foreign policy Kokovtzoff had no preconceived system; if he had had the power he would, I think, have been inclined to subordinate these questions as much as possible to those of the economic prosperity of Russia. A sincere friend of France and the French, Kokovtzoff, however, was often obliged to turn his face towards Berlin, first, in view of the immediate financial interests of the State, and then because of the fear of a rupture with Germany. No one dreaded war for Russia so much as Kokovtzoff, for he was aware both of our lack of military preparation and of the revolutionary ferment which was penetrating ever more deeply into the lower classes and gaining ground daily.

Count Kokovtzoff was replaced, as President of the Council, by M. Goremykin. Soon after his appointment I called on this respectable old gentleman and his charming and worthy wife. M. Goremykin complained bitterly of not being allowed to end his days in peace.

He and his wife had just settled themselves very comfortably in one of the flats in a house they owned in a quiet and fashionable part of St. Petersburg. When taking me "round the property," M. Goremykin drew my attention to a detail: "Here is my bedroom," he said, "there is my wife's, and the room between was meant for the hospital nurse who was to come and stay with us in the event of illness, so frequent, alas! with both of us. You will understand by this detail alone how difficult it is for me, at my age and with my infirmities, to take up again work that I know so well and which imperatively demands strength and unremitting toil." And, indeed, during the two and a half years that Goremykin remained in power this time, until this honest man was replaced by Sturmer, he was but a figure-head, and the Government machinery usually worked without the President of the Council. This exactly suited all sorts of sharpers and shady characters who began at this time to penetrate even to the steps of the throne, and who were delighted to find no firm hand or implacable will at the head of official power.

I went, as I always did when in St. Petersburg, to pay a long visit to our former Ambassador to Constantinople, M. Zinovieff. He had been one of my predecessors in Stockholm, and I felt interested to gather his impressions and opinions on men and matters in Sweden. He had liked the country, and he had been popular and much appreciated there.

From Sweden we passed on quite naturally to general political questions.

"Listen, M. Nekludoff," the aged and distinguished diplomat said with his usual frankness; "what are we about here? We are going straight into war! They are arming in Germany, Austria and Turkey; they are champing their bits in Sofia, and we seem not to notice it! If you would but tell *them* at home all that you have just told me; *they* must listen to you!"

"In the first place," I replied, "I have said it and *written* it repeatedly to the Foreign Office. And then, do not forget, my dear Ambassador, that at the present moment I am the man who has suffered a reverse, rightly or wrongly this reverse is imputed to me; hence I have less credit than I had formerly. Why do you not confide your thoughts and worries to M. Sazonoff? I know that you stand high in his esteem."

"I have spoken to him repeatedly! But you know how it is—these *young people* will not listen to me." (The *young people* were well over fifty at this time, but one must admit that the excellent M. Zinovieff was nearly eighty). "I esteem M. Sazonoff very highly," continued my amiable host; "he is gifted and a gentleman, he is quick-witted and very cultured, and—in spite of his *youth*—has a fair amount of experience; he judges men and matters remarkably well, *especially when he judges them himself and by himself;* he has earned the perfect confidence of our allies; he is particularly esteemed in England, which is not an easy thing for a Russian Minister to be. But his optimism! his optimism! That is the only thing that I deplore in him, and that I fear for him and for us all!"

"You have just said, my dear Ambassador," I replied, "that our Foreign Secretary is a very good judge when he judges things himself and by himself. That is absolutely true. But in order to form a judgment on the general situation, he must weigh the advice of our agents abroad, beginning with the ambassadors; if the latter represent things in a favourable light, he is bound to believe them unless he has grave reason to distrust their opinion. And then at the Minister's side, there are always the Offices . . . that must not be forgotten."

"Ah, yes! the Offices! But you need not tell *me* that!" exclaimed the aged Ambassador, flinging his arms up to heaven.

And, as a fact, the reports of our representatives

abroad were not at all alarming at this time. In March—on the 17th, if I am not wrong—the French Ambassador to Berlin, M. Jules Cambon, wrote his famous dispatch which was a cry of warning, and which foresaw all that was about to happen; this was followed by reports from other French representatives which were equally prophetic. All these dispatches figure in the French Yellow Book on the origin of the war. One would search in vain in our Orange Book for anything on the same subject. There was nothing either in the documents communicated to the Russian representatives abroad. Perhaps there may have been some very confidential letters which have not been printed. But then why have these not been published in the Orange Book so as to make known to the public the vigilance and the perspicacity of our representatives at the most dangerous and most responsible posts? All this is even now a riddle to me.

At last the divorce of the Grand-Duchess Maria and Prince William of Sweden was pronounced, the pecuniary questions in connection with it were settled, and I was able to think of taking up my post. Before starting I called again on the Emperor, who received me very graciously, but did not detain me long. At the Foreign Office also no one talked seriously to me about the conditions and object of my new post. They spoke of the Court, of the Grand-Duchess's divorce, of Savinsky, but not a word about our relations with Sweden and the attitude of the Swedes towards us. "Oh, well! You will arrive, you will see, you will write to us"—that was the viaticum with which I departed. I had as usual studied the record of the dispatches of my predecessors; I could add to this most meagre equipment opinions gathered from M. Zinovieff and interesting information that I obtained in my private and friendly conversations with another of my predecessors, Baron Budberg, a man of judgment, tact and experience who had managed to make an admirable

position for himself in Sweden, and who, from there, was appointed Ambassador to Madrid.

On the 2nd March, N.S., after twenty-four hours spent on a comfortable and pleasant journey, half in the train and half on a steamer, I arrived in Stockholm for the first time in my life.

CHAPTER XV

SWEDEN IN 1914

Happy is the nation that has no history. For a hundred years, from 1815, Sweden has had no history in the ordinary sense of the word, that is to say that she has sustained no wars or revolutions, and has not taken an active part in the political events of Europe. Nevertheless profound changes have taken place during this period in the conditions of existence of the Swedish people, and in the political and economic structure of the country; and these changes, contrasted with the curious survivals of the former social state of the kingdom and with the original mentality of the people, presented and still present a spectacle worthy of the earnest historian's attention.

From 1700 and until 1809 the principal enemy, the hereditary enemy of Sweden, was Russia—the *Imperial* Russia of Peter the Great, Elizabeth, Catherine and Alexander I.; and the home policy of the country adapted itself to the vicissitudes of this perennial struggle.

The aristocratic régime, headed by the Oxenstiernas, had in the seventeenth century placed the international power of Sweden on a pinnacle, and shed a lustre on the justice and administration of the kingdom that all the other countries of Europe might well envy ; the first two Kings of the Vasa-Zweibrücken branch, energetic and authoritative, wished to have their share of glory and influence, so to lucky and easy conquests they added reforms which struck a blow at the exclusive ascendancy of the nobility, and enhanced the fame of Swedish justice and administration.

Left an orphan at a tender age, and having had ever since he was eighteen a struggle with a formidable coalition on his hands, Charles XII. was naturally led to reinforce the authority of the Royal power and to ruin that of the Senate and of the high nobility entirely. As he was vanquished in the fight and as entire provinces had passed to his great antagonist, from the moment of the King's death public opinion demanded a return to former systems of government. The aristocratic régime re-instated itself in Sweden with the last of the Varangians, and the first of the Holstein-Hottorps, but it was a régime that had lost its rigidly Protestant and Cromwellian character, revealing daily more and more of the sceptical levity of the century of the Regent and of the Pompadour. This régime culminated in a second war with Russia, a war insanely provoked and execrably managed, and Sweden lost another considerable portion of Finland. Decidedly the aristocracy were no longer profitable! Hence the country hailed with enthusiasm the *coup d'état* of the young and impetuous Gustaf III., who steered resolutely for enlightened absolutism; and about fifteen years later the military and financial power of Sweden increased effectually, and supplied a certain quota to the balance of European power.

Gustaf III. awaited and chose his hour. At the moment when Russia was deeply engaged in Turkey and Poland, the King of Sweden suddenly threw off his mask and again raised the cause of Charles XII. against his powerful neighbour. The struggle that ensued was not wanting in glorious vicissitudes. The Swedish Fleet once suffered a crushing reverse, and then gained a brilliant victory; a third great naval engagement was undecisive; the contest on land was also undecisive, and after two years of war the two countries, by common consent, returned to the *status quo ante*. "Enlightened absolutism" was apparently not capable of reviving the former power of Sweden. Shortly afterwards the King of "the Ballo in Maschera" fell, the victim of an obscure plot in which old nobiliary

grudges were strangely allied to new revolutionary claims.

His successor, the weak, hysterical, and imaginative Gustaf IV., wished, at his majority, not only to step into the elegant shoes of his father, but also into the legendary boots of Charles XII. Breaking insanely, in the name of legitimist principles, with Sweden's hereditary ally France—the France of Napoleon I. moreover—he was, at one sign from the Corsican Giant, removed from the political arena. Alexander, authorised thereto by his ally of Tilsit, took possession in a few months of all the rest of Finland, who greeted her new master spontaneously; and a *pronunciamento* of the Swedish Army excluded Gustaf IV. and his direct descendants for ever from the Swedish throne. His uncle, the prudent Duke of Sudermania, succeeded him—*for life*—under the name of Charles XIII.

In 1810 the election of a new successor to the Swedish throne in the person of Marshal Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte-Corvo, virtually ends the annals of the dynasty of the Vasas, their policy of interference in the affairs of the Holy Empire, their wars against the Danes, the Poles and the Russians. The country ceased to make war. In 1815 Norway joined her crown to that of Sweden, making up for the definite loss of Finland, and on the map of Europe the possessions of Bernadotte assumed an essentially natural and substantial shape.

The wise policy of Charles-John XIV., of Oscar I., and of Charles XV. resulted in Sweden being completely isolated on the Russian side; the narrow band of open sea which separates the Aland Islands from the Swedish *skärgaard* really seemed to stretch, to widen, and finally to assume the proportions of an ocean. Russia ended by believing in this marvellous expansion, and thought no more of Sweden—from the political and commercial point of view—than she did of Chile or Ecuador. Far-away but good and cordial relations between the Courts, the appointment to the post of Russian Minister to Stockholm of rather "ambassadorial" personages, now

and then a visit from a scholar or inquiring man of letters who "discovered" Sweden and then forgot her. And that was all.

The united kingdoms of Sweden and Norway were naturally bound to consider Russian interests more than Russia had to consider theirs. In 1855, Stockholm profited by the Crimean War, and by the presence of English and French ships in the Baltic, to extract from Russia the formal promise—added to the Treaty of 1856—not to keep up *any military establishment* in the Aland Islands; in latter days Swedish manufacturers occasionally came to compete in Russia with those from other countries, and started a few enterprises which were very well organised and most successful, but as a general rule, since 1815, Sweden had ceased to cast anxious or covetous glances perpetually towards the Baltic, and from that time the internal development of the country became more independent and regular; prosperity began to increase without let or hindrance, obedient to the natural laws of production, and strengthened through the happy dispositions and sterling qualities of the Swedish people.

In the sixties, under Charles XV., some great reforms completed the definitely constitutional and modern character of the political structure of Sweden. The former Diet, or rather the old Etats Généraux, were replaced by two Chambers, the one elected by universal suffrage, the other, the Upper Chamber, recruited by a very complicated system of election, giving the preponderance to the educated or leisured classes, which was quite in accordance with the spirit of the age. The nobility, formerly so powerful, definitely lost all exclusive rights in politics and administration, and the famous *Riddarehuset*, which for so long had been the real *Forum* of Sweden, became but a museum consecrated to the glory of noble families, to their escutcheons and their trophies, on which could be read the military and political history of the kingdom.

But independently of these changes demanded by the spirit of age, the material and intellectual development of the people progressed. The peasant became more and more the owner of the soil. The education of the people in the course of the century made really extraordinary progress. It is as successful as anywhere in Europe. The popular universities in the country—a recent creation of the Scandinavian mind—represent something which remains to be created in other European countries. A series of superior lectures are given for a few weeks in such and such a rural district. These lectures are better and better attended, and are conscientiously paid for by those attending them; every year a greater number of persons—of both sexes—go in for the optional examinations, and, what is most important, no one afterwards seeks any change of circumstances, but remains quietly on his farm or in his workshop.

Large stretches of country north of Dalsland and as far as Lapland were colonised by prosperous enterprises in connection with metallurgy and forestry. The rich iron mines of the country were more and more exploited, and wherever it was possible foundries, steel-works, machine factories came to transform the famous Swedish metal into machinery and tools, setting the standard for modern civilisation. And all around flourishing colonies of workmen arose, everywhere there were institutions for securing to workmen and their families the greatest possible amount of material well-being and of intellectual and moral development. Socialism, as a political doctrine, has lately made great progress among Swedish workmen and peasants; and it was not because the people were *embittered* that they sought to extend their rights of participation in political life, but simply because they desired more and more to increase the benefits from their work and to acquire an importance which flattered their self-esteem as substantial peasants and enlightened workmen.

However, up till quite lately there existed in Sweden

very apparent remnants of the former organisation of the State: very strict Court etiquette; the obvious preponderance of the Upper Chamber recruited, until the recent electoral reform, almost exclusively from the noble, financial, ecclesiastical and academic classes; the part played by the nobility in the social life of the capital and of certain provinces. But side by side with all this a thorough metamorphosis was becoming daily more apparent in the *social spirit* of the country. In Sweden, just as in the two other Scandinavian States, one looks with admiration on all that has been done and effected for the well-being and moral raising of the *people*, the workmen, the urban lower classes: schools admirably organised and managed, hospitals almost luxuriously equipped, summer-colonies for poor children, beautiful gardens and parks laid out in the most thickly populated areas, in short all works of really public utility carried to a pitch of perfection that many other countries might envy.

When I was starting for Sweden some one said to me: "Do not forget that it is the most aristocratic country of Europe." I found this to be true up to a point. But if instead I had been told that Sweden was the most truly democratic country in the world, by virtue of the care and moral deference shown to the humblest, and the natural feeling of dignity reigning in all the lower classes, I should have agreed to that also, and have said that many of the countries in which there is most talk of the reign of democracy have done less to safeguard the rights of the people and their dignity than the three Scandinavian countries—more especially "aristocratic" and monarchical Sweden.

Be that as it may, the balance-sheet for the hundred years of the Bernadotte dynasty and of a constant policy of peace shows for Sweden truly enviable returns and figures. A population of nearly 6,000,000 people, living on an unfruitful soil, near a sea containing few fish, with a harsh climate—a population not naturally possessing a naval or commercial spirit—live nevertheless

a free, happy and comfortable life, allowing themselves the luxuries of a beautiful capital and another large commercial town in the west, Gothenburg, of a pursuit of art carried to a high degree, of an elegant and cultivated society, of a Court in which the setting and ceremonies do not lack grandeur, and finally—more expensive than anything—of an Army of which the real value and irreproachable appearance are certainly far superior to its equipment, but which nevertheless represents an appreciable strength, and a certain weight in the political balance of Northern Europe.

Naturally all this is not entirely the result of the wise Swedish policy of the last hundred years. Many of the things that one admires at the present time in Sweden owe their origin to far older historic causes and to the natural qualities of the people: more especially to the latter.

Of an eminently pure race, the Swedes fully possess the few failings and the great advantages of a people who have developed in freedom on a land belonging entirely to them and which has never been trampled by other nations. And they fully bear the stamp of their granite soil and of their climate with its icy blasts. Slow and uncommunicative, but obstinate and sensitive, capable of strong passions, more of an internal than external nature, generally ingenuous but full of good sense, sometimes genial and eminently honest—these "big children," good-looking, well set up and with naturally graceful movements, carry about in the gaze of their blue eyes the mirage of their dense and rugged forests, of their calm lakes, of their clean wooden houses always of the same dark-red colour, amidst the pretty landscapes of Sweden, so green, so peaceful, so unchanging.

First and foremost the Swede prizes his freedom and his country. Among the Swedish nobility the feeling of patriotism is particularly strong and rules all inclinations and arguments. The events of the national

history of the last two or even three centuries are present in the memory of the Swedish nobility as if they had occurred only ten or twenty years ago. And among the "intellectuals," among those who have been to a university, among the substantial middle-classes of the large towns, the patriotic feeling assumes the same form and the same dimensions. It is naturally less conscious and particularly less "historic" among the lower classes. The man of the people who understands by instinct that Sweden cannot nourish and provide decently for more than a certain number of inhabitants, and who at the same time does not desire or know how to limit the birth-rate, emigrates fairly readily to America. He often emigrates merely to avoid military service. But he can never forget his country. And this emigration, customary and accepted though it be, weighs with true though unconscious melancholy on the existence of the Swedish people.

Centuries of stern education have developed among the people habits of honesty, integrity and politeness; but by nature also they are good and inclined to be generous. During the three years that I spent in Sweden, I never saw a child ill-treated or an animal ill-used—and that in a country where a great deal of strong drink is indulged in! In the economic sphere the Swede possesses no commercial aptitude, but in return he often displays technical skill. Formerly the Swedes were nicknamed "the Frenchmen of the North" because in the eighteenth century all well-educated Swedes spoke French, and also because many young nobles went to serve the King of France. But one might far more correctly have called them "the Spaniards of the North," as they are passionately devoted to the honour and glory of their country, they are proud, exclusive, somewhat taciturn, admirable soldiers, and excel in the sense of national dignity and of the nobleness of their race. Such have they shown themselves throughout the course of their history, and such they are at the present time.

The link which for centuries has bound Swedish policy closely to France is of historic notoriety. The foundations of this close alliance were laid during the events of the Thirty Years' War. Since, throughout the eighteenth century, Sweden in her struggles with Russia has nearly always been able to look to the protection of French policy. The puerile rhodomontades of Gustaf IV.—as I said before—cost him his throne and cost Sweden the rest of Finland; but these events did not in any way change Swedish sympathies for France. Still less were these sympathies diminished by the events of 1813 and 1814. The successor to the Swedish throne, leading his 30,000 soldiers against his former master, proclaimed openly that he wished to save France, confound the "Usurper," and give back to his former country true civil liberty. And it was in this way that the Swedes understood their participation in the coalition of 1813. Moreover, at the Restoration the old Franco-Swedish friendship flourished again intrinsically.

This friendship was lasting; there was a renewal of diplomatic intimacy during the Crimean war, an intimacy which bordered on an alliance. But on the whole at this period French influence in Sweden was principally maintained by the force of inertia. The chief cause of the Franco-Swedish alliance—the perennial struggle between France and Austria—had ceased to exist, and the military power of Russia had meantime increased in such a formidable way that Sweden would have been but a feeble asset in an offensive alliance of the distant countries of the West against the Colossus of the North.

Moreover, from 1815 onwards, a new power was arising and becoming clearly defined, the influence of which contributed to modify radically the relations between France, Russia and Sweden. This power was Prussia—no longer the opportunist and venturesome Prussia of the eighteenth century, but the Prussia of Hardenberg, Stein and Arndt—who was rising triumphant from her disasters of 1807, and who with obstinate

perseverance was inaugurating her new policy: that of substituting herself for the former Germanic Empire and of raising to heights as yet undreamt of the name, the might and the wealth of the German race. *Pan-Germanism* was born just then, issuing ready armed from the brain of Wotan. The University of Berlin was seized with an ardent love for Scandinavian, Flemish, even Anglo-Saxon mythology, history, linguistics, jurisprudence. Literature followed science. Pan-Germanism became ultra-faithful and loyal with the Prussian squires, liberal even to vehemence with the men of 1848, pious and unctuous with the Protestant pastors while waiting to win even the Catholic padres; but it chiefly flattered the "sister nations," extolling their virtues, their history, their customs, their Germanic soul.

For a long time Sweden did not respond. In the first place Prussia and Berlin were not popular there; there had been many fights with Brandenburg; many people still regretted the possession of Pomerania, particularly the numerous noble families natives of this province who at the present time felt as if they had been uprooted; then Prussia was the intimate friend of Russia, and Russia was not always in the odour of sanctity according to Swedish public opinion; Prussia was a "parvenue" who by her present might wounded the pride of a kingdom fallen from its high political estate; finally, Sweden held the traditions of French influence and sympathies, whereas people in Berlin feigned to despise the light French mind and to replace its simple logic by confused and pompous metaphysics.

All the same, gradually the ice between Berlin and Stockholm began to break. First it was Europe's infatuation for the scientific proceedings of erudite Germany: the less her science was understood the more it was esteemed. Then persistent flattery had its natural result. A Swede would take up a German book on comparative mythology and would find that he was a direct descendant of the *Azes*, the gods of the German Olympus; or he would open a popular history book,

and see how Swedish virtues were extolled in the account of the Thirty Years' War and in that of the War of the North. In novels the hero was generally some good-looking youth of Dalecarlia, and the heroine a frank and loyal Scandinavian maiden with periwinkle-blue eyes. At this period the Swede was still much attached to his Protestant religion; so Pan-German theory emphasised the fact repeatedly that Reform was the quintessence of the German mind, the incarnation of the irresistible German flight towards truth and moral independence. And all this was presented in a very clever way. To pedants and those priding themselves on their erudition—fat volumes full of propositions and international difficulties; to simple men and youths at school—popular works either of a categorical and almost imperious doctrine, or fanatical and vibrating. I defy a young Swede to read the so-called *history* of the Thirty Years' War by Schiller—the work of an ardent imagination aud of a pathetic Protestant pietism—without feeling himself one with his German brothers in religion, without communicating with them in the person of the principal hero in the book, King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. And this book is always seen in the hands of every Swedish schoolboy.

But it was not only intellectual influences that caused Sweden and Germany to draw nearer to one another; the political events and situations of the last third of the nineteenth century contributed to it decidedly. After the defeat of France and the enormous increase in the power of Prussia, now become the German Empire, Sweden no longer had any reason to direct her policy towards France. Everything in the North depended on the trend of German policy: would it still continue to cultivate the former friendly relations of Berlin with St. Petersburg, if so it would be necessary to take care not to incur the displeasure of either of these all-powerful friends; if Germany should separate herself from Russia and become frankly hostile to her, then it would

be only by allying herself to Germany that Sweden would have a chance of gaining, or rather of *regaining*, anything.

In 1870 the sympathies of Swedish public opinion were still ostensibly with France. From 1875 the intimacy with Germany begins and soon obtains a firm footing in Sweden.

All secondary countries, but particularly the countries geographically eccentric and speaking a separate language, need to link themselves to the central civilisation of Europe through the medium of one of the greatest participants in this old civilisation: France, England, Germany, Italy, Spain. Sweden, who corresponds exactly to the conditions quoted above, had thus always had need of a "big-sister initiator." So that when this sister was no longer France, her place was naturally bound to be taken by Germany.

Finally, the great industrial and economic progress made by Germany in the last fifty years helped to establish and develop her influence in Sweden. Sweden, generally speaking, does not possess either the commercial spirit of Denmark or the naval spirit of Norway; as I have said, the Swedish people have no inclination for commerce, although they have first-rate technical ability. With the development of the resources of the country, Germany was the first to lend the asset of her commerce to this development. Sweden imported more and more German wares and used more every year. Sweden developed her mineral production more and more; Germany was there to draw as much as was possible of the magnificent Swedish ore into the enormous and insatiable Krupp steelworks; Sweden, who possesses no coalfields, was more and more in need of coal. Germany arranged to supply her with one-sixth of the coal required (700,000 tons on 5,000,000), leaving the English to supply the rest, but intending to increase her share in time. Finally, the great German Bank was willing to finance Swedish enterprises, and soon the most intimate terms existed between the financial market of Sweden and that

of Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen. German managers and clerks in ever increasing numbers came to establish themselves in Stockholm or Gothenburg; very soon German was the foreign tongue which was the most often understood and spoken in Sweden—though this is not saying much, for the Swede does not care about speaking any but his mother-tongue. But the Germans, on the contrary, learnt the Scandinavian languages quickly, and this was another trump-card in their game. Very soon, assisted by political sympathies, the German academic programme was integrally adopted in Sweden, and this definitely accentuated the drawing nearer of the two countries.

People have often been surprised that all this work should have been done in Sweden, in spite of the fact that the country had at its head a *French* dynasty—and French only recently. To that we would reply that the influence of *race* over the sympathies and capabilites of sovereigns has always been greatly exaggerated. It is not blood, it is environment, education, climate, soil, the air they breathe, ideas and ways of thinking, assimilated almost mechanically, and unconsciously, that in the long run constitute the intellectual and moral physiognomy—I would even say the physical physiognomy—of families and individuals. Examine, for instance, the *sixteen quarterings* of the late Emperor of Russia, Alexander III. There are *fifteen German quarterings* and *one half-Russian one*—which, moreover, is absolutely hypothetical—the one that represents the unfortunate Peter III., the miserable scion of the once powerful Romanoff race. Well! there has never been a Russian, a Russian sovereign, so typically *Russian* as Alexander III. It was almost as if the former Tsar of Moscow, a John III. or an Alexis Mikhaïlovitch, were re-incarnated in his person. He was far more like a rich *starovere* merchant of the Volga than a St. Petersburg aristocrat; and his aversion for everything German, and particularly for anything to do with Berlin, was absolutely sincere and only

tempered by a kind of scornful good-nature. A country —more particularly an original country—very soon assimilates a foreign dynasty.

Charles XV., the eldest of the grandsons of Bernadotte and Mademoiselle Cléry and of Eugène Beauharnais, was actually the last of the line in which the influence of French blood is truly noticeable; his brother, Oscar II., being solely and entirely Swedish, it is precisely in his reign that the force of circumstances led to German influence and caused it to bear fruit.

Moreover, two personal causes contributed to it: King Oscar II. was a scholar, a man of letters, a seeker; and therefore a great intimacy sprang up between him and the Crown-Prince of Prussia, afterwards the ephemeral Emperor Frederick III. who also *dreamt* about philosophy and the high principles of humanity and liberty. German public opinion did not omit to profit by this intimacy between the popular "Kronprinz" and the Monarch of the brother-nation, Sweden. German scholars, men of letters, musicians bowed low before the king-philosopher, the true connoisseur and sincere admirer of German science and art; to him went the praises, the flattering dedications, the diplomas of the universities and academies. And it is all very well to have a well-regulated and sincere mind, as Oscar II. had, but these things are always flattering and set up—perhaps involuntarily—sympathy between the object and the authors of these demonstrations.

In addition, Oscar II. was married to a German princess, a Nassau. The young German princesses of the generation to which Queen Sophia of Sweden belonged were generally brought up outside the narrow *ideas* of German patriotism; as they might be destined to a foreign prince, they were not to be hampered with anything that might embarrass them in their new country. But after 1815 there were some exceptions, and Queen Sophia was one of them; and as she was a model wife and mother, and as her virtues and her intelligence gained for her the sincere affection of Stockholm society

and of the Swedish people, her *Germanic* influence spread quite naturally over her new family and her new country.

She married her eldest son, the present King, to a Princess of Baden, daughter of the respectable Grand-Duchess Louisa and grand-daughter of the Emperor William I.

Even under present circumstances, when so many crimes and felonies have been perpetrated by Germany against my unhappy country, I should consider that I was lacking in fairness if I did not mention the high qualities of the House of Baden and its courageous fidelity to the ancient traditions of *behaviour*, charity and justice. The Grand Duchy of Baden was the only place in Germany where the Court dared to be humane to the unfortunate dependants of enemy countries who became civil prisoners; and Prince Max of Baden did all in his power to make the work of the German Red Cross more consistent with the recognised principles and humanitarian objects of this great international organisation. The Prince's efforts were not always successful, for he had to struggle against the blindness of *an entire nation*, and the malignant duplicity of a powerful portion of it. But I know for certain that he did make efforts.

Queen Victoria of Sweden, from the outset of the war, frankly supported the German colours; she rejoiced at Germany's victories and deplored her defeats; she did not curtail by one hour her usual long visits to Carlsruhe,—visits which were, moreover, necessary on account of her delicate health, which cannot stand the severe Swedish winter; she did not seek to escape any of the ovations given to her at this time in Germany; and yet, side by side with all this, she has always kept up appearances, she has always remained a *Queen*. She did all she could for our prisoners and for the badly-wounded Russians who crossed Sweden in thousands. She took a real interest in them. I only had the honour of meeting her twice during the war, and then she extended to the Russian Minister a welcome that was not

only exempt from the slightest tinge of hostility or coldness, but was marked by graciousness and kindness. And the few Russians who also had occasion to meet her at this time had the same experience.

Queen Victoria's health and her prolonged absences from the country have prevented her, more than her origin, from becoming really Swedish; but her intelligence, her deep culture, and her high moral qualities have all the same caused her to gain an ascendancy as much over her new family as over Swedish society and —up to a point—over the country.

In taking possession of Sweden little by little, German policy was not only obeying the dictates of Pan-Germanism, and of German economic interests. It was also prcouring a desirable ally in case of a rupture with Russia, a rupture of which the first idea dates from 1875, and from the help given that year to France by the vigilance of Prince Gortchakoff and the generous intercession of Alexander II.

Since then, relations between Russia and Germany had been subject to many fluctuations. Sometimes the old traditions of the Holy Alliance appeared to be renewed; sometimes, on the other hand, the coldness between St. Petersburg and Berlin became accentuated. Neither the Court at Potsdam nor Germany generally really wished for war with Russia; they would much have preferred an intimacy and an alliance based on the old foundations of trickery on the one side and ingenuousness on the other. But as they had begun to work in Sweden on certain lines, they continued this work from Berlin with consistent stubbornness, without worrying as to whether at the moment they were on distant or good terms with Russia. If war between the two powerful Empires was to break out all the same, Germany would possess an ally that was not to be despised in the shape of Sweden, who would go and bite the bear's ear on the Finland side; if, on the contrary, the friendship between Tsarskoe-Selo and Potsdam was

cemented again, then it would only be necessary to tell the Swedes to keep quiet: moreover, they would understand this themselves.

Now, to prepare the Swedes for the eventual taking-up of arms against Russia it was imperative to dazzle their eyes with a *great hope*, and also to show them a *great danger*.

The hope was the recovery of Finland.

In the centre of one of the most beautiful squares in Stockholm, a large Charles XII. in bronze, treading with enormous boots on a very mean pedestal, points out to the passers-by with a fine movement of arm and sword the direction of the rising sun—that of oppressed Finland. Every good squire and every Swedish "intellectual" is impressed by this gesture, which evokes in him memories of heroism and patriotic troubles. But intelligent and well-informed Swedes—and these are not lacking—know perfectly well that for some time Finland has not been at all what she was under the Swedish régime and up till the middle of the nineteenth century; that the Finns, an obstinate, taciturn, vindictive and spiteful race, but gifted and eager for work withal, are beginning to form a nation that has nothing in common with Sweden nor with the traditions of the Vasas; that even at Helsingfors, the "sons of the sun," the descendants of the Germanic *Azes*, have often to bow before the prominent cheekbones and snub nose of some Finns, distant descendants of those Altaic races who throughout centuries had kept up an implacable conflict with the Aryans. That Finland might one day become independent, *that* the Swedes readily believe; but that she might again become an integral part of the kingdom of Sweden—that could only be contemplated seriously by shallow or ignorant minds. Hence the "*great hope*" was but a feeble bait. So that the "*great fear*" had all the more influence.

It was gradually suggested to the Swedes that Russia had not yet finished her offensive movement

towards the Scandinavian peninsula. Deprived of outlets to the quite open sea, the huge Empire made persistent efforts to secure such an outlet. But the route of the Straits was barred to her by Europe; that of the Persian Gulf by the English; that of the Pacific Ocean by the Japanese; moreover, the last two outlets were extremely far away from the Russian centres of production and consumption. How, then, should Russia not covet a far nearer outlet, that of the ports—very far north, it is true, but magnificent and always free from ice—which open on the Atlantic Ocean through the Norwegian *fjords?* Narwick, Trondhjem, Hammerfest, these are the ports that Russia ardently wished to possess; but in order to do so, she would first have to conquer the North of Sweden, a thinly populated province, in which, however, huge beds of splendid iron ore [1] have lately been discovered. The existence of a more or less autonomous Finland, indeed, hampers the expansion of the Empire on this side. Hence the task of Russifying and assimilating this "unfortunate" province completely has already been begun, and as soon as this has been accomplished, Russia will seek by force to extend her domination over the North of Sweden and of Norway.

This theme, constantly repeated, commented on, and recapitulated, had a great success in Sweden.[2] Stockholm did not wish to consider the weak sides of the argument: the great distance of the Norwegian ports from the centre of Russia, and particularly from inhabited parts of Russia itself; the existence on the Russian Murman coast of excellent ports open in winter. "Fear has enormous eyes," says the Russian proverb: it only sees what strikes it and rarely goes into details. By the years 1910–1913 the theory quoted above was accepted by the whole of Sweden, and as the champion and populariser of this threatening theory at this period appeared the celebrated Sven-Hedin.

[1] Yielding in the smelting up to 80 per cent. of metal.

[2] An infinitely smaller one in Norway.

As we know, Sven-Hedin owes his fame to his travels in Thibet. The Swedish explorer was very effectually assisted by Russia. The Emperor Nicolas II. took a personal interest in his explorations, and the civil and military authorities of Russian Central Asia (whence Sven-Hedin crossed over the Thibetan borders) received orders to grant him all possible facilities, including an armed escort. On his return, he was most graciously received by the Emperor and welcomed by the Academy of Science of St. Petersburg. At his last visit to Stockholm (in 1910), the Emperor still remembered his *protégé*, sent him a Russian decoration, and invited him to go and see him. In consequence, Sven-Hedin was looked on as being a friend of, and under an obligation to, the Russians. And so, if the "Russian" Sven-Hedin himself began to write and to preach that a real danger for Sweden was arising on the side of Russia, then one had to believe it and to seek salvation first in the increase of Swedish armed forces, and then by binding Swedish policy closely to that of the power who alone could check and confound the Colossus of the North—to Germany. When I arrived in Sweden in March, 1914, I thought this tale of Russian aspirations to Narwick was not believed by any one, or else was only a pretext for obtaining supplies from the Riksdag, and for improving Swedish armaments, the concealed aim being Finland. I have since had to change my opinion. I realised that the fear of Russian aggression existed even among the wisest and most well-balanced Swedes. It was not until much later, and when the World War was in full swing, that Swedish public opinion gradually recognised its mistake; but for this it was necessary for Russia to give an absolutely tangible proof, that of the construction and hurried completion of the railway line from St. Petersburg to Murman.[1]

[1] And to think that this all-important line was to have been laid—but was not—already in 1895, when the port of *Alexandrovsk* was inaugurated, and the line sketched out by Witte's orders, then all-powerful

I said above that German labours in Sweden went on independently of the relations existing at such and such a moment between Berlin and St. Petersburg. Nevertheless, towards 1913, a recrudescence of, and an added activity in, these labours was noticeable. Apparently Berlin felt the great collision to be at hand—*wished it to be at hand,* I ought to say—and henceforth Sweden must be "warmed up," her old grudges and new fears with regard to Russia must be stirred up.

In September, the divorce of the Grand-Duchess Marie created a coolness between the two Courts, and made the position of the Russian Minister, the elegant M. Savinsky, very difficult. In November, a still more disagreeable incident occurred. The Russian military attaché, Colonel Assanovitch, was accused by the Press and then by the Swedish Government even, of being a spy or at least of being in close touch with very suspicious individuals (Scandinavians, moreover) who were arrested on a charge of spying. A letter was even produced from the imprudent colonel to one of these individuals. This disagreeable incident served as a pretext for a whole campaign by the Press directed against Russia. Sven-Hedin extracted from it some fresh arguments, and multiplied his writings and conferences on the theme of the *Russian danger.* The public, with increasing vehemence, discussed the inadequacy of Swedish armaments, and the problems of national defence. Never before had Russian diplomatic representation in Stockholm been in such a painful position.

The Government, at that time belonging to the Liberal Party (Staaf and Baron Ehrensvaerd), did all in their power to calm people down, but their adversaries then renewed their patriotic apprehensions, accused the Liberals of not being aware of the great dangers Sweden

Minister of Finance. This construction was set aside, so as to get on with the Trans-Siberian line. Then, the system still obtained of only constructing lines by the State and out of the ordinary Budget of the Empire.

was incurring, and gave way to extreme agitation throughout the country, in favour of extraordinary measures in order to secure the safety of their realm.

This agitation ended in the celebrated *Bondestog*—the peasants' procession. At the beginning of February thousands of peasants from the old and famous province of Dalsland (Dalecarlia), in their beautiful national costume; students from the two universities of Sweden—Upsala and Lund—with their caps, their "colours," and their flags; ecclesiastics from different parts of the kingdom, and other persons who joined in, made their solemn entry into Stockholm, were put up there by the middle-classes and the nobility of the town, and the next day, accompanied by a huge crowd, marched past the Palace, cheering when the King and his family appeared on the balcony; the heads of the demonstration harangued His Majesty in vehement terms, assuring him of the devotion of the Swedish people, and entreating him to take all measures necessary to secure the safety of the country, measures which the country would be delighted to sanction, whatever sacrifices they demanded. The King then spoke and promised that the measures should be taken, and that the question of national defence should be settled with as little delay as possible.

This answer of the King's to the processionists of the *Bondestog* caused a difference between His Majesty and his Ministers. The latter, and the Press of their party, alleged that from the constitutional point of view the King had no right to speak and to make promises to the processionists without having first taken the advice of the Cabinet and discussed his speech with his Ministers. The King, on the other hand, asserted that no one could prevent him speaking to his people, and mentioning his patriotic convictions to them.

This difference of opinion between the King and his Ministers having become accentuated and having got into the Press, the Liberal Cabinet resigned, and the King accepted the resignation.

According to the constitutional laws of Sweden, when

the King and the Cabinet differ about a law, a government measure or a principle, the King has the right not only to dismiss his Ministers but also to dissolve the Riksdag. Only the Riksdag resulting from the new elections may give an opinion, solely and exclusively, on the subject of the law, measure or principle which had caused the difference between the King and the former Ministry. The question under discussion once solved, the Riksdag retires, and makes way for fresh elections, whence issues a new Chamber, normal this time. The Cabinet appointed by the King must also resign as soon as the normal Chamber is elected and convened.

The King entrusted the formation of the Cabinet to M. de Hammarskiold, professor of international law, and former plenipotentiary of Sweden at the Congress of the Hague, who was made Prime Minister; and M. Knut Wallenberg was made Minister for Foreign Affairs.[1] Both were at that time far from realising that their term of office, which should have been temporary, would be prolonged for three years, amidst the greatest difficulties that any Swedish statesman should have had to face for ages.

The new elections (shortly after my arrival in Sweden) yielded results favourable to the principle of the increase in the Budget for national defence. This last question forming the crux of the difference on which the new Chamber had to give an opinion, this Chamber as usual received the name of *Vörsvar-Riksdag* (the Chamber of "national defence"), and the Minister that of *Vörsvar-Regeringen* (Cabinet of National Defence).

Such was the political situation in Sweden at the time when I disembarked at Stockholm, and took up my post there.

[1] In Sweden there are really only two actual Ministers (with the title of Excellency): the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. It is they who give the *tone* to the Cabinet, the rest are more in the position of secretaries to the State.

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE EVE OF WAR

Two days after I arrived in Stockholm, I was received by the King in a solemn audience. The King was going off the very next day to shoot elk in the northern provinces—some said to inspect troops and forts there—and he was in a hurry to get through the audience. He had been, moreover, seriously indisposed for some months, and his physical sufferings, added to political tribulations, according to all accounts, made him nervous and even irritable at times. I did not notice this during my audience, but I was struck by the looks of His Majesty, who appeared to be really ill. As is known, his journey to the North was interrupted by an acute attack of the internal malady from which he suffered. He was brought back to Stockholm, where he underwent a very serious operation, which was wonderfully successful, but which left His Majesty enfeebled for a long time. The King did not entirely regain his strength for a year, but then he was able to resume his normal life and the sports in which he excels: hunting and tennis.

The reception of foreign Ministers who come to present their credentials to the King takes place in Stockholm in the setting prescribed by time-honoured etiquette. At the appointed hour, a master of the ceremonies came to fetch me, and conducted me and my suite in gilded coaches to the Palace. We had no escort; but instead, at the Castle of Stockholm—majestic in its simplicity of an old Roman palace—the Dragoons of the Guard were drawn up on the grand staircase in their historic uniforms of Charles XII.'s

time. At the entrance to the reception-rooms, full of beautiful furniture, pictures, bronzes, and admirable Gobelin tapestries of the eighteenth century, the whole Court awaited me. As soon as the introductions had been made, the doors were thrown open, and I was ushered into the presence of Gustaf V. His Majesty, in cold and formal tones, exchanged the usual compliments with me, greeted the members of my suite in the same manner, and then begged me to follow him into his private drawing-room; the Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Wallenberg (whose acquaintance I had made the day before), was invited to accompany us. The King's expression and his tone then changed completely. He sat down, having offered us chairs, and began by asking me questions about the health of the Emperor and that of his family; he then passed on quite simply to the delicate question of the recent divorce of his son, and expressed, in terms which one felt were perfectly sincere, his regrets at having for ever lost the young Grand-Duchess, his daughter-in-law, whom he had liked very much. I appreciated the dignity and the frankness of these words, which at once put me at my ease with the King. His Majesty then questioned me about the events that had occurred in Bulgaria. "How had King Ferdinand, who had the reputation of being such a subtle politician, managed so completely to lose the game in which he had taken part?"

I replied by a few comments on the events I had recently witnessed and on Ferdinand himself. Amongst other things I expressed the opinion that the curiously undecided character of the King had had a great deal to do with his mishap; if from the outset he had taken up a definite line and had stuck to it throughout, a great many things would never have happened. But Ferdinand was always changing his mind and his direction. . . . Here the King interrupted me. "Oh! but, monsieur," he exclaimed, significantly, "do not judge sovereigns too harshly! If you only knew how difficult it is, how painful it is sometimes, to make a decision amidst

advice and contrary opinions that are clashing in the country!" . . . The King, doubtless, was alluding to his own recent troubles over the *Bondestog* and the change of Ministry. Perhaps, also, he had other obsessions of a still more serious nature in view, which I at the moment had no idea of. However that may be, His Majesty's sincerity—a sincerity piercing through much reticence—made an impression on me; it was a decided change for me after Ferdinand, and the duplicity which I always felt was underlying all the effusions and all the confidences of the King of the Bulgarians.

From the King's room I was conducted to the Queen's apartments, where I found myself in the presence of a *grande-dame* sovereign, correct and kind. The following days I was received in audience by the other members of the Royal Family. First by the Crown-Prince and his wife, *née* Princess Margaret of Connaught. He struck me as being a serious young man, serious beyond his years, with unaffected manners, very guarded in his speech. She—quite charming, and also thoroughly unaffected.

Prince Charles, brother of the King, enjoys the sympathy and the respect of all surrounding him. He is tall, good-looking, and in his appearance has something typically chivalrous—an impression which increases when one gets to know the admirable qualities of his character, his great and active goodness, his upright mind. His wife, *née* Princess Ingeborg of Denmark, possesses all the taking and real charm of her own family. Pretty, intelligent, extremely unaffected in manner, and yet "every inch a princess," she reminds me forcibly of her aunt, the Dowager Empress of Russia, who had sent many messages to her niece by me. Three delightful young girls, of which the eldest made her *début* while I was in Stockholm, and a fine little boy, made up the family.

The King's youngest brother, Prince Eugene Napoleon, the only one of the family in whom the French type is still very apparent, lives almost like a

private person, giving himself up entirely to the pursuit of art. He is a very good landscape-painter, and has a high reputation in the country. He can without exaggeration be placed among the very good painters of Sweden—immediately after Zorn, the celebrated Liliefors and Carl Larson.

I was already acquainted with Prince William, the ex-husband of the Grand-Duchess Marie; he was tall and good-looking, and confined himself almost entirely to his naval profession and the society of his friends; but he was very popular with the society ladies of Stockholm, with whom he had always been a favourite.

As I said above, the King was taken seriously ill on his journey to the North. For weeks he hung between life and death, and I did not see him again till July, when he still looked terribly pulled down, thin and weak, but was gradually recovering his health and strength.

Two days after my solemn audience of the King, I went to call on M. Wallenberg, with whom I had only exchanged the customary commonplaces on my arrival. The new Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs began at once to talk business with me, and, to my great surprise, touched on a subject of "high politics" and politics generally. He expressed in guarded—but nevertheless very frank—terms his apprehensions on the subject of the European situation, and even his fears about the preservation of peace. Although sharing *in petto* the sentiments of the speaker, I took good care not to endorse his opinion or even to follow him on to this ticklish topic; on the contrary I expressed the firm hope that peace would be in no way threatened, that in our country everything would be done to avoid dangerous friction, that I had, in the course of my long diplomatic career, become accustomed to these attacks of European uneasiness, which happily never led to disastrous consequences, etc. . . . But my host did not allow himself to be discouraged. "You come from the Balkan East,

monsieur, and are well acquainted with the situation there; do you not think that the political state of those countries is very menacing? Here and in a great many other places people think that it is just from there that danger might come."

Again I turned a deaf ear to this invitation to confidences. I thought to myself: "Now here is a banker who has just become Minister for Foreign Affairs, and who considers it incumbent on him, at his first interview with the new Russian Minister, to converse on questions of high politics!" If I had known M. Knut Wallenberg a little I should never have formed such an incorrect judgment. Since then, during three years of almost daily intercourse, amidst events of exceptional gravity, I got to know thoroughly the character and mentality of the distinguished Swedish statesman, and I realised that, although not lacking in frankness, M. Wallenberg weighed his every word, and never indulged in idle talk. In this the long experience of a great financier was apparent. Moreover, M. Wallenberg is essentially Swedish, and all Swedes are men of few words; when they speak it is because they think they are obliged to. Hence, if the new Swedish Foreign Secretary had thought it necessary at the outset of our intercourse to converse with me about his fears on the subject of the political situation of Europe, he must have had grave reasons for doing so.

The artificial agitation kept up in the country, the clash of opinions between the King and the Staaf-Ehrensvaerd Cabinet and the demonstrations that had brought about the dissolution of the Chamber, were due —as subsequent events proved—to German instigation. Sinister schemes were ripening in Berlin; she had to attempt to reap, from Sweden, the fruit of the persistent work which I mentioned above; she had to secure finally the formal alliance of Sweden.

Doubtless during the month of February, 1914, the Swedish Court was warned by Berlin of the extreme tension of the political situation, and received proposals

of alliance. Hence the importance that King Gustaf V. attached to the question of the national defence of Sweden; hence also his wish to surround himself, in the great crisis which was forming, with people whom he considered either as essentially prudent and well-versed in questions of general politics, or as personal friends. In the King's opinion, M. Hammarskiold appeared especially to fulfil the first condition; and in M. Wallenberg His Majesty recovered a tried friend of strenuous days and a counsellor whose good sense would be able to face the exceptional circumstances which were imminent. For M. Wallenberg was truly an intimate friend of the King, who had complete trust in him.

Moreover, as soon as the new Ministers were in office, Gustaf V. had to acquaint them with the situation and to confide to them—particularly to M. Wallenberg—the information he held from the most intimate sources and which was to remain hidden from all those whom he could not trust absolutely. Knowing M. Wallenberg as I know him now, I can imagine the gravity, I will even say patriotic anguish, with which this intelligent and circumspect man received the King's confidences on the suggestions which came from the side of Berlin, and threw His Majesty himself into the most cruel perplexity. It was in order to check this information that the Swedish Foreign Secretary had applied to me at our first interview. I avoided this sounding as I did not know my partner. And also what should I have replied? That in St. Petersburg and in our Embassies of Berlin and Vienna, the general political situation was considered to be perfectly clear and free from danger; but that I myself held a very different opinion and had been dreading the great collision since September, 1913? These things can only be said to some one of whom one is absolutely certain. And I repeat that I did not know M. Knut Wallenberg at all. I knew that he was very rich, that he was at the head of the most powerful financial group of the Scandinavian Peninsula, which willingly furnished funds for the great industrial

enterprises in Sweden and in Norway (iron mines, water power, nitrates, etc.); that this group was the only one which was in close touch not only with the financial market of Berlin, but also and especially with that of Paris; that M. Wallenberg had been the real initiator and founder of the "Banque des Pays du Nord." But there ended my knowledge of the person whom I was to have as a partner in the most difficult and delicate circumstances.

Before my time, much hospitality had been displayed at the Russian Legation in Stockholm; at the receptions members of the aristocracy, personages who were well known in society and at Court, and the princes and princesses of Sweden were collected together. But there was not time to get to know and to see the great financiers, the great manufacturers, the people famed in the political world. Moreover, a legation cannot manage that job alone; it must be assisted—as German diplomatic representation always has been—by its colony, its distinguished travellers, its scientific experts, etc. Now, when I arrived in Stockholm, I asked to be made acquainted with the leading members of the Russian colony in Sweden; I was told in reply that there was one very amiable old Greek who was the centre of the sponge trade, but that in the course of the last winter, in order to facilitate his trade, the worthy man had become a naturalised Swede, and that in his person the whole Russian colony had disappeared!

Soon after our first interview, M. Wallenberg told me that he was going abroad, chiefly to Paris and Berlin. The object of this trip, which was only to take a few days, was strictly personal and had to do with the financial business of the Enskilda Bank, business which M. Wallenberg desired to wind up before handing over the management of the Bank to his brother. Nevertheless, he would profit by his stay in Paris also to see the Minister for Foreign Affairs and a few political personages with whom he was well acquainted.

On his return the Foreign Secretary hastened to tell me that, having seen the people quoted above in Paris and having also called on M. von Jagow and M. Zimmermann in Berlin, he had derived reassuring impressions from his conversation with both sides. This pertinacity in acquainting me with the political situation of Europe surprised me somewhat, but I was none the less grateful to M. Wallenberg for the courtesy and the confidence which he showed towards me on this occasion.

The conversation with my new colleagues, especially with the British Minister, were not of a nature to revive exaggerated apprehensions in me. Sir Esme Howard (then still Mr. Howard), whose eminent qualities of mind and character I was able to appreciate later—reflecting officially the profoundly pacific disposition of the Asquith-Grey Ministry, did not give way to lugubrious prophecies nor to considerations which might have put me on my guard against the Swedes and their present policy; Mr. Howard was more inclined to ridicule the agitation of Sven-Hedin and his followers, and did not see the reflection of a political manœuvre preconceived in Berlin. My French colleague, M. Thiébaud, took the "Russophobe" agitation which had taken possession of Sweden more tragically. He warned me at some length against the repetition of faults already committed, according to him, by Russian representatives, and especially against any action that might appear suspicious to the Swedes. I agreed entirely with my colleague. I heard later that M. Thiébaud had at this period begun confidential parleyings with his chiefs, in order to prepare a sort of mediation between Sweden and Russia, from the President of the Republic himself. M. Poincaré was soon going to Russia and from there he was going to pay official visits to the three Scandinavian Courts, and on this occasion he was to make friendly observations about the "Assanovitch affair," and to bring back to the King of Sweden reassuring explanations from His Majesty the Emperor. This idea was adopted; there was some good in it, although it exaggerated rather too much the

importance of the Sven-Hedin calumnies. But I was extremely astonished that my French colleague should have concealed from me, from the beginning and until the end, his idea and parleyings with Paris on this subject. Later on and during the tragic years we went through together I was most careful not to imitate M. Thiébaud's example, and I confided to him, carefully and from the very first, all that I heard, and all that I intended to do or to write.

I gradually became better acquainted with my other colleagues. In the senior member of the Diplomatic Corps, my Portuguese colleague Castro-Fejo, I found a man of great culture and of wide experience of Sweden; I could subsequently congratulate myself on the excellent relations which existed between us from the outset. Alas! two years later his wife—Swedo-French by birth—beautiful, bright and charming, died of an incurable disease, and he himself soon followed her to the grave, having succumbed to paralysis of the heart! The Danish Minister, M. Scavenius, whose acquaintance I had already made in St. Petersburg, was very useful to me from the beginning through his perfect knowledge of political and social matters in Stockholm. We later became very intimate with him and with Madame Scavenius, and often had cause to appreciate their intelligence, their tact, and their sincere sympathies with the Entente. The Japanese Minister, M. Uchida, intelligent and correct, and Madame Uchida, as charming as she was cultivated; the Duke and Duchess of Amalfi, whom we ended by liking most cordially; M. Lagos, the distinguished Argentine diplomat, and the amiable Madame Lagos; an excellent and agreeable French colleague, Baron Devaux, and the equally agreeable English couple, the Clives; our subsequent Norwegian colleagues, all most amiable and reliable; finally—last but not least—the satirical M. Tommazini and the fascinating and witty Madame Tommazini, the life and soul of the Diplomatic Corps and of Stockholm society, completed the friendly circle who gathered closely round

us and whose society helped us to bear three years of constant nervous tension, of trials and of misfortunes that the terrible inexorable war brought in its train.

From the outset there was a coolness between us and my Austro-Hungarian colleague, Count Hadik. On the other hand, my German colleague, Herr von Reichenau, the type of the convinced Prussian and belonging to a social set which paraded the former traditions of Russo-Prussian friendship, gave me a warm welcome and sought an interchange of views with his new Russian colleague.

During the month of April I had to busy myself with the Russian participation in an exhibition of "the adjacent countries of the Baltic," which was to be inaugurated at Malmö.[1] The Imperial Government, hurt by the recent Swedish demonstrations, did not wish to take any part in the exhibition. But thanks to the efforts of a few people who feared that this holding aloof might be misconstrued in Sweden, M. Emmanuel Nobel was allowed to place himself at the head of a private initiatory committee which succeeded more or less in forming a Russian section. The result, from the material point of view, was very meagre: a few embroideries and laces made by villagers, much appreciated abroad; an exhibit by the Nobel petroleum interests at Baku, another by the rubber manufacturers of Riga, a cold-storage section, and finally an art section, represented by the Russian painters of the newest school, in which side by side with a few excellent portraits hung some pictures which would have made the dogs howl; these made up the Russian exhibit which I thought compared disastrously with the Swedish, Danish, and German sections, in which the most interesting and the best specimens of the industries of those countries had been carefully collected together. Nevertheless, later on, I could only congratulate myself on the efforts of those who, in spite of opposition from

[1] A Swedish port opposite Copenhagen.

official circles, had all the same contrived that Russia should be represented at the exhibition of Malmö: the Swedes were anyhow grateful to Russia for having taken part in it. And if this had not been done every one in Sweden would have seen tangible proof of Russian hostility and of her sinister schemes with regard to the peninsula of the North!

At the end of April I went to Malmö to see how the setting-up and the arrangement of the Russian section were getting on. About the 15th May I returned there officially to take part in the opening of the exhibition. The King still being ill, it was the Crown Prince and his wife who presided over the opening ceremonies. The customary prayers, inevitable chants, numerous and lengthy speeches in excellent Swedish (of which then I did not understand one word), a grand banquet presided over by the Royal pair—at which I made acquaintance with a lot of people I never saw again—closed the first day's proceedings. The next day there was a great dinner to the German contingent in the room of the beautiful Berlin china. There I made the acquaintance of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, German Minister to Copenhagen. The Count extended to me a particularly ready welcome. From topical commonplaces we proceeded to exchange a few political impressions, and Count Rantzau appeared to jump at the opportunity to express, with striking warmth and conviction, some ideas on the absolute necessity for good relations between Russia and Germany, and on the terrible consequences that a collision arising between them might have for both countries. I acquiesced very sincerely in this point of view.

"It is a great pity that we have not time to discuss this more fully," said Rantzau. "But you are certain to come to Copenhagen soon. Come and see me when you do; we shall be able to talk more freely and at greater length; do come!"

I did go to Copenhagen two days after, but I did not call on the German Minister. I considered that to seek

a political conversation with Count Rantzau there, where he was always in close touch with his Russian colleague, Baron de Buxhoeveden, would have been an indelicate proceeding on my part with regard to the latter. I have, however, good reason to believe that the sentiments and opinions expressed to me by Count Rantzau were not factitious. As a diplomat in high favour at his Court, he must at this time have known many things which only revealed themselves two months later to the rest of the world, and I know from a fairly reliable source that the apprehensions of the German diplomat, who had never lacked intelligence, were absolutely sincere.

A less formal dinner to the Russian section closed the series of festivities. In the toast which I proposed to the absent King and to the Royal couple presiding at the dinner, I strove to make the thoroughly friendly and sympathetic sentiments which animated Russia towards all the Scandinavian countries—her Baltic neighbours—stand out very clearly, and I expressed a wish for the development of close commercial and industrial relations between my country and Sweden. The Stockholm Press quoted and approved of this toast, and I had a general impression that the Swedes who came to Malmö for the inauguration of the exhibition had gone away less scared with regard to Russia than they had been on their arrival.

Towards the end of May, the Riksdag of "the National Defence" assembled in Stockholm. The ceremony of the opening took place as usual in the grand hall of the Royal Castle and with the usual pomp. The King insisted on opening this parliament himself, although judging by his looks, his walk and his voice, he was still suffering from the effects of the terrible illness and of the operation he had recently undergone.

"*Gode Herrar och Svensk Män*";[1] he began his speech from the Throne, according to established custom; and I remember the impression that this

[1] "Good Lords and Men of Sweden."

ancient formula made on me. I thought to myself: "When will the day come on which the Emperor, my august Master, will open in person a *national Duma* really worthy of the name and will with confidence address the real representatives of the people, strong in their rights, conscious of their duties, and especially feeling themselves to be the sons of their country and the authorised mandatories of their people?"

The Riksdag, with a few amendments, consented to the expenditure which the Government asked for, for the augmentation of the Swedish Army and its equipment.

While this Riksdag was sitting, the political situation in Europe was becoming more gloomy every day. First there was the milliard in free gifts previously deducted by the German Chamber from all the great fortunes of the country; then there was continual coming and going between Berlin and Vienna; the heads of the Staffs of the two Central Empires, and the heads of their Fleets conferring together; the interview of Konopischt when William II. went to put the finishing touches to the manipulation of Austria-Hungary in the person of the heir to the throne, the warlike Arch-Duke Francis Ferdinand; finally, the enormous sum poured into the treasury of the German Red Cross. The language of the Austro-German Press became daily more chauvinistic, more uncompromising.

What was our country doing in view of all these demonstrations, all this work, which were so to speak staring us in the face? I have no idea. No echo reached me from St. Petersburg or from our Foreign Secretary. Our Ambassador to Berlin, M. Sverbeieff, went on leave towards the end of June—as he did every year at the same time—to superintend farming operations on his property at Tula. The Russian Ambassador to Vienna, M. Schebeko, was soon to follow him, and did actually start—*two days before the sending of the celebrated ultimatum to Serbia*—for his property at Yaroslav. (He had to retrace his steps almost as soon as he arrived in St. Petersburg.)

Whence came this tranquillity, this confidence in the immediate future? I have often wondered, but up to now have never been able to frame a satisfactory answer. The French representatives in Berlin and Vienna were very anxious; the Yellow Book exists to prove this in black and white. They must frequently have imparted their anxieties to their Russian colleagues. Why is it then that the latter should have attached so little importance to the warnings of their allied colleagues?

In M. Sverbeieff's case I am not much surprised. This most distinguished man was by his very qualities averse to suspecting dangers, to seeking sinister intentions. He owed his whole career to his natural tact, to his knowledge of the world, and to his prudent self-effacement. He was appointed to Berlin because he was the intimate friend of the new Foreign Secretary, who could rest assured that on the one hand Sverbeieff would not go in for personal politics with the Emperor William II. (an alluring temptation to many of our diplomats), and that on the other he would cultivate the best possible relations with the Court of Berlin, and would not be the cause of any sort of conflict between the two Governments; in short, that the real direction of Russo-German relations would remain entirely in the hands of the Foreign Office, of which the new Ambassador would only be the faithful and obliging mouthpiece. All this was quite right; but in appointing his intimate friend to the post of Russian Ambassador to Berlin, M. Sazonoff had lost sight of the fact that other qualities were absolutely indispensable to the diplomat entrusted with such an exceptionally important post, to wit: the faculty of studying and solving the political situation of the country in which he finds himself, a *flair* for people and events, and the authority of a superior mind capable if necessary of making himself the centre of a political current—in this case the centre of the partisans of peace.

M. Sverbeieff only possessed these qualities to a

very limited degree. After having been for two years Minister to Athens, where the whole Royal Family headed by the wise King George adored him; where every one was enchanted by his receptions, as fashionable as they were hospitable, and where M. Venizelos—an eminently honest politician and a true friend to Russia—found in him an ever kind and attentive partner, M. Sverbeieff was inclined to believe that his part in Berlin would only be a natural extension of the one he had played at the foot of Mt. Hymettus. He was intensely absorbed in his house and household, in his new social environment; he succeeded in making himself liked and even up to a point esteemed by his German official partners; but he did not arrive at what was going on in Germany, what was being hatched in Berlin; he did not raise the alarm in time.

This alarm had been raised by Count Osten-Sacken in a masterly letter written by him in 1907, in which the eminent diplomat, so firmly attached to the Court of Berlin and surrounded by the personal attentions of William II., nevertheless foretold, with the absolute plain-speaking of an exalted patriot, that henceforth the Kaiser would seek to injure Russia *and would choose the Near East as the theatre in which to inflict serious blows on us.* The deduction was logical: if we did not wish for war with Germany, a ground for mutual understanding must be found. This letter had probably been forgotten since 1908. New ambitions had come to divert the direction of Russian foreign policy, and the question: "What advantages can we procure for ourselves?" had relegated the question: "What immediate perils ought we to avoid?" to a secondary place.

I suppose that when M. Jules Cambon went to impart his doubts and fears to his Russian colleague, the latter listened to him attentively, but calmed himself by thinking that on the French side every one was generally inclined to exaggerate the German peril and the agitation of William. He probably also thought that one of the best ways of avoiding dangers was by

not proclaiming them too loudly, and by not delivering insufficiently-controlled apprehensions to the indiscretion of Offices and Courts.

Less comprehensible to me was the scepticism of which M. Schebeko showed proof (or parade). Perhaps he thought that in due time he would be able to master the situation. In Vienna itself, he had been an eye-witness to the ascendency which his former chief, Prince Lobanoff, had been able to gain. He had repeatedly seen the latter act by strength of character and the lucidity of his arguments on the vacillating minds of his Viennese partners, and draw attention at the same time in our country to the dangers which were arising and to the necessity of avoiding them. M. Schebeko undoubtedly possessed this same strength of character and temperament. One noticed this when, having hastily returned to Vienna in the tragic week that preceded the rupture, he was able, in two interviews with Count Berchtold, to extort his consent to enter into conversations with Russia, that is to say to abandon the uncompromising attitude that the Austro-Hungarian Government had adopted from the first day. William II. was then obliged to have recourse to extreme measures and to the ultimatum hurled at Russia, in order to precipitate events all the same and to drag Austria in her train. The energetic intervention of the Russian Ambassador had unfortunately come a few days too late.

I was also assured that the very journey that M. Schebeko had undertaken had had as its chief object to discuss the situation, which was becoming serious and the events which were developing, with M. Sazonoff by word of mouth. In this case it is most regrettable that our Ambassador to Vienna did not start much earlier, that is to say, on the assassination of the Arch-Duke Francis Ferdinand.

It was through inordinately "robust" optimism that our whole diplomacy sinned on this occasion, and I

am still wondering whence this optimism drew its source, when the whole of Europe was seized with indubitable uneasiness, and when in Russia herself the awful rumbling of the revolution, checked but not settled, had been heard since 1906?

Yes, the revolution was always present, extending its roots over the soil of Russia. We diplomats working abroad might have been mistaken about it; but how could those who in St. Petersburg directed Russian politics and were in daily contact with the terrible reality have failed to realise it in all they did and schemed?

In one of the early chapters of these reminiscences, I sketched one of the causes of this phenomenon. I said that since Stolypin's disappearance the foreign policy of Russia had been almost completely divorced from the home policy. But there was more in it than that. At the period when the terrible, world-wide conflict occurred, the Russian "Cabinet" had assumed an aspect as strange as it was glaring. There were two parties who had nothing in common and who quarrelled mutually. On one side, the "reactionaries": MM. Maklakoff, Casso, Makaroff, Sabler, Prince Schakhowskoi, and to a certain extent the President of the Council, M. Goremykin; on the other, the sincere partisans of indispensable reforms: chiefly MM. Sazonoff and Krivochéïn. The reactionary Ministers discerned very clearly—far more clearly than their colleagues—the dangers of the internal position of the country; only, to obviate them, they vaunted and made use of methods which only increased the general discontent and the nervous tension of the country; and in order to retain their places and cause their system to triumph, some of those gentlemen were not ashamed to flatter the vile Rasputin, and to protect his most intimate friends.[1] The Ministers belonging to the opposite camp realised exactly what ought to be done: that is to say, to proceed to immediate reforms, *to adopt truly the representative*

[1] M. Goremykin and M. Casso, fortunately for their reputations, never compromised themselves by these degrading attentions.

régime granted in October, 1905, and to stop the Rasputin scandal, which was deeply humiliating even the most faithful servants of the Throne, and beginning to discredit the Sovereign himself amongst the lower classes. But, although thoroughly aware of the remedies, these gentlemen thought the application of these remedies would at once remove the whole trouble, and would restore to the Dynasty and to the Imperial Government, public confidence, which at that time was absolutely lacking. According to them, none of the foreign prestige of Russia could be sacrificed; it would suffice that a homogeneous Ministry composed of honest and wise men like themselves should be entrusted with the governing of Russia, for the internal ferment to calm down instantly, giving place to systematic and fruitful work, which in its turn would strengthen the international position of the country. These men, although intelligent and well-meaning, did not realise that the mistakes accumulated by the Government and the unbridled propaganda of the opposition parties had sapped the very foundations of national existence to such an extent, that the entire people and the whole country showed symptoms of an acute and serious disease. The State so grievously afflicted internally could not live a normal life externally. Far more than in 1856 had Russia need to *collect herself*.[1] That is what was not understood in our country for several reasons, the principal one being that statesmen of the stamp of Prince Gortchakoff no longer existed, or else were not called to power.

I spent the summer in town, having to buy furniture, and also having planned to take a cure in September, and to make a short stay in Italy with my family. As if on purpose, the summer promised to be remarkably fine and hot, and we ended by regretting that we were not spending it in the country.

[1] "Russia is not sulking; Russia is collecting herself"—famous saying by Prince Gortchakoff.

One of my colleagues had already established himself and his family at Nynäs, a picturesque seaside place, where I and his other colleagues often visited him. On the 28th June we were expecting some members of the Legation who had just been to Nynäs for the day to come and spend the evening with us. Towards eleven o'clock they came in very much upset: "Do you know, Monsieur, what has just happened? The Arch-Duke, the Austrian Heir, and his wife have been assassinated at Serajevo. Here is the telegraphic report that is being sold in the streets."

"This is most sérious," I replied.

"But perhaps," hazarded one of these gentlemen, "it may be all for the best? Every one said that the late Francis Ferdinand was a warm partisan of war. If this is true, his death might increase the chances of peace."

"That is possible," I replied; "but in the first place murder is murder, that is to say a revolting thing; and then the occurrence at Serajevo might increase the displeasure of the Central Empires against the Serbians—and against us, their natural protectors—and might set a match to the train."

However, during the days that followed, these apprehensions hardly appeared to be justified. In Stockholm, as everywhere else, we assisted at the Requiem Mass to the memory of the Arch-Duke and his unfortunate wife. There was much mention in the newspapers of the funeral rites of the murdered couple and of *the intentionally* simple character that the Court of Vienna gave to these rites. Then one heard—to the intense satisfaction of the whole world—that this mournful event did not prevent the Emperor William taking his usual cruise in the Norwegian Fjords, and that he was just starting. In short, everything seemed to have calmed down.

A few days later, I went again to Malmö, whither King Gustaf V. came for the first time since his recovery, to meet the King of Denmark. The weather was fine and hot; the festivities in the King's honour were marked by great cordiality. I saw my German

colleague several times, and he was very attentive to me, although he was much occupied with a big deputation of German officers who had come to greet the King of Sweden, and who paraded ostentatiously everywhere in their most splendid uniforms and fraternised at perpetual banquets with their Swedish comrades from the garrisons of central Sweden.

I also noticed—it was most obvious—in the waters of the straits which divide Malmö from Copenhagen the presence of a great number of German destroyers. When I was going to Copenhagen, after the King's departure from Malmö, I came across several. One seemed to come out of every creek! To my questions on the subject, the answer given was that it was a squadron of destroyers commanded by Prince Eitel-Frederick who, having taken a cruise in the straits, was going to pay a visit to the Swedish Royal couple at the Castle of Tullgarn; a visit which actually took place ten days later.

Meantime, the President of the French Republic was on his way to St. Petersburg by sea; from there he was due in Stockholm on the 25th July to pay his official visit; great preparations were being made to receive him with the customary ceremonial.

I remember that on the 22nd, I and my family and a few members of the Legation made a delightful excursion in the "skärgaard" of Stockholm. Beautiful weather, pretty scenery, a merry lunch, a charming day spent entirely in the open air! Returning in a motor-boat, on one of those soft, clear evenings which in summer constitute the special charm of those regions, I gave myself up entirely to the mere joy of existing. "Well! well!" I soliloquised out loud; "I am not sorry after all to have had to exchange Sofia for Stockholm! Sofia certainly was a more interesting post, and above all a more important one; but here in exchange, one has some repose; one can enjoy life without being perpetually obsessed by political preoccupations . . . ." A bad fairy heard me.

This happened on Wednesday, the 22nd July ; on the evening of the following day, the evening papers brought the first news of an Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, and on the Saturday morning, a few hours before M. Poincaré's arrival, appeared the text itself of this ultimatum which was unexpected and of unheard-of violence. The *tragic week* was beginning; the week in which the future destinies of the world were at stake, and in which the world-war was decided, which in its turn brought about the terrible shipwreck of my unfortunate country !

CHAPTER XVII

THE TRAGIC WEEK

The first day of the "tragic week" coincided in Stockholm with the official reception of the President of the French Republic, and the festivities that had been arranged for this reception.

The President was only to stay one day in Stockholm. As the armoured cruiser which brought the Head of the French State could not berth alongside, but had to anchor two or three kilometres outside, King Gustaf V. embarked at the hour appointed to fetch his guest and conduct him to the Royal Castle in a gondola with twelve pairs of oars, dating from the eighteenth century and richly decorated in the Louis XV. style.

The foreign Ministers were to be presented to the President during the day, and were invited to the great banquet at the Palace, where all the political and social notabilities of Stockholm would be gathered round the King and his French guests. After the banquet there was a concert given by the Swedish choral societies, and late in the evening the President and his suite left, escorted by torch-bearers. As the Diplomatic Corps did not take part in the actual reception of the President, all the members of the Corps and all distinguished foreigners were invited to watch his arrival from the garden of the Castle. The reception was favoured by splendid weather.

When we assembled in the garden, the terraces of which overhang the arm of the sea by which the State gondola was to arrive, one was immediately concious of the great constraint which the news of the day before had caused among the assembly.

All faces were more or less careworn. The "Centrals" held themselves aloof and talked together in low tones. The members of the French Legation, taking part *in corpore* in the reception of the President, were not among the spectators. My British colleague had the serious and pale face that I got to know so well during the many days of emotions shared in common later on. He asked me what I thought of the ultimatum and I did not hide from him that I considered the situation extremely strained; that was his opinion also. I was introduced to the new Spanish Minister, who had arrived two days before. When I shook hands with the amiable and sympathetic Duke of Amalfi, I had no idea that in the near future I should daily have recourse to his kindness and his untiring work on questions relative to the Russians left in Germany, to our prisoners of war, etc.

We were too absent-minded to enjoy the delightful spectacle before our eyes: the picturesque shores of the arm of the sea below us, the motley crowd gaily awaiting the arrival of the French guests, the pretty gondola which appeared at last escorted by a whole flotilla of launches, bringing the King, the President of the French Republic and their respective suites, while the guns fired a salute and the bells of the ancient churches in the old town pealed merrily.

When I returned to the Legation, and re-read and studied the text of the Austrian ultimatum in the French translation, my anxiety increased still more. Just as in 1912, in the cathedral of Sofia, when the standard of Samara was brought in, a sudden and irresistible thought flashed across my brain: "It is war!"

At four o'clock in the afternoon, I and my foreign colleagues presented ourselves at the Castle to greet the President of the Republic. We were shown into one of the drawing-rooms adjoining the rooms occupied by the President. After a few minutes of waiting, the door opened and M. Poincaré came in, followed by M. Viviani. He talked to all the Ministers in turn. "It is not

necessary to introduce M. Nekludoff to me!" he exclaimed amiably when my turn came; "he is an old friend of ours!" Then grasping my hand and lowering his voice, the President said to me: "We are going through a truly alarming crisis; I have no time to discuss it with you, but I hope that we shall have a little talk this evening." M. Viviani, however, paused for a few minutes to exchange impressions with me. "What do you say about the situation, M. Nekludoff?"

"Alas!" I replied, "I greatly fear that it means war."

"It is terrible, terrible," exclaimed the French President of the Council; "*for if it means war for you, it most certainly also means war for us.*"

"I did not expect to hear anything different from you," I said to M. Viviani; "but let us still hope that things will settle themselves!"

"Yes, yes, we will hope so! We shall have an opportunity of talking at greater length this evening," added M. Viviani, taking leave of me.

The banquet served at seven o'clock in the evening in the grand state gallery of the Castle was stormy. The guests could only talk of the ultimatum and of the perils of the hour. At the foot of the stairs I met the Austro-Hungarian Minister face to face; he had left for his holiday two or three days previously, and had not put in an appearance either in the morning on the terrace of the Castle, or in the afternoon at the presentations to M. Poincaré.

"Oh! So you have come back, Count Hadik?" I accosted him.

"Yes, I have come back," and with that the Count turned his back on me and disappeared in the crowd.

The German Minister was paler than usual, and wore an expression of restrained emotion. He insisted on coming up to me to exchange a few commonplaces about the beauty of the room and of the magnificent Louis XVI. Sèvres dinner-service on the long table. We took our seats; the music began; at a given moment, the King and the President of the Republic exchanged

cordial toasts, followed by the "Marseillaise," and the Swedish National Anthem. In short the setting of the banquet bore a normal aspect. But no one paid any attention to what was going on around. All thoughts were centred on the dreaded events, relentless and terrible, which were to be foreseen extending their fatal embrace even to this picturesque town flooded with the soft light of the sunset; even to this old and gorgeous palace which had witnessed so many tragic events within its walls; even to the very people taking part in the banquet and who were talking amongst themselves.

In Paris, in October, 1908, I was present at a party given in M. Izvolsky's honour at the Russian Embassy; it was the day after the annexation of Bosnia, and the proclamation of Bulgarian independence and sovereignty. Then also the atmosphere was stormy; many foreign representatives accosted one another without exactly knowing whether they had to do with a friend or a future foe; at the end of the great saloon M. Izvolsky, the centre of attraction for all, was good-naturedly explaining his diplomacy and the situation to the prettiest and most charming political women of the Paris of that day: Countess Jean de Castellane, Countess Jean de Montebello, Countess de Greffulhe; while on the other side the good-looking and elegant Austrian Ambassador, Count Koewenhüller, who had just been made a Knight of the Golden Fleece, holding a little court of young and beautiful women, cast sarcastic glances at the Russian Minister, as much as to say: "And you, my frend, you will get nothing but worries out of this!"

In 1912 I was present at a party given by M. Sazonoff which I described above, and where general depression weighed on the invited guests. But nothing was to be compared to the tragic banquet of the 25th July, 1914, in Stockholm. It was fate hovering over the brilliant assembly; and every one could hear the flutter of its wings.

Voluminous telegrams were being continually brought to the King, who passed them on to M. Poincaré.

This went on after we had left the dining-room. The King, ordinarily so scrupulously correct and amiable, did not even think of going round and talking to the notabilities at the reception. He specially avoided any conversation with the foreign Ministers. Standing quite apart at the uncrowded end of one of the large reception-rooms, sometimes he talked in low tones to M. Poincaré and handed him the telegrams he received, sometimes to M. Viviani or to M. Wallenberg. The President, seeing me close to him, came up and said to me: "Monsieur, I had an opportunity this morning of communicating to King Gustaf something that the Emperor Nicolas II. had asked me to convey to him, that is to say, the most formal and the most gracious assurance of his good and unalterable disposition towards Sweden and the Swedish Court. In particular I was able to certify to the King that the Assanovitch incident which had so affected Swedish public opinion, had not the importance attached to it by this opinion. His Majesty the King received this communication with sincere pleasure, but he expressed the hope that from henceforth explicit orders would be issued from St. Petersburg to the Russian Legation in Stockholm, and particularly to the military agent who is to succeed M. Assanovitch, to take the greatest care to avoid anything that might appear to bear the stamp of clandestine or irregular proceedings. What I am telling you," continued the President, "is of very secondary importance compared to the political events of the moment; nevertheless, it is all the more necessary to reassure the Swedes and to deprive the Central Empires of all plausible causes for intrigue."

I entirely agreed with the President's point of view, and I assured him that from my arrival in Stockholm I had planned to do all in my power to rectify the mistakes committed by us latterly in Sweden. We went on to speak of the political situation of the moment.

"The King has received some news from Berlin this evening that has reassured him a little; according to

His Majesty, a favourable way out of the crisis which has arisen may still be found, if only both sides will display some good will. May he be right! In any case I have decided to leave out Copenhagen and Christiania, and to return to Paris at once. I hope that the two Scandinavian Courts will graciously accept my excuses conveyed to them by General Brugère, and will not bear me a grudge, under the circumstances."

I replied to the President that in Denmark and in Norway the importance and the gravity of what was occurring must be even better understood than in Stockholm, and that they would be particularly anxious to see the Head of the French Government return in safety, and with all speed to his post. I then talked to M. Viviani on the same subjects. At this moment the sound of beautiful voices was heard, and the King and his guest, remembering the choral societies' part in the programme, passed into the adjoining room and listened to and applauded a few pieces. But all the same, the pretty popular songs and the beautiful patriotic chants of Sweden never had such an absent-minded audience as on this occasion. Every one was in a hurry to have done with the conventions and fatigues of the official festivity; and every one heaved a sigh of relief when the signal for departure was given. A quarter of an hour later, when I was going along the quay opposite the Castle landing-stage in my motor, I could see from afar the beautiful sight of the departure of the French guests, with the torchlight illumination; the red lights were reflected in the water and made it look like blood. "Here indeed is the torch of Bellona!" I thought, with an involuntary shudder.

The next day, Sunday, we received the news of the Serbian answer to the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum, and of the rejection of this answer. On Monday, when we received the full text of the Serbian Note in Stockholm, I was able to realise the gravity of the danger that the peace of Europe was running. In spite

of the high opinion I had of M. Pachitch's prudence, I had not imagined that Serbia could have displayed such moderation and so much obedience to our advice. The unheard-of, brutal ultimatum from Vienna was accepted, except on one point only: the one that aimed quite simply at replacing the national police in the kingdom by Austro-Hungarian police. And the Serbian reservations on this one point had sufficed for Austria not to accept the answer and to break off diplomatic relations with her neighbour! It was as clear as daylight that in Vienna—as in Berlin—the execution of Serbia had been irrevocably settled. Now as I foresaw that Russia could not tolerate this brutal execution, I was almost convinced that in a few days my country would be involved in an open collision with the two Central Empires.

The negotiations and events of the succeeding days proved that these two Empires did not look on the action they had undertaken quite in the same way. Whereas, for the Austrians it was chiefly a question of *punishing the Serbians*, of avenging the events of 1912 and 1913, of re-establishing *manu militari* the influence of the Empire in the Balkans; whereas in Vienna they hoped *in petto* for a capitulation of Russia which would have enabled Austria to do the deed without having to face the terrible trials of the great war—in Berlin it was just this war that was wished for; it had been decided on after long subterfuges and an underhand but violent struggle between the *preventive-war* party and the peace party; and once it had been decided on, they wished it to break out at a chosen and apparently pre-eminently propitious moment. I have good reason to believe that in the Wilhelmstrasse, they were prepared for the following course of events: (1) the bombardment of Belgrade and occupation of Serbia by Austro-Hungarian troops; (2) Russian mobilisation and ultimatum from Russia to Austria; (3) counter-ultimatum and declaration of war by Germany on Russia. From Tuesday, the 28th, when a certain hesitation and a tendency to enter into

conversation with Russia were apparent in Vienna, William II. and his advisers decided to precipitate matters and, without waiting for the second phase, which might miscarry, hurled their ultimatum and their declaration of war at Russia, under pretext of the Russian mobilisation.

But this plan was not revealed in all its cynical crudeness till later on. At the moment one could still hope against hope and attempt possible solutions. That is what would have been done in our country if Berlin had allowed us a few days' respite.

In all my previous career I had never contemplated with equanimity the possibility of an armed collision between Germany and Russia. I had never been an enemy of the Germans on principle; I recognised the good and respectable sides of their national character as these sides had been revealed to me through the study of German history and literature, and through frequenting a certain German sympathetic set. On the other hand, I was perfectly aware of the failings of our neighbours, of their pride which had blossomed spontaneously and inordinately, of their intentional brutality; and I could ill bear the contempt and hatred which every one in Germany paraded for all the Slav races outside Russia. I knew that the Germans had latterly been poisoned by the writings and opinions of a whole school of Pan-German philosophers, historians, and men of letters; but I had not realised the virulence of this poison, which had gradually paralysed most of the good qualities of the German nature.

I knew that Germany was very strong, and my country undermined by internal trouble; I had no confidence in our economic, political and military organisation, no confidence in our Staff, very little even in our soldiers; the recent Japanese war with its sad pages had not vanished from my memory as it had vanished from that of most of my compatriots. I had a high opinion of French courage and genius; but I knew

that France was very ill-prepared for the supreme struggle. On the other hand, I was not at all sure of the intrinsic worth of a Russo-British alliance (in this I was mistaken), and I feared that such an alliance might rather incite Germany to attack us. In short, I frankly dreaded a collision with Germany and held the opinion that, given the present state of Russia, our policy ought carefully to avoid anything that might create serious friction between us and our powerful neighbour. I had ever before me the threat of a great danger; I thought this danger imminent; but I did not think it inevitable. . . .

On Tuesday, 28th July, as the telegrams from the agencies revealed a slight relaxation in the tension, I went to call on my German colleague, Herr von Reichenau, in order to probe the situation with him. I told him quite frankly that I was very anxious and that I was profiting by what might prove the last day on which he and I should be allowed to talk together. "Moreover, circumstances are such that we must tell each other all without any reticence, or we must not talk," I added, when Herr von Reichenau expressed his great pleasure at seeing me. I began the conversation by drawing my host's attention to the fact that I was not at all what they called "a devourer of Germans"; I had family antecedents and traditions that prevented me regarding Germany as a necessary and born foe; and it was in the name of these old memories and traditions that I came to talk to my German colleague that day. "What are they about in Berlin at this moment? They are on the eve of letting loose the most terrible events that have ever occurred in Europe."

"But we in no way wish for war, I assure you," protested Herr von Reichenau.

"Now, now! quite frankly, my dear colleague, it is not possible that you should think it is *we* who wish for war?"

"No, I do not think that; but it is not a question of war or peace. We are absolutely determined this time to

punish the Serbians—*die Friedenstörer*—as they deserve. You wish to prevent this. Very well, we cannot permit you to assume this rôle of forced protectors of the Serbians or of any other Balkan nation; that gives these small States a pride and an audacity which are incompatible with the dignity and the vital interests of Austria-Hungary and of Germany herself. That is what we wish to stop, that is what we are arming for."

"But how can we entirely abandon our rôle of protectors of the Slav and Orthodox nationalities of the Near East? It is an historical fact. One cannot go up-stream in history! I could quite understand your saying to us: come to some arrangement with Austria to maintain order and political security in the Balkans. But to undertake armed action in Serbia and then to say that it does not concern us—*that* our public opinion could never understand nor would it forgive the Imperial Government if it agreed to such a thing! . . . Just think: during the last five years this is, so to speak, the third ultimatum that you have virtually presented to us on the subject of Balkan affairs. In March, 1909, you *ordered* us to bow to the fact of the annexation of Bosnia; we did bow to it. In 1912 you demanded that we should make the Serbians retire from the northern coast of Albania and the Montenegrins abandon Scutari; we set about doing this honestly, in spite of the protests and cries of the greater portion of our Press. Now you wish us to be passive and indifferent spectators of the execution of Serbia, without our even knowing how far this execution will go! Come, come! do you consider it possible for our Foreign Office, for His Majesty the Emperor himself to consent to this third capitulation?"

"Of course, I realise that it would be difficult for you, but for us it is impossible to recognise your right to protect Serbia against us. It is impossible, quite impossible!"

"Listen, Reichenau," I said, seized with deep and sincere emotion; "think, think well over what you are doing. You are unloosing a terrible war, a struggle

probably unparalleled in history. I will be frank with you to the end; I fear this war, I dread it terribly for my country. If we are beaten, Russia will be shipwrecked. But calculate carefully what the result for you will be? You may be quite sure that in the country that goes under, revolution will break out, and it will be a terrible revolution; but we are far too near neighbours: our interests, our economic life, our history even are far too much mixed up for such a revolution to be restricted to one country without hitting the other. If the Emperor William declares war on Russia, he had better know what the result will be: he will deal a decisive blow at the monarchical principle in Russia, Germany, Europe! It is in the name of ancient traditions, in the name of the monarchical principle that I come and warn you that you are riding for a fall! Perhaps by to-morrow we shall not be able to see one another; but one day you will remember my last visit and my last words."

I had probably spoken with much heat and conviction, for at one moment I saw Herr von Reichenau's eyes filling with tears.

"Let us hope, my dear colleague," he said in conclusion, "that we shall still have many opportunities for seeing each other and that the troubles you predict will not occur."

"We will hope so," I said, and on that I took leave of my German colleague, and I never had an opportunity or a possibility of seeing him again.

If Herr von Reichenau ever sees these lines I feel sure he will remember our last conversation and that he will admit the absolute accuracy of my account.

The terrible events which have occurred since have exceeded my gloomiest prognostications, making these appear trifling. It was not only the dynasty of the Hohenzollerns and that of the Romanoffs that were judged and condemned in the hour when war broke out—it was the monarchical principle itself that was struck and perhaps irremediably. The monarchical power is the preponderance of the will and the reason of one man

over those of an entire nation; in order that this preponderance should be justified it is imperative that this will and this reason should be the expression of a high and beneficial idea, which would be lacking in the majority of the country. In modern times, when the spread of education and the influence of the Press had replaced the rivalries of Governments and States by the conscious rivalries of nations, sovereigns ought to interpose their authority against the nefarious propaganda of international hatred and competition. In any other matter they could and should be the head servants of their people; in questions of peace or war, they ought resolutely to constitute themselves the champions of a mutual solidarity which would have preserved the world from the worst scourges. Some, like William II., have done exactly the opposite; others have not understood it sufficiently, hence the decay of the monarchical principle throughout the world.

And here I am again judging sovereigns, in spite of the earnest injunctions of His Majesty the King of Sweden!

On Wednesday, the 29th July, the news was again much worse, and violent agitation took hold of Sweden. All sorts of reports began to circulate in the town and amongst the Diplomatic Corps; it was affirmed that Sweden was bound by a secret military convention to Germany and that in the event of war the Swedes would side resolutely with her. M. Wallenberg, whom I saw on Wednesday, confessed to me that the situation was making the Royal Government very anxious; he then said, emphasising his words, that Sweden was more interested than any one in the preservation of European peace and that a collision between her two neighbours would place her in a dangerous position. "But," he added, "the King has not lost all hope that matters may yet be arranged."

On Friday morning the new military attaché to our Legation, Lieutenant-Colonel Kandauroff, arrived from

St. Petersburg; I had been informed of his appointment a few days previously. The first question I asked him was how matters stood when he left St. Petersburg.

"All that I can tell you is this," answered the Colonel: "as you know, I was discharging the duties of assistant to the Quarter-Master-General at Headquarters; as there was an enormous amount of work, I only left my office two hours before the train left for Abo, that is to say yesterday, Thursday, at six o'clock in the morning. Now, all through the night I was busy dispatching peremptory orders to commanding officers in Poland and on the Prussian frontier carefully to avoid, in case of mobilisation, anything that might seem to the German authorities to be a threat of military action against Germany. All the frontier posts were to be moved back to ten or fifteen kilometres, no marching column was to be formed, even the frontier guards were to be removed so that there could be no collision in the event of German troops approaching our frontier and even crossing it. . . . These orders came from His Majesty himself; they reached General Headquarters very late on Wednesday evening, and yesterday, Thursday, at six o'clock in the morning all the necessary telegrams had been sent off. You can see by that, Monsieur, that in our country all hope of coming to some arrangement with Berlin is not lost."

This news restored some hope to me; but not for long; the following morning the news of the German ultimatum to Russia appeared, and then I realised that all hope had vanished.

From Friday evening a real panic reigned in Stockholm: all the banks were closed by order of the Government, and outside their doors were enormous queues of people who wished to take out their deposits and their money. Prince Eitel Frederick's squadron of destroyers had left two days before for an unknown destination. I was told that my German colleague had said at a meeting that he was sure Sweden would side with Germany.

On Saturday morning I accompanied the members of the Russian delegation to the Spitsberg Conference, which was just over at Christiania, MM. Bentkowski and Mandelstamm, to the boat which was leaving for Abo. With them went my eldest son, attached to the Foreign Office, who had just come on leave but who had been hastily recalled on account of the enormous amount of work at the Office. I entrusted these gentlemen, but especially M. Mandelstamm who was so well up in the position at Constantinople, with a message from me to M. Sazonoff, which ran as follows: In the event of war breaking out and if Turkey's attitude became threatening, I was taking on myself to advise a prompt Russian descent on the coast of Southern Bulgaria; this descent should be effected by considerable forces, one large army corps at the least; simultaneously with this forcing of the gates of Bulgaria a proclamation should be addressed to the people and to the Bulgarian Army, telling them that the Russians were arriving to restore to them Adrianople, Lozengrad and Thrace that the Turks had unjustly taken from them, profiting by the misfortunes of Bulgaria. I guaranteed that if the descent was successful the Bulgarian Army would place itself on our side and that King Ferdinand would be obliged to submit to this movement. I was quite aware that at the Foreign Office no one would pay the slightest attention to this advice; that it would be looked on as presumptuous interference on my part in matters which were no longer my business. But I thought it my duty, at this solemn hour, not to keep back an idea which might be beneficial to our cause. A few days later I repeated the same advice in a letter to Baron Schilling, the only person in Sazonoff's set whose character, intelligence and patriotism I thoroughly trusted.

The subsequent events of the terrible war have proved that I was not wrong. Bulgaria did play the decisive rôle of the secondary weight which finally upset the scales; her geographical position predestined her to this rôle. It was in October, 1915, that, by

Bulgaria's entry into the arena, the decided superiority of Germany over her adversaries became apparent. In September, 1916, Rumania's entry into the war was wasted and neutralised because we could not realise that the first advantage to be derived from the Rumanian alliance should have been to attack the Bulgarians with *large Russian forces* and to beat them, on which the entire Bulgarian Army would have come over to us with the cry that Holy Russia was invincible, that traitors alone had induced the Bulgarian people to take part in a sacrilegious war and that these traitors deserved death. In 1918 when the Bulgarian troops, exhausted by the interminable struggle, were duly beaten and overthrown, the defection of Bulgaria that ensued caused the defection of Austria and that of Turkey, and finally hastened the capitulation of Germany. If the entry of Bulgaria into the war on the side of Germany could have been prevented—and for that there was all the time between August, 1914, and October, 1915—the war would not have lasted so long, that is to say, it would not have assumed the proportions of a world-wide calamity, unparalleled in history, and above all would not have brought about the awful shipwreck of Russia!

I have heard that the diplomatic mistakes committed from the beginning of the war with regard to Turkey and to Bulgaria were due, amongst other causes, to the false direction of English diplomacy, which would not perceive the danger and thought it possible to make use of evasions and mildness there where, on the contrary, a display of strength and decision were imperative. As regards Constantinople I have no grounds for believing or disbelieving these assertions ; with regard to Bulgaria I personally should be inclined to doubt if the British Government was well and fully informed at this period of the political situation of Bulgaria and of the true disposition of King Ferdinand and his people.

On Sunday, the 2nd August, I was awakened at seven o'clock in the morning to read the telegrams which had

been received during the night. The first one I opened was a telegram in which M. Sazonoff informed me that the evening before, at seven o'clock, the Ambassador of William II. had handed him Germany's declaration of war.

In reading this awful news I was seized with indescribable anguish; it was as if a whirlwind of sinister visions had encircled me; at this moment I had absolutely clear presentiments of the troubles which were to overtake my country, my relations. . . . I dashed into my wife's room. "War has been declared!" I exclaimed, bursting into tears. . . .

My wife immediately helped me to regain my self-control by saying: "Stockholm at this moment is one of the most important diplomatic posts for Russia. If the Minister occupying this post gives way to nerves, the worst may happen. It is absolutely necessary from the very first to keep a firm hand on oneself and do one's duty!"

I choked back my sobs and left the room. "The cup is full, we must drain it even to the dregs if necessary." This saying gave me back my courage and powers of action.

Having finished dressing I went to the office at the Legation where a whole crowd of fellow countrymen—the first who had escaped from Germany—were awaiting me.

"Gentlemen," I said, "I have just received official information that last night a declaration of war was handed to our Minister of Foreign Affairs by the German Ambassador. Gentlemen, Hurrah for Russia—and for H.I.M. the Emperor!"

An indistinct murmur greeted this little speech. A gentleman with a red beard and a hooked nose then spoke with a marked Russian accent: "Yes, that is all very well, Monsieur, Hurrah for Russia and the Emperor; but first and foremost you must concern yourself with our unhappy position. We have just arrived from Germany; how and by what route can we return to our own country?" etc.

"Always the same, my dear compatriots," I thought, with a bitter feeling of the reality of things; and this feeling restored all my self-control to me. It was necessary to cope with the most urgent matters and leave the rest to the will of God.

Absorbing work for every day and all hours had begun for me and for my colleagues gathered round me at this moment in the office of the Legation. We strove to do this work to the best of our strength and of our ability, and I consider it my duty to express here the gratitude I owe to all those splendid and faithful colleagues who up to the end did their whole duty and more than their duty, and whose friendship and advice sustained me during three long years of labours, trials, miseries and joys shared as if we had but one heart and one thought only!

CHAPTER XVIII

SWEDISH NEUTRALITY

The first question—the agonising question of all questions for me—was that of the side Sweden was going to take. Would she remain neutral? Would she side definitely with Germany as Herr von Reichenau announced to any who wished to listen?

I knew which were the elements in the country that advocated an active and immediate alliance with Berlin. There were, first, the generals and the officers of the Swedish Army, taken principally from the ranks of the nobility, who were convinced of the crushing superiority of the German forces and of their certain victory, and animated by old grudges against Russia and the hope of at least taking Finland from us. Then there were the nobility, the great number of Lutheran clergy (there is no other in Sweden), and many members of the universities.

The partisans of neutrality were the Liberals, who were no longer in power and who were retiring somewhat defeated though they still had a strong position in the country, and the Socialists led by M. Branting and the Baron de Palmstjerna. I knew through reliable sources that amongst the Swedish lower classes, the people were averse to the very idea of war; but I also knew that if war did break out all the same the soldiers would fight splendidly and that the entire population would be ready for any sacrifice for the good of the country.

The very next day I saw M. Wallenberg, who informed me in carefully chosen words that the

Government *hoped* to safeguard the principle of Swedish neutrality.

The very day of our new military attaché's arrival, that is to say on Friday, the 31st, I had taken the necessary steps to obtain permission to present him to His Majesty the King. I waited an answer on the subject with an impatience that increased as events developed. If the King received us, it would be a good sign; if he refused the audience one would be justified in deducing the worst auguries. Finally, on the Monday, towards evening, I was informed that we were both to be received the next day, Tuesday, at eleven o'clock.

At the appointed hour we were shown into a drawing-room adjoining the King's study; our reception was frigid, the King hardly spoke to Colonel Kandauroff (the Assanovitch incident was of too recent date!). But after this brief interview His Majesty begged me to follow him alone into the next room, and there—just as on the day of my solemn audience—the King's manner changed completely. Inviting me to sit down and without hiding the deep emotion that the events which he described as "terrible" were causing him, he said, laying stress on each of his words: "I wished to see you, Monsieur, to tell you that *Sweden is not bound to any one.*" The King then repeated what his Minister of Foreign Affairs had said to me the day before, that is to say that the Swedish Government wished to maintain absolute neutrality; "provided," added His Majesty, "that the belligerent countries enable us to carry out this resolution." I hastened to reply that as to Russia and her ally (Great Britain had not yet declared herself), Sweden could be quite sure of our perfect correctness with regard to her and of our desire to facilitate her neutrality. On that I was very amiably dismissed. The interview had only lasted a few minutes, but I left the King's study with one terrible worry the less.

Two days later England had joined the ranks of the

Allies and from now onwards I had the opportunity of working in concert with Mr. Howard, and we communicated to each other everything we heard. On the initiative of the French and British Ministers their two Governments, from the first days of the war, made a declaration to the Swedish Government to the effect that the two Powers guaranteed Sweden's integrity and her complete sovereignty on condition that she maintained strict neutrality. When M. Thiébaud and Mr. Howard transmitted this declaration to M. Wallenberg, the latter thanked them warmly and added: "Ah! if only the Russian Minister would bring me an identical declaration, how it would facilitate my task at the King's Councils!" I had not waited for this allusion to take the same step with regard to St. Petersburg as my colleagues had taken in Paris and London, and I was awaiting the answer somewhat anxiously; this answer was delayed, and the activist agitation was again becoming more acute in Stockholm, and all sorts of alarming rumours were beginning to circulate. At last I received the much-wished-for answer from M. Sazonoff: "You are authorised to make a declaration identical with that of the Allied Governments." However, next morning another telegram from the Foreigh Office begged me to defer the declaration a little. The same day my two colleagues came to warn me that the absence of the Russian declaration was greatly agitating the Swedish Government and furnishing arguments to the partisans of the German alliance. "I felt sure of it, and I have already sent an earnest telegram to St. Petersburg to show the absolute necessity and urgency for our declaration."

I realised that it was a decisive moment and that all further delay might have disagreeable consequences. Fortunately, that night a telegram arrived from the Foreign Office authorising me afresh to make the declaration. For fear of a new counter-order I hastened the first thing in the morning, to beg for an interview with M. Wallenberg, and I handed him the communication

he so impatiently awaited. The Swedish Foreign Secretary did not conceal his intense satisfaction: "What you are bringing me will, I hope, definitely assure the neutrality of Sweden, for the Russian declaration will reassure many amongst us as to your supposed intentions." Almost immediately afterwards the declaration of the absolute neutrality of Sweden did appear, and this contributed considerably to the calming of public opinion.

From that moment there were two absolutely distinct currents in Sweden: the King, the Government and the majority of the country adhered to the opinion that Sweden, as far as possible, ought to safeguard her neutrality; the other current, that of the activists, on the contrary, at every favourable opportunity, upheld the idea of an alliance with Germany, or at least of the expediency of using firm and even threatening language to Russia and her allies every time that these Powers should be tempted to restrict or injure Sweden's interests in any way.

Thanks to King Gustaf V.'s sincere love of peace, to the intelligent and firm policy of M. Wallenberg, and above all, to the perfect integrity displayed under all circumstances by the Sovereign and his Minister, the first current, that of neutrality, definitely prevailed. It is only now, when the long and terrible struggle is ended, that one can appreciate the wise and loyal conduct of these two worthy men at its true value; and it is only fair to add a third name to theirs, that of the leader of the Swedish Socialists, M. Branting. Throughout the course of events, the latter behaved as a Swedish patriot rather than as the head of an extreme party, and by this attitude did far more both for the cause of peace and for his own authority and that of Swedish Socialism than if he had wished to profit by circumstances to extract concessions and capitulations from the Government.

When I say that it is only now that one can appreciate

the services rendered by the heads of the neutrality-party, I am of opinion that it was not at all the assurance of the ultimate victory of the Entente which had inspired them. On the contrary, every one in Sweden, without exception, sincerely believed that Germany on the whole was invincible. At the end of the first eight months of the struggle, towards March, 1915, when in the Entente countries they began to calculate the exhaustion of Germany and her allies in soldiers, munitions, and especially in provisions, the Swedes who were the most friendly to the Entente (I should say rather to France and England, for the prejudice against Russia still continued) contested our optimism and never ceased saying that Germany was in no way at the end of her tether, that she would manage the re-victualling in some way or other, that enormous new contingents would be called up, and that the German war industry had not yet given its all and was reserving many surprises for its foes. All this was perfectly true, and the ill-omened year 1915, when, in spite of Italy's entry into the war, disaster nearly overtook the arms of the Entente, proved that people in Sweden were better informed than we were about German resources.

Hence, then, it was not utilitarian calculation which guided the policy of the guardians of Swedish neutrality, but rather the sincere love of peace and the feeling of responsibility towards the people and the country. The Swedes have been quite enough disparaged during the war not to do justice to those among their rulers who were so well able to hold their own against the intentions and the allurements of the agitating section of the country.

While during the very first days of the war Sweden's attitude was becoming clearer, the European conflict was assuming a definite character by Great Britain's entry into the war. I remember with what anxiety we awaited the English decision during these same early

days. For many people this decision appeared to be already unquestionable : the English *ought* to side with France and Russia. But I did not share this assurance. I remembered the political conflict caused between Russia and the Central Empires by the annexation of Bosnia. At that time I often met in Paris my London colleague, M. Poklewski-Kozell, a man as intelligent as he was sincere, who had made for himself an exceptional position in the London world, and who thoroughly understood English political mentality. I asked him once—it was in February, 1909—why England did not earnestly warn Germany that if her provocative policy led to a conflict with Russia, the English would place themselves resolutely on our side and on that of France; such a warning, I considered, would certainly moderate the claims and the actions of Berlin. M. Poklewski replied that in order to issue such a warning, the British Government would have to look on the question of the annexation of Bosnia (without the consent of a European Conference) as a possible *casus belli*. Now this was not at all the case ; the Asquith-Grey Government *would only decide on war if Germany touched one of the primordial principles*, of which the infringement would be intolerable to England. Remembering these words, which were completely confirmed by subsequent events, I did not feel at all sure of the entry of the English into the war up till the day when the Germans invaded Belgium ; on that day I said to myself that Belgian neutrality being undoubtedly one of the great principles which England would never allow to be touched, the English alliance was henceforth assured to us ; and in fact we did not have to wait one day for it. This was an enormous relief to me ; without the co-operation of Great Britain I felt sure of our defeat ; with it, one could hope for much. Alas! I was still too optimistic! It is true that I had assessed the forces and the *moral* of Russia far too low; but on the other hand, like most people in Europe, I was far from realising the magnitude of Germany's resources and her

mathematically-correct preparation for the terrible world-war which all Germans were expecting, and most of them were wishing for.

I remember the effect produced during the first days of the struggle by the noble resolution of Belgium and her King; by the first encounters between the Belgian Army and the invaders, by the short but sanguinary and glorious resistance of Liège. One talked then of the ten, or perhaps twenty, thousand men that the Germans lost during these first fights, and said that they could not continue to sacrifice so many men daily; that they would exhaust themselves quickly at that rate. If at that moment any one had foretold that *eighteen months later* the Germans would still be in a position to lose 300,000 men in a fortnight, *in not taking Verdun*, and that this terrible reverse would not even constitute a definite defeat for them; that war would continue after that for another thirty-three months without decreasing for an instant in intensity and horror; if, as I say, some one had foretold such things in August, 1914, he would have been accused of insanity. Every one felt sure that the war could not last more than a year and a half, and that because none of the belligerents—except perhaps Russia—could bear such protracted tension of efforts, such terrible cost, and such complete disturbance of all economic and social life. Yet all the belligerents—except just Russia—have borne these awful conditions for four years and four months.

I must, however, admit that during the first two or even three weeks, I had no time to consider the events of the war either as a whole or in detail. I was too much absorbed by the crushing task which had fallen to the Russian Legation in Stockholm in connection with the enormous numbers of compatriots of all conditions who, fleeing from Germany, passed through the Scandinavian countries in these days to get back to their homes. I have already related how from the morning of Sunday, 2nd August, I had found myself

faced with the first group of these refugees at the office in the Legation. From that moment the stream of Russian refugees increased day by day and hour by hour. I should never have thought that the number of Russians who went to take waters in Germany every summer was so large; moreover, nine-tenths of these compatriots were Israelites. All these people, suddenly hustled and ill-treated by the Germans, herded into cattle trucks, arrived after much discomfort at Sassnitz (in Pomerania), and thence crossed in ferry-boats to Malmö, and finally reached Stockholm. They were a famished, dirty crowd, with no money, many of them without passports, which the German military authorities had taken from them[1]—a crowd seized with panic, not feeling safe even in Sweden, so firmly had they been told that Sweden also was going to declare war on us. Every train coming from Malmö brought a fresh lot of refugees, who wandered aimlessly along the streets of Stockholm. They had all to be lodged, directed towards the Russian frontier, and supplied with passports and money to buy food on the way.

The Legation and the Russian Consulate-General had no funds at their disposition. I managed, not without difficulty, to get into the bank where I had some credit, and where they paid out to me all the money I had there—a few thousand crowns. The next day I saw M. Emmanuel Nobel arriving; he was the head of the house so well known to us and to the whole world. This excellent man immediately placed a loan of 50,000 crowns at my disposal, and advised me to apply for the remainder straight to M. Wallenberg. In a quarter of an hour's interview with the latter the necessary arrangements were made: the Swedish Government gave orders to supply the Russian Legation and the Consulate with as many railway and steamer tickets as they required. At the railway stations Russian travellers were to receive food, milk for the children,

[1] Probably to furnish some for the German spies who were going to Russia.

medical attention if necessary; in Stockholm itself a public building was to be fitted up for lodging the refugees that the trains and steamers could not convey away at once. The Russian Government was to repay Sweden the expenses of this organisation; of course I pledged myself to this; but I was not asked for any written or signed note on the subject; the word of the Russian Minister was sufficient. This organisation worked regularly throughout the war, and we had nothing but praise for the attentions that the Swedish local authorities and the railway companies lavished on our compatriots.

All the same, during many weeks the Legation and Consulate were besieged by the Russian refugees. The Consulate had to issue tickets, and to give permits to those who had no passports. The first days the confusion was terrible. The street in which the Consulate stood was black with people, and the Swedish police had great difficulty in keeping order. Another crowd, though rather less dense, besieged the Legation, composed of those who came to appeal against the decisions of the Consul, those who thought themselves entitled to exceptional treatment or some favour, all official persons, all those with whom we were personally acquainted. In the office the two secretaries to the Legation explained to all inquirers the route they ought to take, re-assured them about Sweden's entry into the war, met or set aside their complaints and their claims. Meantime, through the other entrance in the house a stream of ladies and gentlemen, of friends, acquaintances, of people we knew slightly or not at all, filled our rooms and were received by my wife, my sister, and my youngest son. There were complaints, tears, nervous attacks even. Every one had arrived in a lamentable state, most of them straight from the train, and almost mad with fright. There were some tragico-comic situations. One fine day the firing of guns was heard at noon (this often occurs in Stockholm: saluting the colours, or at festivals, etc.). At once the visitors in

the drawing-room, the inquirers at the office, and the crowd gathered in front of the Consulate, were all seized with panic. "The Germans! The Germans! The Germans are coming to bombard us!" It was almost impossible to make these insanely frightened people listen to reason.

As I have said, a good half of the society world of St. Petersburg and Moscow whom we knew came to the Legation. Every day we were from sixteen to twenty people at lunch and dinner. On day it was Colonel Skoropadsky, of the Horse Guards, who was hastening to rejoin his regiment; who would have guessed in this smart and correct soldier whom we had so often met in the salons of St. Petersburg, the future "Hetman of the Ukraine," going to ask for his investiture of the Emperor William? At the same time we also saw seated at our table Prince Nicolas Radziwill, one of the very best, whom I had seen the year before returning from the disastrous but magnificent retreat of the Bulgarian troops beaten at Belachitza, and many other officers of the Guard; a few months later we heard of the glorious death of most of these young men.

The Minister for Education, M. Casso, arrived one evening in a piteous state; he had nearly been lynched by the crowd at a station in East Prussia, and only owed his escape to a concurrence of providential circumstances. We made him sit down at once, and gave him a plate of good soup. "The first soup I have eaten for ten days!" We poured him out some good claret. "The first glass of claret I have drunk for ten days!" And then, comforted and consoled, he proceeded to relate his tragic experiences with irrepressible humour. "There was an old hump-backed woman that I shall never forget; the whole time she was worrying the crowd who were dragging me away from the police and hitting me with their fists. 'Hang him, hang him,' cried the old witch; 'he's a Russian spy!' And then

the final *statio dolorosa:* we were about two hundred Russians of both sexes and all classes, surrounded by soldiers with fixed bayonets; we had been standing for more than two hours, dropping with fatigue, in front of our wretched trunks open in order to undergo a tenth search. Suddenly an old non-commissioned officer of the *Landsturm*, fat and jovial, appeared and began to make us a speech, or rather preach us a sermon: 'We Germans are a good-natured people (*ein gutmüthiges Volk*); nevertheless you must not abuse our good-nature,' and so on, and so on. But all the eloquence of this worthy man was wasted; we had become completely insensible even to the proof of the good nature of the German people!"

Poor Casso died of cancer a few months later. He was a very highly-educated man and full of spirits in private life; but on the other hand, he was universally disparaged as a Minister.

Then the staff from our Embassy in Berlin arrived after a halt of a few days in Copenhagen. It was grievous to see poor M. Sverbeieff. He could not sleep, he had to force himself to eat. "And yet they had always been so good, so kind to me during the whole of my time in Berlin!" he repeated over and over again. "But the last days were a nightmare, an absolute nightmare! . . ." Indeed, recalled hurriedly from a delightful and quiet visit to the country, and having returned to Berlin just in time to take part in the upheaval of the last days before the declaration of war, he must have gone through a terrible time, feeling his powerlessness to avert the inevitable! The day after the arrival of the staff from the Embassy, on going into our office I noticed an enormous fire burning in the fireplace; it was the Berlin ciphers that were being burnt. It was of no importance, but I remember the painful impression it made on me.

The members of the Embassy told us of the disgusting treatment they were subjected to—men, women, and

children[1]—when they were getting into motor cars to go from the Embassy to the station; a hostile crowd that the police could not, or would not, control shouted insults at them, and spat in their faces. "You do not know how horrible it was when they actually spat in my face!" said a young and charming woman with a shudder. But they did not confine themselves to spitting; three or four people, of whom two were ladies, received violent blows from sticks, of which they still bore the marks after ten days. "But who hit you? Did you notice what the individual looked like?" I asked the lady who had been the most ill-used. "Oh yes! I did. It was an old gentleman with a white beard and gold-rimmed spectacles, long black coat and soft hat, the real type of the *Herr Professor!*"

However, all these tales paled before those told by the wretched Russians who, on the eve of the declaration of war, had started off in the direction of the Russian frontier, had been stopped within half an hour of the frontier, forced to turn back, and subjected in East and West Prussia and in Pomerania to the most odious, the most revolting treatment for days and days. Some poor wretches were shut up for fifty hours on end in goods-trucks, without food or drink, and without being allowed to get out even for an instant. Some wretched women were confined without any assistance in the pigstyes of the municipal slaughter-houses, where "diese Russischen Schweine" were herded for the night. And a great many unfortunate people were shot, especially those who were caught with kodaks!

All these tales bore a stereotyped resemblance to each other. And among those who told them were people whom one could not disbelieve: intellectuals, men of serious and well-balanced minds, people of our world, and among others many travellers belonging to the Baltic Provinces. I can quote: my old friend the worthy general Baron Kaulbars, his wife

[1] Except the Ambassador, whose motor car was accompanied by a strong escort of cavalry.

and daughter, a Princess Lieven, Count Constantine Pahlen and his sister Mademoiselle Marie de Pahlen, etc., etc.

When in view of these tales one read in the newspapers the accounts of the burning and the massacre at Louvain, and the butchery at Kalisch, one understood what German war methods were, and what the struggle just beginning represented for the civilised world.

I repeat, up till then I had had no sort of hatred for Germany; but from the first weeks of the war I understood what the propaganda of Nietzsche, Treitschke, Bernhardi, had made of the German people; and in addition I realised perfectly that this terrible collision could not end in a peace of compromise; that it was a fight to the death, and that the worst disasters: revolution, complete moral and political decay, would inevitably be the portion of the vanquished.

This feeling did but increase when one terrible month succeeded another. The cruelties practised in Germany upon our prisoners of war, the ghastly deeds perpetrated in the occupied provinces of Belgium, France, Poland, Serbia, the awful Armenian massacres, the use of poison gas, the sinister exploits of the submarines had all come to complete the list—or so it seemed to me then—of the crimes of the abettors of the "fresh and joyful war," and to fill me with loathing of the whole German nation!

Alas! I could not foresee that the list was not complete. That three years later Royal Highnesses, Ministers, exalted dignitaries, and the heads of German and Austrian armies would sit round the green table with anarchist Jews, criminal sailors and prostitutes in order to dismember my miserable country after their agents had strangled her—all that was too horrible to have been even imagined!

But let us return to the events of the beginning of the war, and to the echoes raised by these events in

Stockholm amongst the Swedes as well as amongst the foreigners.

I was not surprised at the first news of victories which reached us from East Prussia. I knew that part of the Imperial Guard and other picked troops were to attack there to cover our necessarily slow mobilisation, and to free France a little, as enormous German forces were hurling themselves upon her. The glorious battles in East Prussia cost us considerable sacrifices. The flower of the "gilded youth" of St. Petersburg, full of undaunted courage, fell there to prove that the privileged and petted regiments of the Guard could sacrifice themselves as much and better than any other. Each day news reached us of the glorious death of young men we had known, whom we had witnessed leading a worldly and careless life midst pleasures and palaces in the capital. But I fully realised that these battles and these victories were but the beginning of the "dance."

Indeed, very soon after terrible news reached us from East Prussia. General Samsonoff's army, sent to support and complete the operations of General Rennenkampf's, had been completely beaten, annihilated by General Hindenburg. Nearly 80,000 men had perished, the others had surrendered in a mass with all their artillery and supplies. It was all very well to minimise the extent of the disaster in our official bulletins, I could read between the lines, and I promptly realised the extent of this terrible defeat, all the more because, since the Manchuria campaign, every one agreed in describing General Samsonoff to me as one of the best and most congenial of our commanders. Then how had the disaster come about? Was it through the flagrant inferiority of our regiments, our men, our officers, and our generals compared with the German Army? Was it on account of the mania for skilful manœuvres by which the heads of our General Staff were possessed, and which inspired them with the mad hope of cutting through, of surrounding their German foes by their grand strategical

manœuvres just when a far simpler and more rudimentary conception of the war would have been so infinitely more suitable to the imperfect mechanism of the Russian armies?

I well remember the painful days that followed this sad episode in our war. I had to put a good face on the matter, not appear to be downhearted, to distribute the official lies knowing them to be such, and express hopes I was far from sharing.

Almost at the same time sad and alarming news reached us from the western front. In spite of their valiant efforts, their stubborn resistance, the French Army, the remnants of the brave Belgian Army and the "contemptible little Army" of the British—a handful of heroes—were steadily retreating before the formidable advance of the German armies. Charleroi, Maubeuge, Arras, the German outposts extending as far as Meaux . . . to those of us who still remembered 1870, memories rose involuntarily before us, in spite of the difference that we knew existed between war then and now.

Fortunately a few days later quite different news arrived to give us fresh courage: "the Germans have been stopped, the Germans are beginning to retreat"; a few more days of great manœuvres and of violent fighting in North-Western France and the invading stream is checked; the line from the Yser to Belfort is definitely established and the interminable trench-warfare begins. I wish to mention here that the glorious battles of the Marne, the grand and skilful manœuvre of Joffre and the bold stroke of Gallieni were not at all described as a real and great victory in the French bulletins; it was only through the explanations of our military agent that I realised the extent and importance of the splendid French success.

In Sweden this success even passed quite unperceived, or else was vehemently denied; the good Swedes could not imagine that the Germans could suffer a defeat; the invincibility of the German arms had passed

into a proverb; and every one still sincerely pitied "la belle France" who had made such a false step in allowing herself to be drawn into political combinations directed against Germany.

Another article of faith was that Germany had been attacked by the Entente, particularly by Russia, who, however, had not acted spontaneously but had been incited thereto by "la perfide Albion." Indeed, if England had warned Germany in time that she would ally herself to the enemies of the latter, Germany would not have declared war and peace would have been secured; but the crafty English on the contrary had made Berlin believe that they would remain neutral, and as soon as Germany, taken in by this, had declared war, England at once went over to the enemies' side! This rigmarole, of which the second part completely contradicted the first (for if Germany had been the party attacked she would have had to defend herself, whatever Great Britain's attitude had been), this rigmarole, I say, which the Germans themselves only pretended to believe, was sincerely and religiously believed by the worthy Swedish public; the entire Swedish Press agreed about it, even that portion of it that was not particularly well-disposed towards Germany. As to the German crimes against the rights of men and of war and against the most elementary principles of humanity, the Swedes simply did not believe them; the thing was impossible; these were calumnies invented by Germany's foes who, unable to conquer her by might, were slandering and abusing her in every possible way!

This tone of the Swedish Press and this attitude of Stockholm society deeply annoyed and irritated my colleagues of the Entente and my Russian collaborators. I was much less affected by it all. When, side by side with these insanities, I saw the Stockholm public rushing to the central station to receive the Russian refugees, distributing money, milk, delicacies to the women and children; when in my personal relations with Swedish society I noticed that the people the most cordially

devoted to the German cause carefully avoided in my presence the slightest allusion, the least word which might have hurt my patriotic feelings, I said to myself that the sentiments of the Swedish nobility, of the officers of the Guard and of the ecclesiastical and lay members of the University were really not aggressive. Their sentiments were based on deep conviction; the Swedes expressed their convictions openly; they did so ingenuously, but also without any ulterior motive, without malice and without displaying any impoliteness.

But if this Germanophile disposition of Swedish public opinion did not irritate me inordinately, yet it inspired me with a certain amount of anxiety. Such constant propaganda of affection for Germany might gradually accustom the Swedish public to the idea of an active alliance; in our country mistakes might be made and measures taken which might revive old suspicions and former grudges in Sweden; and finally Germany, emboldened by the proofs of sympathy she was constantly receiving from the northern side of the Baltic, might have rushed Swedish decisions and had recourse to coercive measures, even to sending troops, as she *felt* certain that the Swedish Army would never use its arms against the German brothers. In short, Swedish *activism* and German actions and intrigues in Sweden appeared to me to present a certain amount of danger which I was careful not to exaggerate, but which it would not do to lose sight of.

Almost as soon as we had heard of the result of the battle of the Marne, the great Russian action in Galicia began; and this advance of our finest army corps ended in complete success in the course of a month. The Austro-Hungarians, who at the beginning of the war had begun the offensive and who having before them nothing but a weak screen of Russian troops, acclaimed their victories and their advance into Poland loudly, were first stopped and thrown back out of Russian

territory and then finally beaten in Galicia. Mikolajow, Lemberg, all the country as far as the Carpathians fell into our hands after fierce fighting in which at first our enemies displayed stubborn resistance. But the hour of the overthrow of the Austro-Hungarian Army struck at last, while we were pushing our victorious offensive up to the immediate environs of Cracow, whole regiments of Austrians—Jugo-Slavs, Czechs and Slovaks principally—were beginning to surrender. A telegram was seized from the Austrian General Headquarters entreating Berlin to send German troops to Galicia, *otherwise the Austro-Hungarian Army was threatened with complete disaster.* Alas! At that very moment our offensive had to be stopped. The reason was quite simple: our railway system was quite inadequate for the conveying of sufficient numbers of fresh troops, of provisions and especially of ammunition. The *physical* strength of the Russian fighting army was decreasing and supplies were failing, while German reinforcements were arriving on the scene in Galicia. The same thing occurred, and for the same reason, in General Brussiloff's magnificent offensive in 1916. All the same the whole of Galicia, the Bukowina and part of Austrian Poland were occupied by us, the fortified place Przemysl, which had been invested, ended by surrendering in 1915 and already in November, 1914, the Russian troops had begun the ascent of the Carpathians.

Meantime fierce battles were raging in Poland, where we succeeded in checking the Prussian advance and in keeping Warsaw.

The manifesto of the Grand-Duke Nicolas solemnly promising to the Poles a wide autonomy within the compass of the real frontiers of their nationality, as well in Russia as in Austria and Germany, produced the best effect on us Russians. Very few people criticised this act; the large majority of Russian intellectuals greeted it with joy; they were surprised rather that the manifesto did not come from the Emperor himself, and

expressed fears that the reactionary party might one day profit by this to go back on the promises made to the Poles.

What effect did the manifesto produce on the Poles themselves? I was told that one of the great Polish nobles, Count Joseph P——, had replied to some one who questioned him as to his personal impressions: "Not for one moment did I believe in it; but in reading the manifesto I wept copiously all the same!" It seems to me that this impression was shared by the majority of the Polish people: they wished to believe, they were stirred to the depths of their souls, but on the whole *they did not believe us!* It was not that they suspected us of conscious and intentional imposture; but they dreaded the eternal weakness, the eternal instability of our best, our noblest resolutions.

Personally—indeed there is nothing Polish about me —I was less sceptical, for I *wished* to believe. At last, I thought, a first decisive blow seems to have been struck at that mass of violence, iniquity, lying and mutual hatred that dishonour my country, her history and her public life! For it was chiefly from the *Russian* point of view that I considered the question. The subjection and the partition of Poland had, during a hundred and forty years, been the cause of much *private* suffering and trouble, but taking the Polish nation as a whole this subjection and even this odious partition had been more beneficial than pernicious. In the eighteenth century there was no longer any real Polish nation, no real Polish State; Poland at that time represented obsolete feudal chaos, involved in progressive decay. The misfortunes of the country revived an ardent patriotism, created national cohesion and finally caused astonishing economic progress; moreover Russian power had never been wielded in Poland to the detriment of the purely material interests of the people; on the contrary; and the definite liberation of the Polish serfs and the giving them land were the work of the *régime of the Tsars.*

But for Russia herself the subjection of Poland and

the cruelties and injustices without number which were committed after every Polish rising were a source of *opprobrium, discredit, and weakness.* And how could one speak of a *Slav* policy when ten million pure-bred Slavs were being down-trodden? At last, I thought, this monstrous state of affairs is going to cease; if only there is not too much wrangling over the question of the "national frontiers," and if only they will keep to what they have promised. In this sense I was myself much inclined to go far further than the famous manifesto. I could not help realising that the uniting of all the divisions of Poland—however extensive her autonomy might be—under the sceptre of the Emperor of Russia could not be truly and honestly accepted by Europe, even by our most faithful allies. It would push forward still more the frontiers of the mighty Empire of the North into the frightened body of Western Europe; the mere sight of the new map of Europe would arouse fears and ideas of a solidarity against us of all countries, all nations, even of those who were now fighting each other fiercely. And then between Poles and Russians there would always exist the irritating question of national demarcation, and the still more irritating and difficult question of the limits of the autonomy. In short I greeted the manifesto of the Grand-Duke Nicolas as a *happy beginning*, but I hoped from the bottom of my heart that our country would have the courage and intelligence to go on to the end, that is to say to consent to the complete independence of resurrected Poland.

The end of the year 1914 was a historic and crucial moment for the fate of the Hapsburg Empire. For several weeks we were led to believe by confused rumours which reached us from the bosom of this Empire that a sensational change was taking place in the policy of Vienna. Indeed, if the Austrian Empire wished to be saved this was the only moment in which that was possible. To make peace with Russia immediately, to grant to the Jugo-Slavs, Czechs and Slovaks absolutely

the same rights as those received by the Hungarians in 1867; to grant serious national guarantees to the Rumanians of Transylvania, and finally to give up Bosnia and Herzegovina in favour of the Serbians—this was the policy which would have infused new life into the decaying monarchy and *which might have disclosed to it other prospects of grandeur*. But this arrangement could only be made to the detriment of the Magyars, from whom Croatia and the Slovak country would have been taken, and whose claims in Transylvania would have been nullified. Now the Magyars were ardent and energetic, whereas the Viennese Court—whence alone salvation could come—was vacillating and devoid of all creative genius; as to the supreme power, it was represented by a poor, helpless old man. Under the circumstances the desperate efforts of the Magyars, backed up by those of Berlin, triumphed over the tendencies to wisdom which for an instant had been apparent in Vienna. A change did occur, but it was an entirely different one. MM. Tisza, Weckerle and Burian—all Magyars and obsequious servants of Germany—obtained unlimited power over the two sections of the Monarchy, and the Austro-Hungarian armies were put under the Prussian General Headquarters Staff and almost amalgamated with the German contingents. Hence the struggle in Galicia was to begin again, and to be more bitter than heretofore.

I have often wondered whether anything was done at this moment on our side to help the sound and reasonable elements in Austria in the plans which they had outlined for a moment? Without knowing the mysteries of the Foreign Office I can answer *a priori*: "No." Once war had been declared and had led from the first months to startling successes on the Austrian front, that to us meant the complete triumph of the simplest political principles which had been preached for such a long time by our patriotic Press, by our so-called Slavophiles, reactionary as well as Liberal, and by the General Staff party. Austria-Hungary dismembered and replaced by

an agglomeration of independent States which would be obliged by the force of circumstances to form a confederation, naturally under the auspices and presidency of Russia; this confederation extending from the Carpathians to Constantinople and from Danzig to the Adriatic, embracing Orthodox countries—because Russia is Orthodox; Slav countries—because Russia is Slav; and finally the Hungarians—because they could not exist otherwise. That was the programme! How would the immense, complex and somewhat amorphous Russian Empire carry out this new and grand political duty? How would she bear the displacement of her centre of gravity towards the south-west? How would the whole of Europe view a state of affairs which would give Russia political domination over the largest half of the European continent? Such questions did not exist for our politicians in editorial offices, in ministerial smoking-rooms, in political boudoirs and archbishops' salons. "We have defeated perfidious Austria, we will now defeat domineering Germany, and our good allies will only be too pleased at our final and complete triumph!"

Formerly Russian diplomacy—so much disparaged—would have gone against these chimerical hopes and these dangerous illusions; and the Court would have upheld it—though secretly—conscious of the hidden shoals and the dangers of so great an extension of frontiers and of such a sudden upheaval of the whole European system. But now our diplomacy had changed and had acquired a new mentality. Having been for some years in quest of the support of the Press and of public opinion, it would never have opposed the aspirations of that opinion and that Press; nor would it ever have proposed or conceived such an unexpected and original solution as that of an immediate and complete agreement with Austria-Hungary. And even if it had conceived and proposed it, it would never have succeeded in obtaining the sanction of the Monarch to such a proposition.

Convinced of the infallibility of all the political ideas of his father, brought up by a General of the Staff himself imbued with the *current* Slavophile ideas, Nicolas II. in regard to his foreign policy was entirely in unison with the opinions prevailing in the intellectual circles in Russia. He was too conscious of the dangers of war and of his responsibility towards the lives of his people ever to take the initiative of the conflict, but once war had been *imposed* on Russia by the brutal aggression of William, the Tsar, in the event of victory, did not expect or desire any solutions other than those he read of in the columns of the *Novoye Vremya*, that he heard praised in his own set, and that his Ministers themselves offered him as a natural and desirable state of affairs. A scheme of agreement with Austria based on certain concessions would have seemed to him a heresy and a dangerous eccentricity; the true, the natural course was that approved of by current opinion, and that was the one to be pursued. It was not in the unfortunate Monarch's nature to rise to the thought that it was precisely and solely in the sphere of foreign policy that he had the possibility and the necessity of separating himself, if need be, from current public opinion, in order to preserve or to restore to Russia the benefits of an assured and established peace. Ah well! the path which would have seemed extravagant and chimerical to him would have ended the war promptly and gloriously, and would thus have given the Imperial power a great chance of salvation; whereas the beaten track of prevailing opinions led to an indefinite prolonging of hostilities and suffering and brought nameless and unparalleled calamities on the wretched Tsar and unfortunate Russia.

Thus peace with Austria did not follow in consequence of our brilliant campaign in Galicia. During the winter 1914–15 every one in our country was filled with triumph at the new conquest, and in Galicia we behaved in a way that definitely alienated the sympathies of all who were not radically hostile to the Hapsburg régime; and we

aroused anger and fear in those very people whom we were supposed to be liberating. The stupid persecution of the Uniate clergy; numerous cruelties practised against the Jews who yet could not change their nature in a day and cease to serve a régime secretly under which they had prospered; marked malevolence displayed towards Polish proprietors and employés—all this did not secure to us the sympathies of the "Ruthenes" who were already working up their future "Ukrainian" exploits and who hated us perhaps quite as much as the Poles and Jews did. And what was worse: the fate of Galicia under the ephemeral Russian domination served as a warning to the other Slav countries of the Hapsburg Monarchy who began to dread the "liberty" which would be brought to them by the Russian Army, followed by the troop of the "Tchinovniks" and the political bishops with the famous Eulogios at the head!

Towards the spring of 1915 the general situation was as follows: the Russian armies, victorious everywhere, were occupying the whole of Galicia, and in the high valleys of the Carpathians were engaged in a sanguinary but still undecided contest with the German troops which had come to reinforce their weakening allies. In Poland we had twice repelled the advance of the Germans on Warsaw, and we held a bit of East Prussia as far as the shores of the Masurian Lakes. In the Caucasus we had succeeded in thoroughly beating the Turkish Army which, during the first months of the war, had at one time thought of invading Georgia. Meanwhile, on the French front the war had decidedly adopted the character of trench-warfare, and the trenches extended from the North Sea to the Jura!

Stagnation was threatening to set in and already every one quoted the words of Kitchener, who had said that the war would last from three to five years, and more likely five than three.

Turkey's entry into the war increased still more the importance of the position that Sweden was taking or

would take up : Russia was beginning to be more and more cut off from her allies, and consequently it was necessary for her to secure transit for goods and passengers across the Scandinavian Peninsula.

However, after the first few months of the war, Sweden's behaviour caused us—on the spot, at least—far less anxiety than at first. The desire for the preservation of peace became more and more apparent in the country. When the Riksdag of "national defence" had served its term, it was dissolved, and another Riksdag resulted from the elections, which in the Upper Chamber gave the majority to the Conservatives, and in the Second Chamber to the Liberals and Socialists. This Riksdag begged the Hammarskiold-Wallenberg Ministry—due to resign—to remain at the head of affairs till the end of the war, a most wise resolution, securing under extraordinarily difficult circumstances the frank collaboration of the Crown with national representation.

Personally I could not but approve of this solution. M. Wallenberg had given us proof of great honesty of purpose and perfect impartiality—through this impartiality we could sometimes even perceive that M. Wallenburg was framing no vows for the German cause ; he realised that German victory would mean the end of the independence of Sweden, and that Sweden had and would always have need of the good-will of France and Great Britain.

One of M. Wallenberg's first acts, when the Cabinet had agreed to the extension of his term of office, was to propose to the King that there should be a meeting of the three Scandinavian Sovereigns. This would be the first occasion since the separation of the Swedish and Norwegian Crowns on which the King of Sweden would meet the new King of Norway, Haakon VII. Wallenberg easily gained his cause. King Gustaf willingly—at this solemn hour—buried his personal susceptibilities, if he still had any. The meeting took place at Malmö and was extremely cordial. A programme for the conduct of the three countries with regard to the formidable

events which had divided almost the whole of Europe into two hostile camps was drawn up. The three Scandinavian countries affirmed their solidarity and their excellent mutual relations; the intrigues of the Swedish Activists in favour of an alliance with Germany and against the Hammarskiold-Wallenberg Cabinet were frustrated. It was a master-stroke of the Swedish Foreign Secretary, who thus acquired a new and solid basis for his policy of open neutrality and of opposition to all sorts of adventures.

CHAPTER XIX

SWEDEN IN 1915

The world war, of which the economic consequences in the long run were disastrous for the whole of Europe, began with a sudden increase of prosperity for certain neutral countries. Just like Holland, Denmark and Norway, Sweden suddenly saw the prices of her exports rising in a dazzling way. Never had the splendid Swedish iron ore been in such enormous demand; never had pit-props attained such formidable prices. It was because iron was needed for the construction of instruments—alas! so valuable—of destruction and death, and the planks were indispensable for the making of thousands of kilometres of trenches in which millions of armed men—like modern troglodytes—were to bury themselves for years. But other possibilities of advantageous exportation were developing for Swedish industry. Her steel and iron goods, her agricultural machines, her turbines, her pit-props, her lathes were more and more in demand abroad as the workshops of the belligerent countries specialised in the making of big guns, shells, rifles, submarines, aeroplane engines. Thanks to German methods, the ancient prophecies were being fulfilled in a reverse sense: ploughshares were being turned into swords, and the bronze of bells which had been cast to peal forth to heaven prayers of love and peace was to be found in awful machines destined to spread death and suffering broadcast.

But Swedish exportation was not confined to metal, wood, and the products of her foundries and workshops. Seduced by the enormous prices that all agricultural

produce had been fetching in Germany from the outbreak of the war, the southern provinces of Sweden, which up till then had supplied the country almost exclusively, began to send to the other side of the Baltic wheat, flour, butter, cattle, pigs, poultry. At first the profits were fabulous; later on the belligerents, enemies of Germany, and the Swedish Government itself put a stop to this traffic: Sweden was in danger of starving if her agricultural provinces, situated at the southern end of the kingdom, continued to send off to Germany all the produce that she had hitherto sent up north.

In this case the demands of the Powers of the Entente coincided with the well-understood interests of the Swedish Government. But the world-war gradually led to such an extension of the idea of contraband of war that the trade of neutrals and finally their entire economic existence were hampered by it in a way that could not have been imagined, and of which the famous "continental blockade" was but a feeble prototype. In January, 1915, the lists of goods and commodities which were considered contraband of war were so large that hardly anything was left for the neutrals' trade with the belligerents; and the longer the war went on, the stricter and more numerous became the prohibitions. And this was not all: the belligerents forbade the exportation out of their countries of a whole category of products, some because they were necessary to the prosecution of the war (such as coal, petrol, etc.), others because if they had been bought by neutral countries, they might have found their way from there into enemy countries. Finally, partly to prevent their country being deprived of commodities absolutely indispensable for direct or industrial consumption, partly to bring pressure to bear on the belligerents and to extort concessions from them, the neutrals themselves drew up long lists of prohibited exports.

Sweden, in consequence of her geographical position, was in a very peculiar situation. As the Baltic was

commanded by the German Fleet, the Swedes virtually possessed free traffic with Germany. Consequently German influence weighed in a natural manner—and irrespective of all political sympathy—on the commercial direction of Sweden. And this caused the Entente countries more particularly to restrict the importation into Sweden of all produce and all commodities which might somehow or other take the road to Germany. Very soon certain commodities of neutral origin, such as American wheat, rubber, tanning materials and nitrates from Chile, were not allowed to be imported into Sweden. Thinking it possible to starve out Germany and to deprive her of certain goods indispensable to the prosecution of the war, the other Powers were afraid that Sweden—whose pro-Boche sentiments were much exaggerated—would simply serve as an intermediary for the dispatch of these goods to Central Europe.

These restrictions and impediments were naturally very prejudicial to the economic life of Sweden, and they irritated the public opinion of the country. Through this the Swedish Government was continually faced with difficulties which it sought to solve as best it could, while the absolutely contradictory demands of the two belligerent parties and the agitation of the "activists" within the country led each day to fresh complications and new difficulties.

Sweden's principal need was coal. The Scandinavian Peninsula does not possess one seam. All the six million tons of coal that the Swedish kingdom consumes for her industries, her railways, and her navigation have to be imported into the country; before the war England supplied nearly five million tons and Germany the rest. Then come corn, other vegetable foodstuffs and forage (the Swedish production does not cover the country's consumption), petrol and its by-products, nitrates, hides, tanning materials, sulphur (absolutely necessary to the production of paper-pulp—a great feature of Swedish rural industry), wool, raw cotton, rubber. All these commodities had to be imported from outside, from

North and South America, Russia, the British colonies, Italy (sulphur).

Consequently the belligerent countries of the Entente had, or seemed to have, more of a hold on Sweden than Germany had, for the vital imports of the country mainly depended on their good will. This was how the matter was viewed in England, and in 1915 negotiations were opened with Sweden through a commission of English specialists who came to Stockholm to conclude an agreement based on a strict regulation of Swedish imports and on the control of the consumption of the imported goods. However, these negotiations ended in nothing, the principal reasons being:

(1) As concerns the importation of corn and forage, Russia, in spite of her oft-repeated promises, could only supply a small quantity of what Sweden needed; the railways of Russia, and particularly of Finland, were so blocked, and possessed so little rolling-stock that the quantity promised could never be conveyed to Sweden. Wool and Russian hides were becoming more and more scarce, even for home use and that of the Russian armies; hence none could be subtracted for Swedish use.

(2) England could not manage to supply Sweden with the same quantity of coal as she supplied before the war. Towards 1916, the importation of English coal was reduced to two and a half million tons and an equal quantity came to Sweden from *Germany*, who for the purpose used the coal pits of Poland which she had seized in 1914 and 1915.

(3) Italy, far from being able to threaten Sweden with cutting off her delivery of Sicilian sulphur, was anxious to find a market for this important national production, and moreover western countries were in urgent need of Swedish wood-pulp, so that in their own interests they could not restrict the output of this product, of which sulphur is one of the essentials.

(4) Germany, on the other hand, besides her coal, had very effectual means of bringing pressure to bear on

Sweden and of claiming the supply of certain commodities. Sweden could never have borne the cessation of the exportation of her iron ore and of the products of her forests; that would have spelled ruin and even famine for the entire population of her central and northern provinces. Now, the ore found a natural market in Germany by way of the Baltic, and the wood could only be shipped westward by this same way, that is to say with the tacit authorisation of the Germans.

(5) Finally, if the Entente countries were able to bring pressure to bear on Sweden by the restriction of imports, Sweden on her side could bring pressure to bear on those countries through the absolute necessity for one of the members of the group—Russia—to have recourse repeatedly to Swedish assistance. Cut off from her allies since Bulgaria's entry into the war, having no outlet open except on the Archangel side—a port which is ice-bound for more than five months of the year and only connected to the rest of Russia by one railway with a very bad service[1] —Russia had an imperative need to secure transit through Sweden. I was constantly obliged to entreat the Swedish Government to grant free passage to such and such merchandise not coming in the category of actual contraband of war. And also officers, generals, statesmen and scientists on missions were perpetually crossing Swedish territory going from Russia to the West, and *vice versâ*. Germany was kept informed by her numerous agents of all this transport and all these permits; she did not omit to make them a subject for claims, sometimes even for threats, and she demanded compensation in the form of certain supplies and of authorisation for a stay in Sweden for these same "control" agents.

(6) Russian orders in Sweden became daily more numerous as the war continued. They comprised machines of all kinds, ball bearings, steel-plating, turbines, steel and iron pipes, presses, cables and above all

[1] The Murman coast was only connected with Petrograd towards the end of 1916 by a railway line with a still more inadequate service.

lathes, so absolutely indispensable to the making of all metal things—*munitions* amongst others. Now as soon as a Russian order of the kind was accepted in Sweden and received an export licence, the Germans in their turn claimed Swedish products, mainly foodstuffs such as butter and pork, but sometimes farm-horses. Three times Sweden, in spite of our protests, had to export thousands of horses to Germany, horses that were not suitable for the Army, all of them more than ten years old, and which nevertheless fetched enormous prices (as much as 2000 francs per horse). But every one knew that these old Swedish horses went to German farms to replace younger horses that were fit for the Army.

Such was in outline the position of international trade in Sweden, a position which was tangled, confused, and perpetually complicated by the political and military considerations of the belligerents, by the suspicions, denunciations, accusations, of the foreign Press and the exaggerated claims of the local Press.

So as to combine our efforts satisfactorily, my French and English colleagues and I decided to confer continually on all political and commercial questions. From the spring of 1915, the Italian Minister, M. Tommasini, joined us, and the help of this diplomat, gifted with such keen intelligence and such remarkable aptitude for work, was most valuable to us. On all questions of trade and transit, the tone was mainly set by the British Minister, for his country controlled the relations of Sweden with Western Europe and with America. Luckily for me, I always found Sir Esme Howard to be a man with a fair and well-balanced mind and most capable of realising the urgent needs which I had to meet and which were often in contradiction with the principles adopted and jealously maintained in London. We ended by settling our respective rôles. Every time that I had to ask the Swedish Government for a licence, an exemption or a permit in the sphere of transit or the supplying of produce, I applied to my

English colleague. He made a note of my request and made it a condition of compensation for the licences demanded by Sweden. Finally, arrangements for general trade which passed from time to time between Sweden and England always contained clauses in our favour: a few hundred lathes to be allowed to go into Russia, the transit of such and such commodities to be allowed to us, etc.

These almost daily conferences with my allied colleagues have left me the pleasantest memories. We communicated everything we knew to each other, and we were all four imbued with the same faith and the same conviction—that come what may, the war *must* be ended by the complete victory of the Allies, and could end in no other way.

The complete cohesion of the Entente Ministers was all the more fortunate because in the person of the German representative to Stockholm we had met our match.

A few weeks after the declaration of war, the disengaged German Minister to the *Mpret* of Albania, Baron von Lucius, was sent, by Berlin's order, to *support* Herr von Reichenau. Up to 1913 Baron von Lucius had held the post of Counsellor to the Embassy in St. Petersburg, and had then been sent to the Prince of Wied who was taking up his royal duties in the land of the Skipetars. It was then that I drew the best horoscope for the new dynasty by predicting that there would always be a Wied (*vide*) on the Albanian throne. This punning prophecy was not long in being fulfilled; from the summer of 1914 the *Mpret* and Baron von Lucius were both disengaged again.

I had known Lucius in Paris, and had seen him again several times in St. Petersburg, where he had not *gone down* in society. He was accused of political intrigues —which was quite true—and of intrigues against his chief—which was possibly untrue; in March, 1914, when a striking and much commented-on article entitled "Der

preventive Krieg" appeared in the *Cologne Gazette*, this article was fathered, amongst us, on to Baron von Lucius. The article advocated making war on Russia and France before the two countries should have completed their armament undertaken with the obvious intention of attacking Germany. It was said that this was the opinion of the Crown Prince and of the exalted military circles of Berlin, and Lucius by popularising this idea was ingratiating himself beforehand with his future Kaiser.

Be that as it may, as soon as I heard that Baron von Lucius was being sent to Stockholm, I predicted to my allied colleagues that Herr von Reichenau would not long remain at the head of the German Legation. Indeed, six weeks sufficed for the newcomer to supplant Reichenau gracefully, and to instal himself in his place as German Minister.

Quick, intelligent, shrewd, and essentially cynical, he did not take long to collect into his hands all the threads of German intrigue in Sweden, and to assume the direction of this intrigue. He possessed all the means thereto. A huge staff of assistants and specialists was added to the German Legation; five counsellors to the Legation found themselves at the head of five separate offices installed in vast premises, and were overburdened with work; one office dealt with trade, the second with purchases and orders for German re-provisioning, the third with the Press and propaganda, the fourth with spying and counter-spying in Sweden and Russia, and the fifth assumed the general direction of affairs.

Meantime, the Russian Legation was reduced to its pre-war staff: two secretaries, and the naval, military and commercial attachés, all three without any private assistants or even any typewriters under them. It was not till two years later that our staff was somewhat reinforced. My allied colleagues were similarly situated; Sir Esme Howard, over-burdened with work, did not have a staff large enough to cope with the enormous amount of work at the British Legation till

about 1916; and my French and Italian colleagues had but one secretary to help them up to the end! This is one of the numerous examples of the superiority of German machinery over that of the Entente from the beginning of the war. Berlin realised at once that when they were spending tens of millions of marks per day in the war zone, they could and ought to spend a few hundreds in making diplomatic work more thorough and more profitable, by information and propaganda in a neutral country as important as Sweden from her geographical position.

Thanks to the untiring work of our collaborators, Howard, Thiébaud, Tommasini and I were just able to get through the most necessary part of our work; all the same, at the beginning of the war and during the first two years I greatly felt the want of collaborators in the sphere of questions concerning the Press. It was not till 1916 that the Legation ended by having a more or less adequate service in this respect.

I regretted far less my complete powerlessness in the difficult sphere of secret intelligence and of counter-spying. These two important branches were, with us, entrusted, just as in the Russo-Japanese war, to the agents of the famous State Police, who carried it on by the same clumsy and prejudicial methods that they were accustomed to use in their counter-revolutionary work. Consequently, I was glad not to have to associate with these individuals and not even to know them. And when I had to get confidential information for my own guidance I could always apply to my allied colleagues, whose agents were anyhow more honest and better informed.

But I must return to Baron von Lucius. In his strictly political work he displayed more shrewdness than his predecessor. Whereas the latter had wished to press the Swedes at all costs to declare war on Russia, Baron von Lucius quickly understood that the greater part of Sweden, and even of Swedish society, did not care to be drawn into the perils and the enormous risks of war.

From that time the German Legation changed its tactics; von Lucius only asked the Swedes for friendship, sympathy, and services of an economic order which would enable heroic Germany, whom the English wished to starve ("Gott strafe England!"), to save her wretched women and innocent children from dying of inanition before her eyes. As the war continued and revealed ever more and more its true and hideous aspect, as Swedish public opinion was leaning more and more towards the idea and the longing for a good European peace, von Lucius revealed himself more and more as a friend of peace—of an "honourable" peace, of course—for his country. He suggested to the Swedes the idea of striving for this peace so indispensable for humanity at large; he drew a picture, most attractive to their generosity, of Sweden as the initiator of world-wide peace, of Stockholm as the place where the future peace congress would be held.

Ah, well! in spite of all these exertions, all this cleverness, von Lucius's term of office in Stockholm was not a success. He was too excitable, too much of a *trickster.* There are some tendencies which at first are not understood by certain societies or by certain persons, but which end by shocking their natural instincts of frankness and noble-mindedness. And then they become suspicious. The methods of the German Legation could not either in the long run appeal to honest people. Agitation in the Press; attempts at extortion; enticing away of young people to serve as spies in Russia or to make attempts there to wreck munition factories or means of communication—an enticement which usually commenced with offers of honest employment; the keeping up of active relations in Stockholm itself and in the north with the Finnish revolutionaries, *not at all liked in Sweden;* perpetual tales about contraband; finally, a plethora of German agents and spies of both sexes in Stockholm and all over the country; naturally all this made the Swedish Government anxious, and shocked public opinion, when actual facts came to their

knowledge. And at the root of all these facts one saw the hand of the official representatives of Germany.

What also ended by harming these representatives was the agitation of Sven-Hedin and his most intimate friends. When the "great Thibetan" accepted the Kaiser's invitation and went to the German Head-quarters, every one in Sweden thought this trip quite natural, and the correspondence of the eminent publicist and political agitator was read with enormous interest; but Sven-Hedin was wrong to prolong, and above all to repeat, his visits to the Kaiser's armies; he also made the great mistake of praising in his letters the "fresh and joyful war" as prosecuted by the Germans, of showing himself to be not only pro-German but imbued with militarism, and ultra warlike, and of posing as a liege-man of Germany. This at last opened the eyes of the Swedes as to Sven-Hedin, and the more their inclination for peace and tranquillity in Europe increased, the more did the "personal friend" of the Kaiser lose ground. When I took up my post in Sweden in the spring of 1914 the name of Sven-Hedin was on every one's lips; when my time was up in the spring of 1917, one heard no mention of the famous explorer. *Sic transit.* Moreover, the overthrow of Sven-Hedin's authority and that of his Activist friends had an undoubted effect on the position of the German Minister.

German diplomatic representation in Stockholm had another vulnerable point in its armour which could not escape the notice of the public at large. Whereas the best personal relations united the representatives of the Entente, and at all receptions and in public places I was seen to seek the company of my allied colleagues, it was no secret from any one in Stockholm that Count Hadik and his collaborators could hardly bear the bragging, the authoritative tone and the *nouveau riche* mentality of their "grand" German colleague. The Austrian diplomats formed a separate party with the Turks and the Bulgarian chargé d'affaires. So the Germans in their social relations had to rely on those elements

of Stockholm society who professed and paraded Germanophile sentiments. But soon even these elements became more discreet, more reticent; the unconventional methods of the *burschikos*[1] German Minister ended by shocking them; they decidedly preferred the aristocratic good style of the Austro-Hungarian representative.

Not having at my disposal the means of propaganda of the German Minister, and not being able, like him, to rely on the popularity which the German name enjoyed in Sweden, I carefully avoided any emulation of von Lucius. The more he went about in Stockholm society, the more reserve did I display with regard to that society which was correct, polite but not much in favour of anything Russian; the more he worried and hustled the Swedish Government, the more I endeavoured to be conciliatory and to guard against all misunderstanding between this Government and that of St. Petersburg. But before and above all I strove to avoid, in my relations with M. Wallenberg, anything that might seem to denote a lack of confidence in him. In the course of my relations with the Swedish Foreign Secretary I learnt to esteem his frankness as much as his prudence, and to respect his word; moreover, our pesonal relations, which began by being merely correct, became more and more intimate and confidential.

When I review in my mind the subsequent phases of my relations with the Swedes—official and political personages, financiers and manufacturers, journalists and authors—I can prove that towards the end of my stay in Sweden a great many prejudices against Russia had decreased in intensity, while new sympathies were being aroused and fresh relations formed. Certain events, the outcome of the world war, were of use to me, and I took care to seize on these opportunities to do away with the prejudices which had taken root in Sweden about the supposed Russian peril.

[1] An untranslatable German expression: familiar; bumptious; free and easy.

The construction of the railway line connecting St. Petersburg with the Murman coast and its ports, which are never ice-bound, was the first fact that I proclaimed loudly in Sweden in order to prove to what extent the tales about our supposed craving for Narwick and Trondhjem were devoid of foundation. For a long time the Swedes remained sceptical with regard to my efforts; a deep-seated prejudice cannot be uprooted in a moment. Had the line to Murman really been laid? Did it really lead to open ports? The old story of the village scenery placed by Potemkin along the Empress Catherine's route reappeared in the columns of the Scandinavian newspapers: perhaps the Murman railway line was only scenery destined to put Swedes off the scent? But in the end they had to yield to evidence: the railway line, laid in a hurry and somewhat primitive, was nevertheless open towards 1917, and conveyed to St. Petersburg guns, ammunition and other goods indispensable for the prosecution of the war which our allies unshipped in the open and well-sheltered ports of Kola and Alexandrovsk.[1] Once the war was over it would be easy to improve the line, and then Russia would have undisputed and ice-free outlets to the sea, outlets situated about 1200 kilometres from the capital.

Another consideration which helped to calm Swedish minds was the intention, which soon became known, to hand over to Russia Constantinople and the Straits by her allies and chiefly by England. Henceforth, if the Entente succeeded in beating Germany, the whole attention of the mighty Russian Empire would be directed towards the south beyond the Black Sea. The Baltic problems would then be of secondary importance, and the Scandinavian countries—beginning with Finland and continuing with Sweden—would no longer have to fear that the giant's hand would turn towards the north-west.

Amongst the new elements which helped me to

[1] Called Murmansk since the Revolution.

establish better and more trusting relations between Russia and Sweden there was what I then called "the case of M. Perrichon." All my contemporaries probably remember the amusing play of Labiche's and his subtle moral sense, demonstrating the fact that one is more grateful to one's neighbour for a boon that one has conferred on him than for one *received* from him. M. Perrichon sets himself to adore the young man he thinks he has saved from falling over a precipice, whereas he ends by hating him who effectually saved his life, and who then fancied he had thereby deserved the hand of Mademoiselle Perrichon.

When the Swedes behaved so kindly and with so much delicacy towards the Russian refugees returning from Germany by Sweden, I saw that the feelings of hostility and distrust nursed in the country with regard to my compatriots were anyhow partly melting away. Later on this phenomenon became accentuated. The admirable manner in which Sweden managed the repatriation of our seriously wounded men was not solely the work of the Swedish Red Cross and its noble President, Prince Charles; the whole of Sweden seemed to participate in it, and to do so effectually; our wounded men carried away the best impressions of their journey through Sweden, when entire populations turned out to greet and pity the wretched Russians and to look on one of the saddest and darkest sides of war. "The case of M. Perrichon" assumed more and more its highest and deepest meaning, which is that the good you do to others cause you to know them better and finally to like them.

When I saw that events were seconding my efforts and warding off the danger of an immediate collision between Russia and Sweden I acquired the conviction that one could and should build for the future and endeavour to form closer and more trusting relations between the two countries than had existed in the past. The products of the admirable Swedish metallurgic industry might replace in Russia some of the analogous

products which before the war were exclusively imported from Germany. The excellent Swedish engineers and scientists—generally accurate and honest—would with advantage replace certain representatives of German *Kultur* who came to make fortunes in our country. In entire branches of modern progress—in telephony for instance—the Swedes could initiate the Russians into their methods and their wonderful instruments.

Besides we should derive real profit from the closer study of the political and social organisation of Sweden and from borrowing certain ideas and certain institutions from this people whose country has so many analogies with all the immense North of Russia. Peter the Great had taken the administration and fiscal organisation of Sweden and transplanted it in bulk into his empire, a work which was afterwards spoilt by his weak and stupid successors; the Swedish nobiliary constitution was later on the centre of attraction for the enlightened minds of the Russian nobility—the only class who were at all cultivated in the Russia of the eighteenth century; these tendencies ended in the reforms of Catherine II., reforms which might have been the beginning of the true political and social progress of Russia if the Prussophile manias of the great Empress's successors had not come to spoil and annul her work. Undoubtedly ever since the days of the Värings and Rurik there has been an affinity and something akin to a mysterious link between the Scandinavian countries and the North of Russia; and the periods in which these links were severed and forgotten were not exactly the happy periods of Russian history.

Such were the plans and the dreams that I allowed myself to indulge in while the storm of the war was still raging. Awful ruin has overwhelmed Russia since then, and seems to forbid us to indulge even in dreams and hopes for the future. All the same, I still believe in the correctness of the impressions that my stay in Sweden left on me. And that is why I allow myself to look with equanimity on one of the consequences of our present

downfall: the secession of Finland so hurriedly recognised by our allies. When the future Russian Constituent Assembly has to settle the frontiers of the Empire I hope that she will ratify the complete and final divorce of Russia from the Grand-Duchy of Finland. From that moment there would be nothing to hinder a sincere and mutually profitable drawing together of Russia and Sweden, of which the first political object would be Finland herself. For if the Swedish elements in Finland, elements which are wholesome and eminently honest, gain the influence they deserve in the country, Finland would take up the natural and beneficial rôle of a peaceful State, interested in the economic welfare of her great neighbour in the East; whereas the preponderance of the Finnish race, inclined to cruelty and treachery,[1] would force Russia and Sweden to unite their policy more, and together to guard against Finland becoming what she nearly became in 1917—a German base for operations in the Baltic and a hotbed of Bolshevism.

When I speak of the change taking place in Swedish

[1] The *Ural-Altaic* race, commonly called Finnish, is represented in Europe in four countries: the *Turks*, founders of the Ottoman Empire, belonged to this race; in history they displayed much tenacity, coupled with great cruelty incorrectly attributed to Mohammedan fanaticism. The *Bulgarians*, a Finnish race, conquered the Slavs and the aborigines of Mesia; they adopted the Slav language and Slavo-Byzantine civilisation, but they preserved in the Bulgarian nation strong and indelible traces of their blood, their mentality and their tendencies. The *Magyars* after having terrorised Central Europe, were merged into the Slavs of Pannonia, and were subject to the influence of Latino-Germanic culture; the physical type of the people improved, but the Ural-Altaic language still persisted, as did also the spirit of despotism and violence towards the other peoples of St. Stephen's crown. Finally the *Finns* proper, half savage only two centuries ago, were at first entirely under the influence of Swedo-Lutheran culture, but then singularised themselves latterly by suspicious and narrow nationalism tending to the worst excesses.

There is a fairly important strain of Finnish blood in the Russian *peasant* population of Central and Eastern Russia. This explains certain traits of cruelty and treachery which one sees sometimes among these populations, and which are so greatly at variance with the Slav frankness and gentleness so often apparent in the history of the Russian people.

public opinion with regard to the supposed Russian peril, I am somewhat anticipating events. During the first twenty months of the war the Swedish political horizon was not always free from cloud, quite as much in respect to Russia as to the Entente in general.

The Swedish Activists were agitating unceasingly, and this agitation was fed, sometimes by the events of the war, sometimes by the inconvenience to the country caused by the strict blockade kept up by England, sometimes finally by the famous question of the Aland Islands which the Activists raised as soon as it was necessary to warm up the anxiety of the country, and which the Swedish Government itself held to be an important question demanding a clear and distinct solution.

The year 1915 began with a general impression of successes for the Entente. In Galicia the taking of Przemysl, and the vigorous offensive on the side of the Carpathians, seemed to promise us at no distant date the possibility of carrying the devastation of war and decisive fighting right into Hungary; in Poland we were still struggling fiercely with the German invader, and Warsaw felt secure behind the trenches of the Bzura, and the unflinching bulwark of our troops; finally, in East Prussia our armies were still holding their own on the shores of the Masurian Lakes, that is to say in enemy country. Meanwhile, in the Caucasus a brilliant and unhoped for victory of General Yudenitch's at once changed the situation: the Turkish troops, badly beaten, no longer contemplated an offensive on Tiflis and Baku; they themselves were attacked near the Turkish fortress of Erzerum.

This military position of Russia was certainly not advantageous to the propaganda of Swedish Activists. "This was the fate in store for us!" one of my neutral colleagues heard an earnest member of the Swedish Conservative party say when Stockholm heard of the decisive defeat of the Turks and our of advance in Armenia. However, the friends, or rather the admirers, of Germany

did not allow themselves to be downhearted: the Germans, they said, had enormous resources in men and supplies at their command; they were reorganising all their system of war, and were animated by the resolve to win. . . . And the men in power in Sweden who were in a position to know the situation of the German Empire held a point of view somewhat similar to that of the Activists. They *knew* that Germany was still very strong, and thought her invincible. The months succeeding the taking of Przemysl and the triumphal journey of the Emperor Nicolas II. to Lwow (January and February, 1915), fully confirmed this opinion.

Towards the end of February we heard of the German offensive in East Prussia. The Russian army operating there was taken by surprise at the very moment when two army corps had been withdrawn for the Carpathians, and the troops to replace these had not arrived. The army of General Sievers was overthrown, lost many prisoners and stores, and was forced to retire in haste to Grodno and Kovno, where at last they succeeded in stopping the German advance. But the war had decidedly been carried into Russian territory, and fresh vulnerable points were being discovered on our side as much in Northern Poland as on the borders of Courland.

Moreover, this was but the beginning. Towards the middle of May of this same ill-omened year 1915, and at the very moment when Italy was going to throw her good sword into the scales, we heard first of the successful German attack at Gorlice; then of the piercing of our front between the San and Cracow, and of the capture of entire Russian army corps in the passes and valleys of the Carpathians; in short it meant the decisive defeat of our armies in Galicia. Nevertheless, Italy placed herself on the side of the Entente and began the struggle on the Isonzo and in the Dolomites; the Russian troops, ferocious in their retreat, still held their own for some time on the San; but the enormous losses sustained on the Carpathians and in Galicia, and the want of

ammunition, which was becoming more and more felt on the Russian side, ended by shattering our resistance. Gradually Poland and Eastern Galicia were evacuated, Warsaw was occupied by the Germans, and towards October, 1915, the Russian retreat abandoned to the enemy Volhynia, Lithuania as far as Baranovitchi (former G.H.Q. of the Grand-Duke Commander-in-Chief), and the whole of Courland as far as the Dvina and the outskirts of Riga. The inconceivable exodus of millions of the inhabitants of the invaded provinces plunged these poor wretches into awful suffering and unheard-of calamities, and their miserable appearance and terrible tales increased, in the towns of Central Russia, the complaints and criticism evoked by our reverses, by the munition crisis, and by the reactionary policy of exalted Government circles. In October we knew or we understood that the Russian army in Lithuania had been on the brink of a disaster, that the Guard and some army corps had been almost annihilated, and that only the skill of Alexeieff and the splendid spirit still prevailing in the ranks had averted the catastrophe, and to a certain extent re-established the balance of power.

Of course all these events encouraged the Swedish Activists, and gave weight to their propaganda: German ardour had in no way been damped by the reverses of 1914; Germany more than ever appeared invincible; henceforth would it not be to Sweden's interests to side definitely with the German "brothers"? The agitation mainly seized the Swedish military circles, who naturally were enthusiastic about the great deeds of the war. Sweden's neutrality seemed to be in question again. But mercifully it only seemed to be so.

In the first place, in the country itself, beginning with the King and M. Wallenberg and ending with the good and sturdy agricultural populations of the interior of Sweden, the same aversion to the risks, horrors, and devastation of war was apparent. And then the German military command itself, although celebrating and proclaiming its victories aloud, was inwardly aiming at one

object alone—that of saving its stake, and a few of the successes achieved, by the immediate conclusion of an "honourable" peace. Berlin understood—although this was rigidly kept from the public—that the victories might be fleeting, and that it was imperative to seize this moment to act on that portion of the Allies which Germany considered the weakest morally, that is to say on Russia.

In June, 1915, before the surrender of Warsaw, I had held in my hands the first German proposal of peace. A Russian merchant, residing at the time in Stockholm, had had a visit from a second-class German financier who came to talk to him about the necessity for both countries of putting an end to this disastrous war, and "suggested" to him, *by dictating them*, the conditions to which the parleyings might pledge themselves. My compatriot brought me this curious statement at once. It began by stating that Russia had just undergone a serious reverse; that such reverses would only increase in the course of the summer; that Warsaw and Riga would inevitably fall into the hands of the Germans, and that it would be better to seek peace before the fall of these two capitals obliged the German Government to offer far less favourable peace conditions than those which Russia might get at the moment. Now, these favourable conditions were the following:

(1) Russia was to abandon the part of Poland belonging to her, which was to form an autonomous state, *economically associated with Germany*.

(2) Russia was to consent to "a few" modifications of her frontiers in Courland and Lithuania, to Germany's advantage.

(3) Germany and Russia were together to exercise a kind of *condominium* in Constantinople, sharing the influence over Turkey and keeping out the other Powers. This *condominium* would have as its object to guarantee to Germany free penetration into Asia Minor and the south of Persia by way of Bagdad, and to Russia free passage through the Straits.

(4) Russia and Germany were to conclude a political and commercial alliance in which France might find a place, but of which the point would be specially directed against English encroachments.

(5) In the event of these proposals being favourably received, Russia was to send two or three first-class financiers to Malmö to meet some great German financiers to discuss the conditions of peace together in greater detail.

I took care to transmit a copy of this statement to our Foreign Office, after having thoroughly warned the person who had shown it to me that I felt sure and certain beforehand that we should reject all proposals of separate negotiations unknown to our Allies. As I expected, there was no sequel to this German attempt, so far as our country was concerned. I heard later that at the same time Germany had made overtures to the Danish Court to bring about a conversation with Russia. These overtures had the same negative result.

From this moment, according to what I gathered from reliable sources, several attempts were made to bring about separate conversations first with Russia, then with England. Attempts were also made by Turkish representatives with their Japanese colleagues (whom they were able to see as a state of war did not exist between Turkey and Japan). Then Stockholm witnessed the arrival of the famous "Ford Peace Troupe."

In Sweden the pacificist current made special progress from 1915 onwards, and the Court and the Royal Government lent it, if not their actual help, at least their most sincere sympathy. M. Wallenberg, in particular, was animated by the impulse to put an end to the acute state of Europe, of which the results would be: the exasperation of national antipathies, awful material ruin, and the placing on the order of the day the most dangerous and most insolvable social problems. It was this pacificist current that checked the renewal of warlike tendencies occasioned by the German successes of 1915.

I have already alluded to the difficulties Sweden had to face in consequence of the naval blockade, and of the numerous other hindrances to her revictualling and her trade.

These difficulties went on increasing, and German propaganda, clever and admirably carried out, did not cease directing the point of Swedish public displeasure at England.

The Christmas festivities of 1915 brought on a curious attack of this displeasure. Christmas presents, the famous *Yul-Klappor*, are an almost sacred custom in Sweden. Custom demands that even the Swedes who had emigrated to other countries should exchange presents at Christmas with their relations and friends at home. Hence innumerable postal packets arrived from North America in Sweden towards the end of December; these parcels are impatiently awaited; they are always unpacked in the presence of the whole family. And behold! at Christmas, 1915, all these postal packets coming from America were stopped by the English naval authorities, and Sweden received no *Yul-Klappor* from the emigrants! The indignation and agitation were indescribable. Vehement articles in the newspapers, protest meetings, deputations to the Government were all resorted to. King Gustaf V. ended by inviting the British Minister to go and see him; His Majesty complained of this proceeding which victimised the whole Swedish people and hurt their most cherished feelings, and he begged Sir Esme Howard to transmit to the British Government an immediate request to repeal this odious measure.

The investigations made in England on the subject proved that the *Yul-Klappor* of 1915 included articles prohibited by the blockade—for instance, pneumatic tyres; hence it was supposed that these articles were destined in a roundabout way for Germany. This may have been true in a few isolated cases; all the same it would have been better if England had not struck this blow at the most cherished feelings of the worthy

Swedes, because in truth a few hundred tyres or a few hundred hams smuggled into Germany would not have materially strengthened her military position !

However, not even in this case did the displeasure of Swedish public opinion go so far as to evoke dangerous tension between Sweden and the Entente countries; and the reason for this lay in the solidarity which became daily greater between the three Scandinavian countries, with regard to everything relative to current events and the economic situation.

At the end of the preceding chapter, I mentioned M. Wallenberg's master-stroke in arranging the first meeting between the three Scandinavian sovereigns at Malmö. Since then conferences between Swedish, Norwegian and Danish statesmen took place whenever circumstances or special questions demanded them. A new solidarity was becoming established—a solidarity which was apparent above all in economic and commercial spheres. The three Scandinavian countries strove to supplement mutually their resources and their needs. They made reciprocal concessions, and with regard to the blockade, the interests of the three countries collectively replaced their individual interests. Moreover, as Denmark and Norway displayed far less impatience with regard to the measures taken by the Entente Powers than Sweden did, this conciliatory spirit ended by influencing Sweden's conduct.

Thus the dangers which threatened the maintenance of Swedish neutrality in consequence of the success of German arms and the miseries of the blockade were averted or at least mitigated. A third source of danger remained, that of the Aland Islands.

The question of the Aland Archipelago, which had remained dormant since the definite conquest of Finland by the Russians in 1809, rose up at the sound of the guns in the war of 1853-55. The Anglo-French squadrons took then the fortress of Bomarsund, situated on one of the islands of the Archipelago; the united Kingdom of

Sweden and Norway profited by the situation to derive a few advantages in the tangled question of the reindeer forests of Finmark, and also raised the question of the Aland Islands. By a clause added to the Treaty of 1856, Russia pledged herself not to keep up any military establishment on these islands, which constituted a fairly appreciable guarantee for the safety of the Swedish capital, situated about thirty nautical miles from the extremity of the Aland Archipelago.

To do away with the stipulations disadvantageous to Russia of the Treaty of Paris was, as we know, the work of the whole long Ministry of the Chancellor of the Empire, Prince Gortchakoff. After a long delay, in 1871, at the Conference of London, came the elimination of the clause, untenable for Russia, of the limitation of her fleet, of her fortified places, and of her dockyards in the Black Sea; in 1879, the portion of Bessarabia adjacent to the Danube which France and England, under Austria's influence, had forced us to give up to the Danubian Provinces, was restored to the Empire. But the wise and subtle Chancellor, who could and wished to act nobly, and was not instigated by restless ambition; the *grand seigneur* Chancellor, never thought of retracting the concession made to Sweden in 1856. He realised that for the neighbouring kingdom this concession had a vital value whilst it only had a passive one for Russia, and he preferred to keep up the relations of excellent neighbours with Sweden rather than to enjoy the small triumph of the elimination of the last and insignificant restrictive clause of the Treaty of 1856.

The prudent M. de Giers and his three immediate successors took great care not to alter our policy in this respect. But in 1906, matters assumed a different aspect. At this moment the separation of Norway and Sweden set the problem of the international régime of the North Sea, a problem solved by a convention between England, France and Germany. Analogically one might raise the question of the régime of the Baltic Sea; and M. Isvolsky, newly appointed to the post of Minister for Foreign

Affairs, considered it a propitious moment to restore to Russia her plenary rights in the Aland Archipelago. The Berlin Government, sounded beforehand on the subject, promptly consented to support the Russian proposal; it was, first, one more means of arousing the suspicions and fears of Sweden with regard to Russia; and then it afforded an opportunity of separating Russia—on the Baltic question at least—from France and England, who would probably still maintain their point of view of 1856.

In Sweden every one at once became most anxious. Under the circumstances, King Gustaf V. made a personal application to the Emperor Nicolas II. He wrote a letter in which he entreated his powerful neighbour not to create fresh difficulties for the Swedish Crown—already sorely tried by the separation from Norway—by rousing the apprehensions and the anxiety of Swedish public opinion with regard to the Aland Islands. The Emperor sent a very correct letter in answer, announcing that he would not raise a question so delicate for the prestige of the King and for the tranquillity of Sweden.[1] This exchange of letters cleared up the situation for the moment, but it did not settle the matter formally and definitely. Uneasiness always existed in Sweden on the subject of the Aland Islands, and the war of course increased this uneasiness.

In the first place, Russia hastened to fortify the Archipelago. Sweden could easily understand that we could not do otherwise, given the supremacy of the German Fleet in the Baltic. But once the fortifications were erected should we be inclined to demolish them at the end of the war? And if it was Germany who won, would she not be only too glad to profit by an equivocal situation to establish a strong naval station in the Archipelago and thus command the Swedish coast so close to Stockholm? On the side of Russia, Sweden dreaded above all the installation in the Archipelago of a permanent military aviation base, whence *in less than*

[1] I never actually saw the letters, but their contents were related to me by some one whom I consider to be truthful.

half an hour aeroplanes could reach the Swedish capital. In general, the absence of international stipulations of a clear and precise nature on the subject of the Aland Islands was a source of inconvenience and real danger to Sweden, and the Royal Government thought it its duty to profit by the occurrence of the war to obtain from the two parties face to face, beginning with Russia, the definite neutralisation of the group of islands separated from Swedish territory by the Aland's Haf, which is deep but not more than thirty miles wide.

The question of the Aland Islands was of great use to the Swedish Activists, by giving them a plausible pretext for arousing national anxiety. This agitation lasted throughout the year 1915; it calmed down a little towards the end of that year, in view of the assurances that the Swedish Government received from us as to the absolutely temporary nature of the fortifications erected by us in the Archipelago. But at the first favourable opportunity this agitation would revive, and I considered that it was to our interest to meet this agitation by a formal and frank declaration, which would serve as a basis for the future régime of that part of the Baltic, and which would prevent all misunderstandings on this subject between Russia and Sweden.

CHAPTER XX

WAR SUFFERERS

In the preceding chapter I have endeavoured to describe briefly the work imposed on the Russian Legation in Stockholm by Swedish policy and the fluctuations that this policy underwent during the first eighteen months of the war. But besides this work, we had to place our best efforts and our attention at the service of our very numerous compatriots, who were either victims of the war, or brought to Sweden by the claims of politics, public duties, or business.

In Chapter XVIII. I wrote of the enormous number of Russians who fled from Germany when war was declared, and who arrived at the Legation in a state of panic and destitution, demanding urgent assistance. Our staff being quite inadequate for this task, we conceived the idea of enrolling a few willing people among the Russian refugees themselves, who would consent to stay a little longer in Stockholm and come to our assistance. A few of these people were kind enough to settle down for several months amongst us and to work unceasingly—and of course without any remuneration—at finding accommodation and generally helping our unfortunate compatriots. A committee was formed thus under the auspices of my wife and of my sister, who had just joined us from Paris. Some good-natured Swedes came spontaneously to help us; amongst these noble persons I should like to mention the Consul, M. Stromberg, and especially Dr. Lindberg, the voluntary consultant physician, who up to the end devoted himself to our poorer compatriots, and whose

medical skill caused him in the long run to be consulted by all the Russian residents in Stockholm.

Such was the origin of our committee of benevolence, which soon acquired a certain notoriety in Russia as well as abroad. All Russians passing through Stockholm were sure of a ready welcome in the premises of the committee situated opposite the station. The invalids were received in the hospitals of Stockholm, which means that they were admirably cared for. Travellers were looked after; they were told how to direct their correspondence to relations and friends left behind in Germany; pecuniary assistance was given to the poorest; many of our compatriots who did not know what to do, and who were fit for work, were employed and paid by the committee itself; others offered their services free, and worked thus for months. The clergy of the orthodox Church of Stockholm shared in our labours with real self-devotion. Many members of the Legation, and above all Baroness Rosen, wife of the Counsellor of the Legation, lent intelligent and untiring aid.

The gradual decrease in the stream of Russian refugees seemed as if it ought to diminish the labours of the committee. But another task claimed the self-sacrifice of the members; and this task, good-naturedly undertaken, ended by taking up the greater part of their time and efforts; it meant that the staff of the committee was perpetually being increased, demanding new workers, an entirely new office organisation, and, in view of increasing expenditure, fresh resources to meet this. This task was the correspondence with our prisoners of war in Germany and partly in Austria, and the sending of money and provisions to these poor wretches.

The Stockholm committee was the first Russian institution that concerned itself with our prisoners. We received a few letters from officers who were prisoners, we answered them, and thus our mutual intercourse started.

Gradually these relations developed. People wrote to us from Russia for news of those who were supposed to be prisoners, and sent us letters to send on to them, and then provisions and money. The accounts of Russian travellers who had actually seen our work had made this popular in Russia. It soon became necessary to increase the number of assistants to the committee, to enlarge its offices, to regulate its various duties, which were: the correspondence with the prisoners of war—officers and men; the transfer of the correspondence addressed to prisoners in Russia and *vice-versâ;* the purchase of presents—provisions and indispensable necessaries—for the prisoners and the dispatching of the same.

On all questions relative to the situation of our prisoners, civil and military, in enemy countries, we had perpetually to have recourse to the kind help of the Spanish Minister, because it was the Ambassadors of His Catholic Majesty who protected the interests of the Russians in Berlin and Vienna. The daily intercourse which ensued between me and the Duke of Amalfi will remain one of the happy memories of my long career. All Russians who had occasion to apply to him received a charming and cordial welcome; and anything that the Spanish Legation could do for them was promptly done by the Minister himself or by his amiable secretaries. It was just the same with any service that the Russian Legation asked of them; moreover, we were for ever troubling them by demands for information, entreaties for protection, claims in favour of our unfortunate compatriots.

Having served a long term at the Foreign Office in Madrid as general secretary, the Duke of Amalfi, historian, writer, and delightful poet, in accepting the post in Stockholm foresaw pleasant leisure moments which he would be able to devote to his literary pursuits. And now instead—hardly installed in his new post and surprised like all of us by the storm of war—he was drawn into the business of the protection

of Russians in enemy countries, and had, on our account, to resume a more strenuous daily task than the one he had just left in Madrid. Nevertheless, each request that my compatriots or I addressed to him was met by a kind and charming smile; entire records, admirably kept, often in the beautiful handwriting of the Duke himself, prettily tied up with "ribbons," were perused and quickly yielded the information required. The translator of the sonnets of Heredia into Spanish verse—a work which made the great literary reputation of the Duke of Amalfi—knew quite as well how to direct his office as he did his poet's pen; but above all he was capable of putting his whole heart into everything that he did for our unfortunate compatriots.

Two years later, when I was in Madrid, during my brief term of office in Spain, I noticed that this noble way of doing humanitarian acts was truly Spanish: under the orders of the King's private secretary—the very sympathetic Señor de Torres—there was an entire department, admirably worked, devoted to the protection of the prisoners of war, a work Spain had so generously taken over. And the incentive was given by His Majesty Alfonso XIII. himself, who took great interest in this humanitarian work and imbued it with a character of frankness, energy and Christian piety.

How many persons owe their life to the King's intercession, how many thousands and hundreds of thousands of unfortunate people owe to him the gradual amelioration of their miserable condition! When the impartial history of the terrible war comes to light the friends of humanity will be able to rest their eyes, wearied by the sight of so much hatred and so much unnecessary cruelty, on the figures of King Alfonso XIII., of Prince Charles of Sweden and all those who were their assistants and agents in their great work of charity and generous protection.

I must be allowed to mention, side by side with these princely philanthropists, the characteristic figure of one of the representatives of the eminently democratic

organisation of the American Y.M.C.A., an organisation which from the beginning did so much moral and material good. One day, in Stockholm, I was called on by the principal representative of the Rockfeller organisation, connected to the Y.M.C.A.—the Reverend Clinton Harte. He had just come from Germany, where he had had access to the prisoners' camps, and was on his way to Russia to try and obtain the same favour. I gave him the letters of recommendation he asked for, and later on I heard that he had made the best impression in St. Petersburg. Mr. Clinton Harte afterwards went twice from Russia to Germany and from Germany to Russia, and in both countries he succeeded in alleviating the lot of the prisoners of war. Each time that I questioned him as to the real condition of our men in Germany the worthy philanthropist avoided telling me of the cruelties and injustices committed against those prisoners; and as one day I expressed my surprise at this reticence, he replied quite frankly that he had made it a rule not to relate the bad and disagreeable things he had seen, but on the contrary to commend the good sides of the régime which the prisoners of war were under in each of the two countries. "In this way one avoids *reprisals*—which are the worst things that can happen—and one excites a spirit of emulation towards right and justice, an emulation which ends by making the lot of the wretched prisoners a little less hard." On reflection, I think Mr. Harte was right.

During the years that have since elapsed Germany has been called to account by the entire Press and the whole public opinion of the allied countries for the treatment inflicted by her on the prisoners of war. I consider that it would be quite futile to add anything to what has been said and written on the subject. Moreover, a particularly painful and depressing feeling would stop me at the present time. The Russian soldiers, prisoners in Germany and victims to the horrible treatment they complain of, have, it appears, forgotten all they suffered.

A little improvement in the régime to which they were subjected, a few months of clever propaganda corroborated by the news that arrived of Russia and the Russian Army in a state of dissolution, sufficed to make these same men accept from those they had hitherto regarded as their tormentors the good news of the abrogation of all discipline, of the integral sharing of all the goods of this world, of the Bolshevist paradise which appealed to their native heedlessness and their vacillating minds. Amongst these people one heard of astounding fraternisations, of inconceivable confusion of ideas; one did not hear of any men coming out of these German concentration camps with the wish to place themselves at the disposal of their unfortunate country, or at that of the Allies who had just opened the doors of their prisons.

The Russian people being so far above base sentiments of indignation and reprisal, in whose name shall I draw up accusations and quote at the tribunal of history the abettors of the inhuman treatment inflicted on our prisoners?

Speaking generally and as far as I can judge by sifting the evidence we received in Stockholm, this treatment was truly detestable during the first year of the war. The conviction disseminated among the German people that the war was due to an attack by the Allies, the ravages and the excesses committed by our troops in some areas in East Prussia,[1] the opinion prevailing in the German High Command that the war must be ferocious in order to be short—all this influenced the fate of the prisoners of war. Moreover, the very number of these prisoners, larger than any one could have foreseen, made their position more appalling; herded for the

[1] Whereas the ravages committed by the German armies were systematic and due to *orders* issued from high places, those committed by the Russian troops were sporadic and due to *disorder* tolerated in such and such a section of those troops. Thus the Guard which entered East Prussia first with Rennenkampff behaved with exemplary discipline. Most of the excesses were committed by the troops of the reserve, those very ones who later on surrendered in a body.

first months in icy cold sheds, vilely fed, they died by tens of thousands of spotted typhus, of tuberculosis, scurvy, or else became invalids for life. From the second year there was an improvement in their lot, an improvement partly due to the action and censure of the neutrals, partly to the spirit of organisation inherent in Germany. Spacious sheds were built, and they were light and airy, if not warm. Cleanliness reigned there. But penury and the bad quality of the food continued to play havoc among the prisoners, and the German iron discipline always bore the same hostile and unfair character, and tried to degrade the poor wretches subjected to it. The question of the treatment of the prisoners caused some conferences to be held in Stockholm under the auspices of the Swedish Red Cross between representatives of the Russian, German, Austrian and Hungarian Red Cross Societies. Prince Charles of Sweden presided. Both sides desired to effect an improvement in the lot of the prisoners; the Russian delegates—moderate bureaucrats—did not refuse their consent to the possible amelioration and especially the regulation of the treatment of enemy prisoners in Russia; on the German side Prince Max of Baden, on the Hungarian side Count Apponyi, and on the Austrian side Slatin-Pasha, all displayed undoubted good will at the conference. A whole code of rules and humanitarian measures was agreed on and drawn up.[1] Many of these measures were carried out there, where they were not opposed by the inflexible cruelty of the German military command or the incurable disorder of Russian administration.

From the autumn of 1915 the prisoners' camps were visited first by the neutral Red Cross delegates, then by

[1] A special agency for intercourse with the prisoners of war was established in Sweden. The Swedish Red Cross centralised this work. The indefatigable humanitarian activities of Prince Charles of Sweden were exercised for the welfare of millions of unfortunate men. The Prince had as his principal helper M. Diedring, whose untiring work was beyond all praise.

detachments of ladies who were admitted into enemy countries and allowed to inspect the cells and the hospitals of the prisoners of war—except the worst ones of course. There were on the German side some infernal regions which were never opened to Virgil or to Dante, still less to Beatrice. These were the reprisals camps, and especially the "kommandos" of "voluntary" workmen, that is to say, the camps of prisoners working under the stick of German corporals at military works at the front, often under the fire of their compatriots and allies. These regions of unutterable misery and of gnashing of teeth, which constituted a flagrant infringement of the elementary precepts of the Geneva Convention, were never opened to the charitable curiosity of the Russian sisters.

We remember with pleasure the times when these detachments of ladies of the Russian Red Cross passed through Stockholm on their way to and from Germany and Austria. Their energy was beyond all praise; they were very guarded and cautious in their accounts, and yet one perceived behind all they said the deep impression made on them by all they had seen and the boundless compassion they felt for the poor officers, the unfortunate Russian *soldatiks* (the little soldiers) that they had just visited, and whose sufferings they saw, and still more guessed at. By comparing their accounts, one gathered that the conditions of Russian prisoners in Austria and Hungary were infinitely preferable to those of our prisoners in Germany.

Far less guarded and moderate was the conversation of the sisters and of the medical staff of the detachments of the Russian Red Cross who had been captured in Germany and repatriated by virtue of the Geneva Convention, but only after whole months of strenuous negotiations. These doctors and sisters were very outspoken when they told of all they had undergone and seen during their enforced stay in Germany. For the love of humanity one must hope that their accounts were exaggerated.

The summer of 1915 saw the beginning of a charitable work which helped to alleviate the most terrible suffering imaginable—that of the seriously wounded and incurables among the prisoners. On the initiative of the Holy See—an initiative which will be eternally blessed by thousands—what was commonly called "the exchange of the seriously wounded" was started.

Between Russia and the Central Empires the exchange was to be effected through Sweden. The Swedish Red Cross and its president, Prince Charles, set to work to organise the service of the transfer of the seriously wounded: by sea between the Pomeranian port Sassnitz and the Swedish port Trelleborg (near Malmö), and by the Swedish railway between Trelleborg and the Finnish frontier at Haparanda—Tornea. Swedish hospital ships and ambulance trains were fitted up with all possible comforts. A sympathetic, devoted and well-trained staff of doctors, sisters and nurses was attached to these ships and trains which conveyed the seriously wounded Russians from the south to the north, and the seriously wounded Germans and Austrians in the opposite direction. On the railway journey fairly long halts were made at the big junctions, and then meals were served to the invalids. It was then that the population of the neighbourhood came—especially at first—to greet the wounded, to bring them flowers and show them little kindnesses; and I must mention particularly that in this way, as moreover in everything else, no distinction was made between German and Russian invalids.

The members of the Swedish Red Cross who had taken part in this organisation, and first and foremost Prince Charles himself and Princess Ingeborg, came several times to visit the ambulance trains on their way through Sweden, and brought small gifts, and spoke words of consolation and hope to the wounded. The Crown Prince and his wife also made this charitable pilgrimage; they visited the Russian ambulance-train in my presence, and I remember the Crown Princess

saying to me: "Do tell these poor men that I am a cousin of the King of England." I translated this into Russian: "This lady is the cousin of the English Tsar, our ally!" And every one was delighted!

Queen Victoria also came, of course, to see the wounded. I do not know all that Her Majesty did for the Germans, but I know that she was full of pity and kindness for the poor Russian wounded, and that she entered into the most minute details as to the fitting-up of the train and the state of health and mind of those in it.

The Stockholm committee of benevolence took an active part in visiting our unhappy compatriots. My wife especially devoted herself to this. She went twice a week to one of the big stations nearest to Stockholm, where the train stopped for three or four hours; whenever the train service allowed of it, she used to accompany them to the next stopping-place. The almoner of our church, some members of the Legation and of the committee, sometimes some foreign colleagues or Swedish ladies, went with her on these pilgrimages. They took cigarettes, delicacies and fruit to the wounded, but above all they gave them their first sight of Russian faces after endless months of captivity.

Our wounded never ceased praising the care bestowed on them by the Swedish sanitary staff. "From the moment that we were put on the Swedish boat, we felt as if we had reached the Kingdom of Heaven," these poor men kept on saying. And one could see that a few hours had sufficed to establish a current of sympathy between the Swedish staff and the poor men they tended with so much kindness.

And yet nothing could equal the joy of these poor men when, at the station of Hallsberg or Krylbo, they saw my wife—in her sister's uniform—arriving with the other Russians. . . . "Little sister, little sister (*sestritza*), come into our carriage! Little sister, sit down here near me! Do you think I shall ever reach Russia? Do you think I shall see my mother once more?" These questions were often asked by poor wretches who were

nothing but skin and bone and who looked like dying men of sixty, whereas, in reality they were young men of from twenty to twenty-five years of age! And sometimes two or three hours later my wife closed the eyes of these same poor men who, as death cast its shadow over them, became gradually calmer and resigned to never seeing their own villages and their families again, and who died quietly and without a murmur, as dies the Russian man of the people. For, of the 200 or 250 wounded that each train carried, there were always some that died during the long journey in spite of all the care bestowed on them.

One saw all kinds of awful physical suffering in these moving hospitals: blind men and madmen (a great number of madmen!), tubercular and maimed men, all had the same wan and pinched look, and were scantily clothed in worn-out garments.[1] Emaciated by hunger (the horrible hunger of German prisons!) and suffering, by cold and vile treatment, they had most often had their limbs amputated, not in consequence of wounds received on the battlefield, but on account of frost-bite or of some disease contracted in the dog-holes of the concentration camps.

And all these poor wretches (except the madmen)—the blind, the tubercular and the maimed—asked one and the same question, which seemed to cause them real anguish: "Is it true that we are to make peace with Germany, as we have been told? We will not believe it. We will go on to the end, even if all our comrades still in captivity must perish miserably. The Germans are at the end of their resources; they often confessed as much to us. A few more months of effort and the enemy will be beaten!"

And it was wonderful to see the relief of all these poor men when I replied peremptorily: "We shall not make peace, we shall go on to the end; victory is already in sight!"

[1] They were generally clothed in old Belgian uniforms, taken by the Germans from the depôts of the heroic country they had invaded.

It was not once but a hundred times that my wife, my colleagues, and I heard such questions and such remarks from the lips of these simple men, and they revived our own courage and dispelled our own doubts. How can one reconcile this with the shameful phenomena which have since appeared and which drew from me—a few pages back—expressions of bitter irony? Is it really the same people; that which spoke through the lips of the martyred wretches in the ambulance train, and that which now shamelessly displays the basest selfishness and fraternises obviously with its executioners and bitterest foes?

Oh! strange and disconcerting people that no one has ever known well—not even those born of your flesh and blood! People amongst whom gentleness is allied to the most abject cruelty, incurable distrust to the most vapid simplicity, a boundless spirit of sacrifice to the most violent covetousness! People who, during the course of six centuries of suffering and unremitting toil, were able to erect the edifice of a mighty Empire, and who destroyed this Empire in six months, as a child gleefully shatters a complicated and precious toy with a hammer! Never has the tragic antithesis of *odi et amo* struck me so forcibly as when I conjure up your image on the ruins of what was once my country!

What is the fate reserved for you? Will you perish through disintegration, after having been subjected to the most degrading influences, the vilest slavery? Or, having come back to your senses and become weary of the increasing disorder, will you return to the beaten track of your former existence, colourless and passive, and will you meet without too many curses the huge bill for your attack of madness, replacing your neck under the yoke which was formerly your safeguard against others and against yourself? Or again, suddenly seized with passionate repentance, and taking your *risorgimento* in hand on your own initiative, will you be capable of giving birth to new men and a fresh system, will you

reconstruct a new Russia, mighty, glorious and respected, before all the nations of the world?

I shall not live long enough to see the future God has in store for you. Too many things have gone for ever, too many vanished loved ones are calling to me, for me even to wish to await the final verdict on events that are now being evolved. But something tells me that the awful external aspect of my country is but temporary darkness, but a passing nightmare. It is impossible for me to believe that sacrifices such as those made during this war by Russia, that the brilliant courage and heroic resignation of millions of her sons who faced death on the battlefields, that the martyrdom of those poor men of the people that I described just now—that all that should be lost and obliterated from the pages of history. These dead, these heroes, these martyrs, are the seed sown which must germinate, and which will germinate, so that one day there shall be a glorious harvest in the fields of Russia, and so that peace shall reign in town and village, in the conscience of the people, and in the hearts of men!

The officers who passed through in the ambulance trains appeared to us, generally speaking, to be less interesting than the men. Having undergone great suffering, humiliated by captivity and bad treatment, shy by nature, they were very reserved, and besides appeared to be much worried by their piteous appearance and shabby clothes, by the very fact of having been defeated and made prisoner. There were, however, some exceptions. We were often questioned, and with impatient curiosity, about the events of the war, about the real state of affairs in Russia and among the Allies, a state of affairs which the German gaolers took pains to describe to our officers as being absolutely compromised. Some of these officers owed their repatriation to deeds denoting iron energy, to subterfuges placing a strain on all their faculties for months at a time. Others showed proof of supreme contempt for their condition as invalids and in

return of palpitating interest in the cause that they had defended. I still remember a tall, good-looking young man, with an aquiline nose and an energetic expression. He was wounded and picked up for dead by the Hungarians at the *Koziuvka*, that corner of the Carpathians where more than 50,000 Russians covered the ground after repeated attacks. He was admirably nursed in a Budapest hospital, where ladies bearing the highest names of the Hungarian aristocracy took great care of him—he admitted this with sincere gratitude. Finally, having had one arm amputated, the other arm and both legs damaged and left stiff, and both eyes almost irretrievably injured, he was able to be repatriated as "seriously wounded," which he certainly was! I can see him still, just before the train left, standing on the step of the carriage, and drawing himself up with undefeated energy. "Legs, arms, all that is nothing; the state of my eyes worries me, but perhaps I shall be able to see a little with one. In any case I shall be able to do something: I shall ask to be allowed to go into the schools for young officers; I could teach them heaps of useful things about actual war and fighting; but above all I should tell them how necessary it is for them to be esteemed by their men, how one must be ready to sacrifice oneself if need be, and how happy and proud one can feel at having done one's whole duty!" "It's an epic! a perfect epic!" exclaimed a foreign colleague who was with me, and for whom I was translating the words of my compatriot. Again we bowed very low to him, although he could not see us doing so.

His name was Captain Sergueieff, of the Siberian Tirailleurs.

But let us leave the ambulance trains to continue their journey and let us turn our attention to other compatriots who were continually passing through Sweden and often stopped in Stockholm.

Very few days after we had seen the heroic Captain Sergueieff at the Krylbo Station, I was surprised by a

visit from Mademoiselle Marie Vassiltchikoff—the famous *Macha*—whom I mentioned incidentally in Chapter V.

"What fair wind has brought you, and how have you managed to leave the charming but enemy country?" I asked her, alluding to the delightful environs of Semmering where, lodged in a pretty châlet between the villa of the Szecenyis and the castle of the Lichtensteins, my compatriot led a wholesome and charming life, made up of long walks on the mountain, harmless gossip and luxurious tea parties.

"Oh! it's a long story!" replied Mademoiselle Vassiltchikoff. "I was allowed to leave, but on parole; I am to go back *there*. Also, I am in a great hurry to start; I shall start to-morrow. And I have come to beg you, my dear Minister, to give me a permit, or else to affix your seals to one of my handbags so that I can get it through the custom-house at Tornea easily." "Dear me! dear me!" thought I, "and what is the meaning of this trip on parole; and what is this little bag that must be safeguarded from indiscreet eyes? Is it possible that our mutual good friends in Vienna wish to employ the plump Macha as the dove out of the ark? I should have thought they would have had more sense!" Aloud I said: "And is it long since you left Vienna? Did you see Prince Lichtenstein before you left?"

"Yes. . . . No." . . . the face of the speaker became crimson and betrayed intense embarrassment. "You see, I left Austria four months ago." And then with the determined expression of some one who is going to jump into the water, she let herself go: "I have been in Germany all this time; I have heard and seen many interesting things; I was shown over the Russian prisoners' camps; I had several talks with the Grand-Duke of Hesse. . . . You understand that I must make haste. One thing only worries me: shall I be allowed to go back, do you think? For I have given my word that I will go back."

"But this is quite a case of Regulus of ever blessed

memory! Come, come! all this is most interesting. I absolutely must hear more about it." Upon which I made my amiable visitor promise to come and dine and spend the evening with us. Moreover, I already saw daylight in this affair: it was in Berlin, and not in Vienna, that the idea arose of sending Macha Vassiltchikoff to St. Petersburg to her august patroness; she certainly must have with her letters written to the Empress Alexandra by her brother the Grand-Duke of Hesse and by her sister Princess Henry of Prussia. Hence the anxiety about the little bag.

At eight o'clock Macha Vassiltchikoff arrived. Besides her, we had one or two intimate friends to dinner, amongst others M. Alexander Volkoff, the famous botanist expert and painter[1] in water-colours, and at the present time owner of a fine estate in Russia, but above all and always a brilliant and untiring talker, and one of the cleverest men that I have ever met. The conversation very soon and most naturally turned on the events and the situation of the day. We talked about the prisoners of war and of their sufferings in Germany. "I do not know what is being *said*," exclaimed Mademoiselle Vassiltchikoff sharply, "but I know what I have *seen* with my own eyes. I was shown a concentration camp near Berlin" (giving the name); "everything there was admirable: spacious, airy sheds, well-dressed men who looked perfectly happy; I was taken into the bakehouse; I saw a huge room full of loaves; I tasted one, it was quite delicious!" . . . Mademoiselle Vassiltchikoff was not quite so incorrect as we thought at the time; we discovered later that there was a famous model prisoners' camp in Brandenburg (I have forgotten the name), which was shown to distinguished neutrals and to ingenuous persons; the number of prisoners was limited; they were very well lodged, fairly well but sometimes insufficiently fed; only the discipline was as hard and sometimes as cruel as in the other camps. The outburst of our charming guest on the subject of the

[1] Under the pseudonym of Russoff.

prisoners of war raised vehement protests and a general discussion on all questions relative to the war. We heard Macha Vassiltchikoff—as I expected—take up the well-known German arguments on the origin of the war, and inveigh against crafty Albion; this raised a storm of protest, and the conversation had nearly turned into that useless hubbub where every one talks at once and no one listens, when old M. Volkoff began to speak: by his concise and scientific reasoning he proved to his opponent the absolute inanity of the German thesis, and the intellectual, moral and even material superiority of England over Germany; and he knew both races and both countries thoroughly; he took great care not to disparage the Germans and their enormous resources; but the German cause appeared clearly to the listeners as perverted from the outset and lost in advance. At the end of this long magisterial peroration there was nothing left of Macha Vassiltchikoff or of her arguments. Before taking leave of her, I warned her that the Legation in war-time refrained from issuing permits for the Russian Custom House, and were still less inclined to affix their seals to special bags; then looking straight into her eyes, I said: "Mademoiselle *Vassiltchikoff*" (I emphasised the name—one of the very good and ancient ones of the Russian nobility which had been borne in the person of Macha's nearest relations by eminently respectable people specially known for their patriotism and their adherence to the Slavophile school), "listen to a friend's advice: you have not been in Russia for some time; I fear that you do not realise the enormous change the war has wrought in the dispositions of everybody. On arriving in St. Petersburg try to look and listen carefully before indulging in talk such as we have just heard, and above all before attempting to take any steps which would be completely at variance with the name you bear." The plump Macha burst forth into protestations of her perfect patriotism, and swore that she was not being sent on any mission. All the same we heard that a few days after her arrival in St.

Petersburg the police had raided her house and seized her papers, on which she was expelled from the capital and sent to one of the estates of some relations of hers. Soon after I received from the Foreign Office a large parcel marked "very confidential," which I was told to dispatch, through my Spanish colleague, to the Spanish Ambassador in Berlin. It contained the letters *still sealed* that Macha Vassiltchikoff had brought from Germany addressed to the Empress and to the Emperor and which were being sent back to the senders. This ridiculous incident, however, sufficed—just like the incident of Protopopoff-Warburg, which I shall relate in its proper place—to wake up the Russian public and to cause the rumours about the pro-German intrigues, in which the Empress Alexandra was involved, to be believed.

The official personages who passed through Sweden and stopped in Stockholm were naturally the object of the special attentions of the Legation and its members. In the first place, there were the numerous soldiers (engineers, artillery officers, etc.) who were going to the western front and to America, or returning thence. The principal object of their journey was arms and ammunition orders. Professor Gardner also came twice, and I was much pleased and interested to make his acquaintance; he was a distinguished chemist, sent on a very special and important mission. It was shortly after the horrible surprise of the poison-gas, used for the first time by the Germans on the French front. Since then they had used it constantly on the Russian front. Professor Gardner was sent to the west to find out what our allies had done in order to fight the Germans henceforth with the same weapon. He told us, amongst other things, that for a long time the Emperor Nicolas II. could not be persuaded to consent to the adoption of this horrible method; but the Russian soldiers began to complain: "the Germans suffocate us like rats in our trenches, and our chiefs dare not pay

them out in the same way!" It was only these complaints and the increasing anger of the troops that finally induced the Emperor to yield.

In 1916 I was much pleased to see M. Peter Struve the head of the service of economic studies connected with the war. We reminded each other of the days when I held the post of First Secretary in Stuttgart, and he, Struve, eminent economist and then political exile for *reasons of opinion* (there were some such!), had come to settle in the same town in order to edit a Russian "revolutionary" organ, the *Osvobojdenie*, which my chief (the lamented Prince Gregory Cantacuzene) and I used to read with enormous interest and intense pleasure. It was the very free enunciation of sincere and serious opinions on what was going on at the time in Russia. The first numbers were of palpitating interest, for Struve had brought back with him some unpublished statements, some valuable matter which the bureaucracy of the day was concealing most carefully. Whole bales of the "subversive" gazette then got into Russia and there was no bureaucrat who had not got a number on his table. Several genuinely profited by it; others delighted in reading about the blunders and "indelicacies" therein disclosed, of which the authors were comrades of the "English Club," or of such and such another "commission." Later on the *Osvobojdenie* deteriorated, for really interesting matter became scarce as its director lost touch with Russian life.

From the outbreak of the war, M. Struve did a patriotic act by spontaneously offering his services in the sphere familiar to him, that is to say in economic affairs. I was much pleased to see the genial Professor again; the information gathered by the commission over which he presided was regularly communicated to the Legation; there was some intensely interesting matter, which threw a clear light on the economic situation of our adversaries; there were no preconceived opinions, no exaggeration. The conversation of

M. Struve was quite as interesting and useful as the perusal of his reports.

Another political refugee passed through Stockholm quite at the beginning of the war. This was the celebrated Burtzeff, the counter-spy of the Revolution. He was sufficiently ingenuous to return to Russia, and offer his services to the allied cause. He was promptly locked up. It was obvious that the men who had supreme power in the administration of Russia at that moment could not allow a man to be at large whose doings were particularly unpleasant to them and who knew so much; one can hardly blame them. But all the same it would have been more dignified and more honest to close the frontier to Burtzeff or to send him abroad, than to respond to his fine act and his honest proposals by putting him in prison.

Throughout the war Stockholm was the meeting-place of a considerable number of Poles. The Scandinavian countries offered the only ground where Russian Poles could meet their kin of Austria and Prussia, and Stockholm was the nearest place to Russia and also the one for which the Germans were the most willing to issue permits. Hence the hotels of the Swedish capital received many Poles, mostly landed proprietors of noble birth.

I had never associated much with Polish society. This afforded me an opportunity, by which I willingly profited, of getting to know it better, all the more because the manifesto of the Grand-Duke Commander-in-Chief made our mutual relations far easier and more natural. My memories of these relations are essentially pleasant ones. I became better acquainted with people amongst whom the love of their country—the religion of their country, I ought to say—surpassed all other sentiment, and served as fountain-head to their work, their mentality, their sentimental existence even. The very natural result of this state of mind was a marked development of the political sense, and I would even say

of the practical sense, for during the last fifty years, Polish society made enormous strides in the economic and financial sphere. I had frequently noticed and known this essentially political mentality among the Balkan nations, but there, owing to the absence of other intellectual interests, one ended by becoming tired of eternal politics. Here the national tendency was allied to a refined education and to a mind open to the most subtle speculative conceptions, the whole supported by the old ground-work of learning and classical literature which up to now has been one of the most powerful elements of solidarisation and of mutual comprehension between people of different nations and different faiths.

I shall always remember my very pleasant relations with some eminently sympathetic and clever persons, such as M. Dobiecki, Count Sobanski, the two brothers Wielopolski, M. Skirmunt and many others, including also some women of very great charm and lively intelligence. Could it really be possible that through a violent craze for equality the flower of Polish aristocracy should entirely disappear and have no more influence on the future development of the beautiful resuscitated country? I will not believe it, and I quote Benjamin Constant's saying, "l'esprit surnage."

Some *Lithuanian* politicians also came to Stockholm, and they called on me.

I have always felt interested in this nationality, whose history is so closely and so strangely interwoven with the history of its two neighbours, Russia and Poland. A curious language, akin to Sanskrit, a still more curious historic destiny!

Up to the beginning of the fourteenth century the nation lives in a savage and curiously druidical state in the huge virgin forests which afford shelter to the Lithuanian and with him to the "aurochs." Then suddenly warlike enterprises begin: the antique race is collected together under the rule of one king; the neighbouring Russian principalities—which formerly made

the laws for these forest-dwellers, who were lacking in resources and arms—are conquered one after the other,[1] and the kings of Lithuania in a few decades found a State which extends from the Baltic to the banks of the Dniester. At once a great preponderance of the Russian language and civilisation, of the Orthodox faith even, becomes apparent in Lithuania, who in spite of that—or rather on account of it—is in a perpetual state of war with Moscow. This intermittent conflict, which lasts for more than a hundred years, assumes the character of an intestine war—that between Eastern Russia, the Russia of Moscow, deeply tinged with Tartar influence and the Byzantine autocratic ideal, and Western Russia, in which still lives the memory of the independence of the towns, and of princely raids, and where elements of a new European civilisation are being introduced. It is a fine and glorious time for the kings of Lithuania (still heathens), who at last stop the conquests of the Teutons, treacherously installed in Prussia, and who on the famous day of Tannenwald defeat the knights in armour by bringing against them, besides the Lithuanians and the Polish allies, a whole Russian army recruited even from within the old walls of Smolensk.[2] Then a great change occurs in the fate of Lithuania. Jagellon, her King, espouses Queen Hedwig, and with her Poland also and the Roman Catholic Faith. A union becoming closer and closer is formed between Cracow and Vilna. Vilna gradually gives the precedence to the capital of Poland, whereas Kieff, jealous at taking the third place, offended in her religious faith, sulks at first at the new state of affairs, then champs her bit and finally seeks to detach herself from the "Republic of the magnates," and ends by uniting herself, with the whole of Little Russia, to the great Russian Empire of the North, foreshadowing thereby the disaggregation of Poland.

Meanwhile there is less and less mention of the

[1] It is true that the whole of Southern and Western Russia had just been completely ravaged by the Mongolians.

[2] Even the Smolensk militia gained the honours of the day.

Lithuanian *people*, of the Lithuanian language. The Grand-Duchy of this name still exists, of course, and its colours and its arms still proudly wave next to the Polish White Eagle; but if the integral form has been preserved, the contents have changed. All the nobility of the country has been Polonised; only in the villages does one still hear the old language which has remained neglected. Mickiewicz, the greatest poet of Lithuania, has never written one verse in Lithuanian.

Yet the village people have undeniable virtues; good, honest, hard-working, devoted almost to fanaticism to their faith—the Roman Catholic—they have managed to progress during the last century by small but sure steps along the path of their national resurrection. Prussian authority, which holds a purely Lithuanian fraction of the country, is hurriedly trying to denationalise and colonise it, and is partially successful; Russian authority, which presides over the destinies of the rest of the Lithuanian population, does nothing either for or against this national movement; continuing to look on the Lithuanians as Poles, it embitters them from time to time by vexatious measures with regard to what this people hold most dear—their churches and their creed. In the 'eighties there was even a disgraceful incident of the kind, which ended in bloodshed; history will for ever record the name of the spot: the village of Krozé, and the names of the authors of the crime: Governor-General Orjevski (son of a Polish renegade) and Governor Klingenberg (of German extraction). But this sad incident roused the indignation of all right-minded and honest Russians and drew the attention of Russian public opinion and even of the Government to the Lithuanians. Stolypin, who knew the Lithuanian population thoroughly—he had settled down on a large estate bought by his parents in the province of Kovno—eventually protected these good and honest peasants whom he had learnt to love and esteem. Moreover, at this period, the national awakening of the Lithuanians had already made notable progress. Their constant

emigration to America had done much in this respect. At the present time more than a million Lithuanians inhabit the United States without losing any of the links with their native country; 100,000 reside in Chicago alone, and they have their schools, their churches, their newspapers, and, as far as in them lies, they help and support their compatriots who have remained on the banks of the large national river—the Niemen.

One day one of the most noted Lithuanian deputies to the Duma, M. Itchas, arrived in Stockholm, accompanied by a Baron Schilingas. These gentlemen were going to the Allies in order to interest them in the fate of their nationality; Itchas, an intelligent and open-minded man, did not in any way conceal from me the objects that his compatriots had in view: the reunion of the part of East Prussia still inhabited by Lithuanians to the rest of the country; and a wide autonomy of the whole, in union with the Russian Empire—an academic, administrative and judicial autonomy—and of course absolute religious freedom.

I could not but sympathise with this programme. The geographical situation of Lithuania links her undeniably to the rest of the Empire. But the true grandeur of the latter would consist precisely, according to me, in guaranteeing the autonomous development of the adjacent small nationalities, drawing them to her by gentleness and interest, and in return lending them the protection of her great power.

These conversations led to a more intimate friendship and sincere mutual sympathy between M. Itchas and me. He passed through Stockholm again on his way to America, and then came back, bringing with him a young wife, a Lithuanian of Chicago, pretty, intelligent, and speaking, besides English, her old native tongue. The provisional Government placed Itchas at the head of the Russian Red Cross. I have completely lost sight of him since the "Dictatorship" of Kerensky and the infamous triumph of the Bolsheviks. Has he returned to Lithuania? Is he taking part in the famous *Taryba*, or

has this national assembly, formed by the Germans with the help of the most Radical elements in the country, rejected the workers of the first hour, the "old-world" patriots? If M. Itchas ever sees these lines, I beg him to consider them a very natural token of my esteem and of my sympathy.

It was not only politics that brought my compatriots to Stockholm. As the war went on and St. Petersburg became more and more gloomy, Sweden received many charming society people whose sole object in coming was to have a change of surroundings and ideas, in fact *to go abroad*, a habit which had become too deeply rooted in Russian society to be permanently dispensed with. These people, intelligent and agreeable for the most part, brought with them a real St. Petersburg atmosphere, a whole collection of gossip and stories, and rumours true and false. Association with them caused us to feel far nearer to Russia in Stockholm than we should ordinarily have done. As other travellers, belonging to other worlds and often very interesting, came amongst us, I can truly say that at no other post could one so well keep one's finger on the pulse of Russia as in Stockholm. Towards 1916, this pulse began to denote high fever.

The picture of "Russia transported to Sweden" would be incomplete if I left out another element—far less sympathetic—that of the numerous traffickers and adventurers that the war brought from the four corners of Russia—more especially from one of her corners—into the Swedish capital. The gradual rise in price of all commodities and the great scarcity of some of them induced all people having any aptitude for trade to begin to buy and sell. Musicians bought leather and candles, newspaper correspondents sold medicines and eggs, dentists and hairdressers specialised in coffee and knitting wool. As this buying and selling sometimes bordered on contraband, unpleasant stories came to light from time to time, generally followed by the

expulsion of the delinquents. Yet among this crowd of traffickers there were some men who possessed money and were accustomed to trade. These people quickly amassed considerable fortunes without indulging in illegal practices. Later on one heard of their doing a great deal of good for their compatriots who came to take refuge in Sweden after the Revolution.

Beside these "commercial amateurs," and often mingling with them, there were other groups of elegant gentlemen who hardly ever left the lounges and the restaurants of the smart hotels, tossing down bottles of champagne and proclaiming loudly that they were commissioners of the Russian Government for the purchasing or ordering of such and such goods. But it hardly required a practised eye to discover in them the agents of our famous State Police, become secret-service and counter-spy agents. But as these gentlemen always ended by compromising themselves or by being guilty of some knavish trick or other—if they did not begin that way—they were sooner or later escorted by the Swedish police to the frontier of Finland. In two or three cases —at the entreaty of those who were interested in them and on the recommendation of people I knew—I thought it my duty to intercede with the Swedish Government and to solicit the repeal of the sentence of expulsion. But each time it was proved to me by evidence that the individual in question was either a rogue or a thief. So that in the end I did not interfere any more in these cases.

The German spies that swarmed in Sweden were guilty of fewer personal "indelicacies." But they infested the hotels, enticing young Swedes into doubtful callings; opening what were in effect recruiting offices in the north into which Finns were lured, who were afterwards sent to Germany to form whole battalions; arranging expeditions the object of which was to cut such and such a means of communication in Finland. And they did all this under the benevolent eye of subordinate Swedish officials—inaccessible to bribery, but permeated with German sympathies!

All this atmosphere of trafficking, adventure, contraband and spying ended by influencing the morality of the Swedish people, so high before the war. Stealing and swindling, which was heard of so rarely before, began to increase in an alarming manner at the time when I left Sweden. And I have heard it said that it has increased still more since. Let us hope, for the good of the Scandinavian countries and of their splendid population, that the conclusion of the war and the departure of undesirable foreign elements will put an end to this regrettable contamination.

CHAPTER XXI

A VISIT TO PETROGRAD

From the beginning of 1916, everything led me to believe that we should not get through the spring without fresh efforts by the Swedish Activists. The object would be the same one as before; that of creating discord between Sweden and the Powers of the Entente, and thus irrevocably to throw her into the arms of Germany; the pretexts for this campaign would be furnished (1) by the questions relative to the revictualling of Sweden, (2) and chiefly, by the question of the Aland Islands. I foresaw that this time all that was possible would be done by Germany and her Swedish friends and clients; hence, we should have to be careful and make it our business to support the sensible portion of the Government and of the Swedish public by just concessions. I felt that I should overcome these difficulties more easily by getting into direct and personal touch with St. Petersburg, and I therefore begged permission to go there to discuss the present situation and various questions in connection with Sweden at the Foreign Office and the War Office. In answer, I was told that they would be glad to see me; only they begged me to give private affairs as the reason for my journey to every one in Stockholm. This was not difficult: my second son was about to get his commission and to leave Tsarskoe-Selo soon after to join his regiment at the front; thus, naturally I was going to bid him farewell.

I arrived in St. Petersburg (already re-named "Petrograd") in the evening of the 12th February, after a somewhat tiring journey of seventy-two hours across

Sweden and Finland. I remember, as if it were yesterday, my arrival at the dark and gloomy Finland station, and the joy that filled my heart suddenly when I saw my two sons coming to meet me, both of them tall, young, charming, the younger one in his smart uniform of the 4th Chasseurs of the Guard. Two years and a half later these two splendid boys only existed in "the silent cemetery of our memory.[1] . . . The snow which had fallen heavily the day before my arrival, covered the ill-lighted town as with a shroud, muffling all sounds. *Petrograd*, in contrast to the brilliant and lively St. Petersburg that I had left in March, 1914, seemed gloomy and sad; it is true that it was the first time that I had come from the capital of a neutral country as yet almost untouched by the war, into that of a belligerent country. Paris made the same impression on me fifteen months later.

The next morning I went to see M. Sazonoff. When we had reviewed all the questions in connection with my post in Sweden—transit, exports, exchange of commodities, and finally the question of the day, the Aland Islands—I asked the Minister if he thought it advisable for me to go and see the Minister for War and the Head of the General Staff. "Most certainly," replied Sazonoff; "go first to General Polivanoff, he is a most intelligent and distinguished man with whom I am on excellent terms." The Minister went to the telephone, and after a little friendly conversation with the Minister for War, apprised him of my arrival. The General made an appointment with me for the next morning. The Emperor was to arrive in two days' time from General Headquarters, and M. Sazonoff promised to solicit an audience of His Majesty for me.

[1] My younger son, Serge Nekludoff, fell in Volhynia in July, 1916. My eldest son, Peter Nekludoff, secretary (from May, 1916) to the Embassy in Rome, died in Paris, in September, 1918, of Spanish influenza. Both of them possessed—allied to great nobility of character—a true delicacy of feeling, and qualities which earned for them the sincere affection of all those who knew them.

I thought my chief rather thin and tired, but full of energy and hope. The black time of 1915 seemed to be definitely over. The day of my arrival the news of the capture of Erzerum had come through; every one was most hopeful about the campaign which was to open in the summer against Germany and Austria; the enormous task of the reorganisation of our military forces was being completed; munitions were plentiful, and the capital was swarming with troops of splendid appearance.

M. Sazonoff entirely approved of my point of view on the questions of the Aland Islands and the agitation of the Swedish Activists; there was no immediate or very grave danger, but it was necessary to make reasonable concessions to the Swedes.

The next morning I went to see General Polivanoff. I found, as ever, a charming welcome and a right and clear comprehension of the questions I came to discuss. The General approved of all my suggestions and begged me to confer, as to the details, with General Beliaieff, Chief of the General Staff, and General Lukomsky, Director of Ordnance.

When we had thoroughly discussed the Swedish question, I, relying on my good personal relations with Polivanoff, put the following question to him: "Tell me, General, if you think you can do so, what stage have our parleyings with Rumania reached? Abroad, and even here, every one seems to be expecting Rumania's immediate entry into the war on our side. The Emperor's recent journey to South Russia is universally looked on as the sign of an approaching alliance of arms—and possibly of a family one; how do matters really stand?"

"I can tell you quite frankly," said the General, "that I know nothing; one day every one is for the alliance; the next day it appears to be out of the question or postponed *sine die*. But I will tell you quite as frankly that for my own part I am not at all keen about this alliance which every one desires so ardently."

"And why is that?" I asked, somewhat surprised.

"I will tell you. In the first place, we know nothing about the fighting qualities of the Rumanian Army; 1877 is a long time ago, and 1913 was only a military outing in Bulgaria. On the other hand, what we do know is that Rumania does not possess the equipment necessary to modern warfare, nor munitions more particularly. At present we possess both, but not in sufficient quantity to enable us to share them with a new army of more than 500,000 men. I shall be told that our allies in the West can supply Rumania; but you, who are in a position to know, are perfectly aware of the fact that, given the present state of our communications with the West, everything sent to the Rumanians would diminish by that much what we ourselves ought to receive; hence it would always be a case of sharing. Secondly, if Rumania decided to come into the war, we ought to have an army of at least 300,000 men, perfectly equipped and supplied—under the command of an excellent general—which could enter Rumania by the Dobrudja and Tutrakan. Now, a great many people at General Headquarters think—and I entirely share their opinion—that if we did possess such an army,[1] it would have quite enough to do on our own front, already a fairly long one, in the event of our deciding to make a vigorous offensive."

"And why would you have to send this auxiliary army to the Rumanians?" I asked.

"If for no other reason, to defend them against the Bulgarians," replied the General with a subtle smile. "The geographical situation of Rumania," he continued, "is very bad. If the Rumanian army advanced towards Transylvania in order to realise national aspirations and

[1] This reserve army already existed at the time when I talked with General Polivanoff, and it was quartered at Odessa and in Bessarabia. It was General Scherbatcheff's army, and at the time of Brussiloff's great offensive, it conquered the Bukowina by a series of brilliant operations; but it could not after that be sent to the Dobrudja.

to threaten the Austro-Germans in the flank, the Bulgarians would immediately dash to the Dobrudja and the Danube; and then think what an enormous frontier Rumania would have to guard on that side. And we know that the Bulgarian troops are first-rate, and what is more, animated by ferocious hatred of their neighbours."

"That is exactly the answer I expected," I said to the General, "and I entirely share your opinion. But have we not sufficient troops both to strengthen our Galician front and to attack the Bulgarians? A brilliant success against them would, in my opinion, lead to a complete and immediate change in the Bulgarian Army, to the downfall of Ferdinand and the Boche alliance!"

"What you say is perfectly true; but it is not soldiers we lack; it is means of communication; our railway system is only capable of supplying our front, which consists of a given number of divisions; add to this number another 800,000 men (500,000 Rumanians and 300,000 Russians), and our armies will not be properly supplied either with men or provisions, or, above all, with arms and ammunition. You also doubtless know that on the Rumanian side we only possess two railways, and both are absolutely ridiculous; they are being improved at present with feverish haste; but it is much too late."

I took leave of General Polivanoff, telling him that I hoped with all my heart that his most sound and clear ideas would carry the day.

The two Generals, Beliaieff and Lukomsky, whom I went to see soon after, made a very good impression on me. I had already conferred with our Chief of the General Staff when he passed through Stockholm. This time in a pregnant conversation we drew up a whole programme (which, however, was never carried out) concerning the compensations to be granted to Sweden in return for the transit allowed to us and the supplies that we could obtain from her. General Beliaieff seemed to me to be very well up in all the questions relative to his department, and I was struck

with the number of subjects that we treated exhaustively during one hour's conversation; this denoted remarkable conciseness and clear-mindedness on his part. Later on, at the approach of the Revolution, the Press spoke very badly of the General. He was universally accused of servility towards the worst leaders of those ghastly months. Alas! I fear it was true. One can, moreover, possess a very clear mind and much intellectual power and yet be totally lacking in civic courage and even in moral honesty. The opposite is unfortunately just as common; we experienced this from the beginning of the Revolution, when men who were perfectly upright, pure, and animated by the best intentions found themselves absolutely incapable of controlling Government machinery after rude reality had replaced for them all generous dreams and abstract criticism!

A few days after my arrival in Petrograd, I heard that M. Savinsky was there, recovering from rather a serious illness, and that he wished very much to see me. I found my colleague pale and thin and animated by that feverish wish to exonerate himself and to bring his services and opinions into repute which is the distinguishing characteristic of every man who has suffered a serious reverse, and who feels that he is a butt for the accusations of his enemies and the gossip of his friends.

He told me—and was able to prove—that already in April, 1915, he had warned the Foreign Office of the imminence of the Bulgarian peril, and had suggested as the sole means of stopping Bulgaria the restitution by Serbia of the part of Macedonia annexed by virtue of the treaty of Bukharest. In Petrograd they could not make up their minds to force the Serbians to do this, and in order to get out of the difficulty they persuaded themselves that the danger was in no sense pressing and that the Russian Minister to Sofia exaggerated the perils of the situation; there was all the more excuse for this

attitude as the British Minister in Bulgaria—the same one that I had had as colleague during the years 1911-1913—did not take at all a gloomy view of things, and reassured the Foreign Office as to the intentions of Ferdinand and M. Radoslavov. In July, 1915, when the Bulgarian loan of five hundred million francs negotiated in Germany was effected under the very eyes of our Minister who had predicted it, those in authority at last listened to the cries of alarm uttered by Savinsky and his French colleague, and began to consult as to the best means of parrying the blow. It was just in the middle of our disastrous retreat from Galicia, Poland and Lithuania; coercive military measures were no longer to be thought of; the problem was how to please the Bulgarians without wronging the Serbians too much; whilst the latter, who saw the storm brewing, were clamouring to be allowed to attack Bulgaria before she had completed her mobilisation and her concentration of troops—against which London protested vehemently. The Rumanians did not appear to be going to carry out the engagements contracted in Bukharest; Greece was passing through the darkest days of the vassalage of Constantine XIV. with regard to his Imperial brother-in-law. The weeks went by; and while every one was still engaged in evasions and hesitations the irreparable deeds were done: Bulgaria mobilised and then entered Serbia, whilst the Centrals attacked this unfortunate country from the front.

That is what Savinsky told me; and as a general outline it was the absolute truth. Only my colleague omitted to inform me of what had taken place in Sofia between his arrival in January, 1914, and the spring of 1915. I think I ought to fill in the gap now.

At the first audience that my successor had with the King of the Bulgarians, Ferdinand gave him a touching welcome: "Your arrival, Monsieur, is as healing balm to my lacerated heart!" However, in a few short weeks, the relations between the Monarch and the Russian Minister showed no signs of being particularly

intimate. Ferdinand simply avoided seeing Savinsky and hid from him, just as he had hidden himself from all the diplomats accredited to his person. My successor had absolutely no opportunity of pouring his healing balm on the wounds caused by my "bluntness," for Ferdinand took them to be cured by the exalted personages of Austria-Hungary and of Germany. Things became worse after the outbreak of the World-War. A prey to mad agitation, torn between ambition, fear, a thirst for vengeance and his innate irresolution, the King shut himself up more and more. Savinsky, whose knowledge of Balkan affairs and psychology was very superficial but who had never been lacking in shrewdness and energy, ended by grasping the situation and, abandoning all hope of acting on Bulgaria through the person of the Sovereign, wished to outline a policy of influence over the Bulgarians themselves, over their ruling classes, even over those Stamboulovists who were the most averse to Russophile sentiments. Unfortunately, from the first months of his time in Sofia, my successor came under the influence of the suspicious individual that I mentioned in Chapter XIV. of these reminiscences. This gentleman became the political inspirer of his chief, and when it was necessary to influence the men in power and Bulgarian public opinion, he thought out a great speculation in connection with the purchase of wheat for the Russian Government, a deal which was to change the Bulgarian disposition by the bait of the great benefits accruing to the country at large and to private individuals. Two men of business, a certain M. Gruber and a M. Polak (junior) were sent from St. Petersburg to manage the transaction. The member of the Russian Legation whom I mentioned above made himself their intermediary and "political counsellor"; millions were involved, they talked of pocketing the whole of Bulgaria; they ended by buying a few thousand tons of wheat (which could not be taken away when war broke out), and they compromised the names of a few politicians, amongst others that—already thoroughly compromised

—of M. Gennadiev, who later on was accused, judged sentenced, and who spent the period of the Bulgarian war on the damp straw of a prison cell. "The poor man" was only set at liberty when the French troops arrived in Sofia. Hence the great deal in wheat ended in nothing, and only then did they think out other methods of procedure, less crooked and more fruitful. But much valuable time had been lost; the victorious offensive of the Germans in Galicia and Poland had begun, and those Bulgarians who were our enemies were encouraged in their attitude by the events of the war, which seemed to be turning decidedly in favour of the Central Empires.

My arrival in Petrograd almost coincided with a significant and much-discussed change in the composition of the Russian Cabinet: the aged M. Goremykin was at last allowed to retire, and his place was taken by M. Stürmer, an old member of the Council of the Empire, who had never occupied any very important post, and who was reputed to be ultra-reactionary. In the more or less Liberal and enlightened circles of Petrograd this appointment was sincerely deplored, as it was looked on as a challenge thrown by the Court at public opinion. Subsequent events have proved that this view was well-founded; but at that period I did not entirely share the pessimism of my Petrograd friends. I had incidentally heard of Stürmer's work at the outset of his great career, which was spent in the province of Tver. The provincial assembly of the Zemstvo, reputed "red," saw the elections of the president of this Zemstvo wrecked twice running by the central authority; the third time the Home Secretary himself appointed a president (he was entitled to do this by law) in the person of M. Stürmer, a local landed proprietor and an eminently Conservative Councillor-General, an elective post which he combined with a Court function in the capital equivalent to that of deputy head-clerk to the Registrar. In Tver every one expected that the new president would persecute all the

functionaries of the Zemstvo tainted with liberalism: doctors, schoolmasters, directors of co-operative societies, etc. To the intense astonishment of every one, Stürmer not only kept all these "reds" in their places, but he also made himself the advocate of his colleagues in Petrograd, cajoled them, and after two years of administration, during which everything went smoothly, he was made a Provincial Governor. The Liberal party in Tver almost gave him an ovation at his departure. It is true that a few years later, this same Stürmer, again sent on a special mission to Tver by an ultra-Conservative Home Secretary, behaved like a proconsul there, denounced his former friends of the "Left," caused some to be deported, and broke all the others. But to excuse him one ought to mention that his mission was of short duration and that when it was over he was to have a post at the Home Office as a reward. To sum up, I had a poor opinion of the character of this shady individual; but I thought him clever and intelligent and I hoped that, as he might find himself faced by an almost impossible situation, he would, by some clever stroke, be able to change the dangerous course adopted or submitted to in high places, thereby restoring a little popularity to the person of the Emperor.

My conjectures appeared to be coming true on the spot. His Majesty arrived from General Headquarters and during a very brief stay at Tsarskoe, to every one's intense astonishment, he announced his visit to the Duma and went to it the same day. It was a most dramatic stroke: the first time that national representation was holding a sitting at the Taurida Palace, the Tsar deigned to attend. He had, it is true, opened the session of the first Duma in person—the revolutionary Duma of 1906; when receiving the members of this Duma at a memorable ceremony in the Winter Palace, His Majesty had made them a speech in which he alluded to the representatives of the nation as "the best men of Russia," [1] but this did not prevent him sending them all

[1] "Lootchié Rousskié Ludi."

back to their homes four months later! But since then the sessions of the subsequent Dumas had been opened by the President of the Council, and the Emperor himself had never ventured into this "cave of Æolus," whence however, since 1907, nothing but soft breezes and zephyrs had issued forth, which were quite incapable of sweeping anything away or of impeding the course of the governmental ship.

The Emperor's arrival provoked a storm of enthusiasm amongst *all* the members of the Duma and in the large crowd which had gathered at the news of the Imperial visit. There was no session in the presence of His Majesty, who addressed a few unimportant words to the representatives of the nation in the Great Hall; there was as usual a *Te Deum* in which the Tsar and the members of the Duma took part; there was a stirring speech from the president, M. Rodzianko, a speech greeted with rousing applause. It was like an electric shock throughout Petrograd. In this visit to the Duma every one wished to see a token of reconciliation between the Court and public opinion; they anticipated the probable consequences of the event: change of certain Ministers, suppression of certain odious and ridiculous measures, cessation of the Rasputin scandal. Alas! all these hopes were doomed to prompt disappointment. Even I had soon to lower my tone. I realised that M. Stürmer, with advancing years, had lost even his shrewdness of former days and that now he was only capable of telling clumsy lies and indulging in tricks that could not deceive any one. From henceforth a whirlwind of madness enveloped the Tsarskoe Palace, a madness with which the Emperor was infected at every visit which his wife paid him at General Headquarters at Mohilev. There were some changes of Ministers, but, alas! of the worst description; and the Rasputin scandal reached monstrous proportions.

On the very day that the Emperor attended the Duma I went to call on Prince Galitzyn, recently

appointed president of an important Commission of the Russian Red Cross. For some time the directors of the Red Cross had been causing trouble with our Stockholm Committee ; they allowed us the very small grant agreed upon beforehand and at the same time they wished at all costs to subject us to scrupulous control ; I knew that they really wished to impose on us the collaboration of some "tchinovniks" who would only have put spokes in our wheel. The work of our Stockholm Committee had become so popular amongst the Russian public that all those who were about to make their career through the channel of the Red Cross wanted to have a hand in this work and to pretend that it was they who directed it.

I had known Prince Nicolas Galitzyn in Tver, where he had been Governor for a time. Moderate, essentially honest and a gentleman, but idle and superficial in the discharge of his duties, he presented the pleasing and correct type of a man of the world, always dancing attendance on one of the local beauties. I found the dear Prince somewhat aged and changed. He received me with his usual urbanity, but during the business-talk that I started, I realised at once that the new president of the Red Cross had no other ideas than those with which he was endued by the factotum of this organisation, a certain M. T——, an insidious man and a worker who for some years had entirely managed the Russian Red Cross by shelving all the presidents in succession.

In the course of conversation Galitzyn mentioned the Empress Alexandra, with whom he had had to do as president of the Special Committee of Assistance, and I could see that the dear Prince was a complete victim to her Majesty's charms. He could not say enough about the great cleverness, the virtues, the wonderful work of his august patroness. It was senile and unrestrained adoration.

A year later the poor Prince—suddenly appointed President of the Council of Ministers, to the amazement of the public and by virtue of his devotion to the

Empress—presided as a figure-head during the closing weeks of the old régime, went through the terrible days of the Revolution in the same state of surprise as that in which he had submitted to his appointment, and finally found himself in a cell in the Peter and Paul fortress, from which, however, he was eventually released as a guileless and irresponsible person. I do not know what has become of the poor old gentleman since.

What a difference between this dull, lackadaisical man and Prince Alexander of Oldenburg, whom I had called on the day before! His Palace on the Quai de la Cour looked like a hive in full activity, where doctors, scientists and sisters collected to make reports, receive instructions, exchange opinions with this energetic man of few words, who had a blunt manner, but who, nevertheless, was full of kindness and true pity for suffering humanity, never more in need of pity than now. We had a pregnant conversation on the subject of the transport of the wounded, which the Prince was directing in Russia, and of the treatment of prisoners of war. General and instructive conversation animated the lunch to which I was invited after the interview, and at which I met the principal assistants of the indefatigable host. One felt that the Prince had seen everything with his own eyes during his constant journeys across Russia, Europe, Asia, that he had taken part in the experiments of scientists, the distribution of clothing, the cooking of food, the fumigating of wards. Ah! thought I, if only Russia had more such untiring men of action, of unfailing energy! This one may well have his faults, as all mankind has; but in his case it would never be faults of *omission*, which are the very worst of which any one can be guilty at a time demanding above all else courageous initiative and unremitting toil!

On leaving Galitzyn I went to see M. Alexis Neidhart, who was at the head of a special committee in connection with our prisoners of war. I had not seen

M. Neidhart since Moscow, when he was a schoolboy of about twelve or fifteen years of age,[1] but I had often heard him spoken of since as a man of intellect, tact and merit, who, having been elected a member of the Council of the Empire, had made himself the head of an influential group of moderate and intelligent Conservatives. In the course of an hour of agreeable and pregnant conversation all business relative to our work for the prisoners of war was settled with M. Neidhart; I received the kind promise of a substantial grant—a promise carried out soon after—and I left much charmed with his broad and open mind, and his manner so entirely devoid of Petrograd "tchinovism."

During the last years of Nicolas II.'s reign there had been much talk in Petrograd of the possibility of placing M. Alexis Neidhart at the head of affairs. He was a firm Monarchist and a Conservative, but a moderate Conservative, taking the word in its Western sense, that is to say completely exempt from that tendency to despotism and that coarseness of behaviour that characterise the Russian reactionaries. He and his group, in that case, would probably have imposed their own conditions: *i.e.* they would have demanded the genuine homogeneousness of the Cabinet, the suppression of the despotic rights of the State Police, and the frank acceptation by the Emperor of the *constitutional* system for Russia, if not of an integral parliamentarianism. Moreover, Neidhart and his friends were not the only people to preach such a programme; they had eminent seniors and forerunners who sat with them at the Council of the Empire; these included old M. Andrew Saburoff, one of the most *European* and cultivated of statesmen; M. Koni, a distinguished philanthropist, and a ready help in all trouble and in all good causes; M. Alexis Yermoloff, Minister of Agriculture for a time, a thorough expert in this primordial branch of the

[1] He was the brother of Madame Peter Stolypin; his other sister was Madame Sazonoff.

economic and national life of Russia; Prince Sviatopolk-Mirsky, for a short time Home Secretary, an enlightened man and a firm Liberal; M. Kulomzin, true type of the superior official of solid learning and broad views, who had grown white in the service of the State, after having spent his scholastic career at Cambridge; and a great, great many others. Most of these men belonged by birth to the best society of Russia, they had all worked either with the Emperor Nicolas II. himself or with his father. But the unfortunate Emperor had never once thought of summoning them to the Palace to ask their advice even in the most critical moments. He saw them on official occasions, his manner was kindness itself, he spoke a few pleasant but unimportant words to them and dismissed them with a charming smile. However, swindlers like Stürmer, acknowledged lunatics like Protopopoff, absolute nonentities like Galitzyn, and a host of others, were called to power. And meantime individuals of the lowest category (Rasputin was only the most prominent and disreputable one) penetrated into the Palace through the back-door; every one talked with them and allowed themselves to be influenced by the wildest creations of the brains of these creatures. *Quem deus vult perdere!* . . .

I was received by the Emperor the very day that he was returning to Mohilev. The Emperor gave me a welcome which touched me deeply. In his kindest tones he thanked me for my services in Sweden. I made a low bow, and having expressed my heartfelt gratitude for the gracious words of the Sovereign, I ventured to remark that my services amounted to very little in comparison with those of the innumerable Russians who had given their blood and their life for their country and their Tsar.

"Yes, Nekludoff, but you also have *truly upheld the flag of your country*." The Emperor passed on to the question of Swedish activism and the Aland Islands;

he commanded me to reassure the King of Sweden thoroughly on the subject of Russia's intentions in that quarter; the fortifications erected on the Aland Islands were a necessity of war, and would disappear as soon as the war was over, etc. I then offered my respectful congratulations to the Emperor. "But what on?" "But on the capture of Erzerum, sir!" "Ah, yes, yes!" he started, as if he had been dreaming; "certainly it was a fine performance of our troops." . . . Then the Emperor was kind enough to say a few words to me about my son, who had just joined the regiment of which His Majesty was the virtual commander, and the uniform of which he nearly always wore; and then I was graciously dismissed.

At this audience I noticed a great change in the Emperor. These two years of terrible trials had naturally aged him; his hair and beard were streaked with white, his eyes were sunken. But it was not that that impressed me most. I noticed a kind of weariness, a kind of constant preoccupation which seemed to prevent him concentrating his whole attention on the conversation on hand; the vivacity of his manner and of his mind seemed to have vanished. I attributed all that to the fatigue of the moment, to the manifold worries of the situation. But when I recall those memories to-day it seems to me that in the manner and appearance of the Emperor Nicolas II. there was more than preoccupation, more than worry. Perhaps he already saw the abyss opening at his feet and perhaps he knew that to stop was impossible, that he must pursue his way towards the inevitable and fatal crash.

I never saw my unfortunate Emperor again. In the course of this book I have often had to deplore the faults committed by him—faults which he expiated in a truly ghastly manner; I shall still have occasion to criticise bitterly, in the name of "cold-eyed justice," the last actions of this man, fore-ordained to the most appalling catastrophes. I must be allowed here to tender grateful homage to the kindness that he had

always shown *me*, to his *universal* kindness, to his ardent patriotism and to the undeniable nobility and sincerity of his personal and private character.

When he was hurled from the pinnacle of greatness, most of those who had served him, fawned on him, flattered him, turned against him and no longer remembered either what they had obtained through his generosity—or his weakness, or the devotion they had heretofore professed to the person of the Monarch. They now only spoke of the "country"; the country must be saved at all costs, and it was in the name of this sentiment—probably—that they abjured their former convictions and overthrew their former idols. Nevertheless, in saving the country, they intended also to save their interests, their position, their emoluments, and it is that side of the case which has always appeared to me to be the weak point in all the fine speeches that I heard, from the outset of the Russian Revolution, from the lips of my friends, men of the world, men in office, who from one day to another had become the staunch partisans of the new régime and the assiduous clients of the new men, the dispensers of the *sportula*.

The next day I returned to Tsarskoe-Selo to present myself to the Empress Alexandra.

I began by lunching with the Grand-Duke Paul and Princess Paleï in their fine palace which had recently been built. I found myself again in the congenial atmosphere of the informal receptions of the Grand-Duke and his wife in Paris at their charming house in the "Parc des Princes." In their Tsarskoe palace—built and decorated by French experts in the same Louis XVI. style, but larger and grander—there were gathered together on that fine winter's morning the same people I had seen so often in Paris: the worthy Grand-Duke, so good, so simple and yet so refined; the beautiful and charming Countess of Hohenfelsen (re-named Princess Paleï since the war through horror of all Boche names); their two daughters, born while I

was in Paris in 1904 and 1905; their son, whom I had watched growing up, now an officer in the Hussars of the Guard, and resting at Tsarskoe after having been a year in the trenches; one or two intimate friends of the family; suddenly like a whirlwind in came the Grand-Duchess Marie, ex-Princess William of Sweden, in her nurse's uniform; she was as frank and simple in manner as ever, and for a quarter of an hour she and I talked of Stockholm, which at heart she still loved just as she had been loved there.

When I learnt the horrible fate of the Grand-Duke and his unfortunate morganatic son, I recalled vividly that last luncheon-party at Tsarskoe; with it mingled other memories—of Paris, Florence, Constantinople—right back to those far-away days, so far away that they seemed as a dream or as a tale that is told, when in Moscow, in 1866, about a dozen of us small boys used to go on Sundays to share in the games of the little Grand-Dukes Serge and Paul; days of real fun and wild pranks in the big park and the fine suburban palace of Neskutchnoye, under the strict supervision of the old mentor of the Grand-Dukes, Khrenoff, formerly a non-commissioned officer of the Guards, who never let us out of his sight and whom we all adored. The Grand-Duke Paul was then a very attractive child of seven years of age, with pink cheeks, lively but always good; who could have foreseen for him that ghastly end, preceded by the most terrible privations and the vilest cruelty?

But I must return to Tsarskoe. At two o'clock I went to see the Empress Alexandra, who, in my honour, had discarded her usual sister's uniform and donned her smartest clothes: it was quite the *Empress* receiving her Minister Plenipotentiary. I had not been near Her Majesty since February, 1911, when, beautiful, charming and good tempered, she had received me and my wife and eldest daughter in that same bright drawing-room filled with flowers. I found the Empress changed. She had a deep vertical wrinkle between her eyebrows which

gave her an expression of morbid tension. Her eyes were intensely sad. Her Majesty spoke to me first about matters relative to the work of the Red Cross and to that of our Stockholm Committee. Then she asked me whether I had taken the necessary measures so that the goods sent by the Red Cross to our prisoners of war should not be indefinitely delayed at Haparanda (the Swedish frontier). "Madam, I have made inquiries on the subject, and they prove that the Swedish Red Cross does all in its power to get the goods across the frontier without hindrance, and to send them further!"

The Empress took up a photograph lying on the table and passed it to me: "But all the same, Monsieur, here is a photograph showing a huge stock of goods from the Red Cross piled up in the open air at Haparanda."

"I know that photograph, Madam, I have been shown it before; but that pile of cases which Your Majesty sees there are not goods from the Red Cross, but postal packages in transit that Sweden kept back for months at the frontier by way of reprisal. Your Majesty is well aware that every case and every bale from the Red Cross is marked with a Geneva cross quite large enough to come out in this photograph; now Your Majesty will be good enough to observe that it is not to be seen on the cases shown here."

The Empress took the photograph and examined it carefully. "That is true," she said, replacing it on the table.

After that she turned the conversation to general questions concerning politics and the war, and she laid great stress on the seriousness of the situation which—abroad as well as at home—called for the greatest and most unceasing straining of efforts. "Alas! So few people here seem to realise the gravity and the dangers of the hour; there are some houses in Petrograd where they even dance!" added Her Majesty, emphasising the words. Soon after I was graciously dismissed. The audience made a somewhat unfavourable impression on

me; it may well have been that I was prejudiced against my august hostess; but it seemed to me that she wished to show me to what extent she shared the worries of the Government and of the High Command, and to make me understand that when one came to Petrograd on business connected with one's official duties, one ought to discuss this business with the Empress. The co-regency had begun.

Two days later I called on the Dowager Empress. Her Majesty discussed with me the unprecedented sufferings inflicted by Germany on our prisoners of war; she mentioned the insults to which she had been subjected in Berlin when she passed through Germany the day before the declaration of war, on her way from the Belgian frontier to Copenhagen. The dear good Empress did not conceal the feeling of profound disgust inspired in her by German cruelty and the duplicity of William II.; the terms she used were as frank as they were cutting.

I also went to see the Grand-Duke Nicolas Mikhaïlovitch, whom I had often met during my last years in Paris and in Petrograd. The enemies of this man, who was both clever and cultivated, liked to compare him to Philippe Egalité, and asserted that he intrigued with the "Masonic" party against his august cousin, the Emperor Nicolas II. Nothing was ever less true. A very sincere Liberal, the Grand-Duke did not restrain his criticisms of a régime that he considered disastrous, as much for the country as for the combined interests of the Emperor and the Imperial Family; he did so with an openness that precluded all idea of intrigue; the most that could be said of him was that he had the characteristics of the perpetual fault-finder. Carefully excluded from politics and the government of the Empire, he had taken refuge in the sphere of historical research. The studies and works which he wrote himself, and which were brought out in sumptuous editions to which one was not accustomed in Russia,

are of undeniable interest. His excellent and impartial history of the reign of the Emperor Alexander I. is the work of a true historian, and was very well received abroad. Nicolas Mikhaïlovitch was a sincere and faithful friend to France; he had some intimate friends among French contemporary historians.

The Grand-Duke received me in his magnificent study filled with a precious collection of portraits—historical miniatures. What has now become of this superb collection? Our conversation naturally turned on the political questions of the day. My august host did not restrain his criticism. He was of opinion that we were making for a revolution which would probably not break out while the war lasted, but certainly immediately after the conclusion of peace. "Alexander III. did not like me very much; Nicolas II., although full of kindness for me as a private individual, has a holy horror of my ideas. Nevertheless, I have served them faithfully, and I am always ready to serve the Emperor; only I cannot conceal from him that first and foremost I have duties towards my country and the Russian people."

The impression I received from the ten or twelve days spent in Petrograd was frankly bad. Public displeasure could not be hidden. In drawing-rooms, in the offices of journalists, politicians, scientists, there was violent criticism of the last appointments, the actions of the Government, the perennial conflict in the very bosom of the Council of Ministers between M. Sazonoff, Krivocheïne, Count Ignatieff, General Polivanoff on one side, and Stürmer, Trepoff, Prince Schakhovskoy, protagonists of the reactionary party, on the other. Count Kokovtzoff, whom I made a point of calling on, predicted the worst calamities. Others were less pessimistic, but they anxiously wondered how far the blindness of the unfortunate Emperor would go; they all pitied him; but his weakness was the subject of the bitterest criticism.

Concerning the war itself every one was far less gloomy. They were hopeful about the reorganisation of the Russian forces, and were confidently awaiting the offensive which was to take place in the spring. I remember a dinner-party composed only of men where this question was much discussed. One of the guests upheld the theory that from the purely military point of view one could not hope for decisive successes, nor need one fear fresh reverses; that in fact it would be a draw. I disputed that theory hotly. "Either *we shall do for them* or else *they will do for us*," I summed up my opinion; "there can be no medium between complete victory and complete disaster; and the final result will be seen in the autumn of 1918 at the latest." At my suggestion a short formula of the two opinions was drawn up; my opponent alone signed his own; all the other guests wrote their names under mine, and we gave the document into the keeping of the Italian Ambassador, Marquis Carlotti, who was one of those present.

And the people? At first sight nothing seemed to reveal their frame of mind. Externally it was the same colourless, apathetic, sleepy mass. But the persons who came most regularly in contact with the working-classes of the capital and the country, with the lower orders, did not conceal their anxiety.

I was out one day in a "izvostchik" with a young, intelligent and well-educated woman, whose modest income and occupations brought her a great deal in touch with the masses. We passed a queue which had formed outside a provision shop. Women were in the majority, but both men and women walked up and down the frozen pavement with the same air of gloomy indifference. "That is what will make us lose the war," said my companion, pointing to the queue.

"*In cauda venenum?*" I asked, jokingly.

"Do not joke; what I tell you is the absolute truth. At the beginning of the war there was enthusiasm among the lower classes, at least in Petrograd, which I

have never left. But now nothing remains but weariness and apathy. It has lasted too long. The people are deeply displeased at the privations they have to undergo; they seize eagerly on all tales about malpractices that are being indulged in, about dissensions in the bosom of the Government, about Court scandals. They comment on all that in their own way. When one goes about a great deal among the people one often hears things that make one shudder!"

"But the workmen are getting huge wages? Drunkenness has been abolished? There are no ragged people to be seen in the streets? So whence comes all this discontent?"

"From our reverses of last year, which the people felt far more deeply than is generally believed; from the propaganda of the revolutionary leaders, which is more vehement than ever. True, a workman's family at the present time have warm clothes, good boots; they sometimes even buy a gramophone; but the moment any discomfort, any disappointment occurs: a rise in prices, scarcity of provisions, a necessity to spend hours on the pavement in order to buy the least thing, brutality on the part of the police—and all the relative comfort is forgotten, and one hears threats uttered in a spirit of bitter hostility."

This conversation, like other somewhat similar ones, gave me food for deep thought.

From the beginning of the war I had heard on all sides that the danger of a revolution had been temporarily warded off. All the parties of the Left, beginning with the "cadets" and ending with the Socialist-revolutionaries, had pledged themselves not to undertake anything that might hinder the progress of the war; all these people were supposed to have agreed that a German victory would be the worst blow struck at the cause of liberty, in Russia and elsewhere; that consequently it was first and foremost necessary to win the war.

But when the representatives of Liberal opinions in Russia agreed thus to proclaim a kind of "sacred union," and declared that as long as the war lasted they would prevent a revolution from breaking out, they were reckoning without their host, that is to say without Germany.

German policy had reckoned on the Russian Revolution from the very beginning of the war. She was counting on it firmly. Long before the precipitation of political events in Europe had brought about the conflagration, the German Government had begun to knead the dough in Russia—dough into which the leaven of revolutionism was worked. In 1905 and 1906 the rôle of the German agents with regard to a Russian revolution was an ostensibly negative one. At that period William II. thought and hoped to allure the Tsar afresh through the support he lent him and the favours he lavished on him. But when, after Bjoerkoe and more especially after the tightening of Anglo-Russian ties, the Kaiser's hopes had faded away, then Berlin entered resolutely into relations with the Russian revolutionaries, and sent resolute and clever agents amongst the working-classes of the Empire. These agents were rarely recognised revolutionaries. There was a whole category of people who could further Germany's schemes without having to write themselves down as Socialists, without having to think that they were engaged in a work of pure destruction; especially without arousing the suspicions of the Russian police.

These agents—often unconscious ones—were the German proprietors, directors, workmen, of the numerous German industrial enterprises in Russia.

Foreign colonies are, always and everywhere, inclined to criticise the country in which they find themselves. More especially does this apply to the foreign colonies established in Russia, when in the course of their work they are confronted by the malpractices and venality of the police, the dilatoriness of the administration etc. Nevertheless, up to a certain

period the Germans who had work in Russia had received the word of command to show themselves conservative, loyal to the Imperial Government, obedient to the authorities. Towards 1907 the word of command was changed. "Russia and her governors were worth nothing; the duty of the Germans established in Russia was to bring to the unfortunate Russian people the good news of their political and social rights." As ever, when it is a question of German action, the Berlin directions were carried out with zeal and uniformity. Whole bales of proclamations and revolutionary literature were sent from Germany to Russia under the benevolent eye of the frontier-authorities and even—so I have been told—under that of German diplomats and consuls. A remarkably intelligent Frenchwoman belonging to the Diplomatic Corps of Petrograd, Frau von L., told me that one day, *in her drawing-room*, Baron von Lucius—at that time Counsellor to the German Embassy—had announced in loud and clear tones: "What is all this about Russia? Russia cannot and dare not go to war. And if she dared, the very next day the revolution, fully armed, would come from there" (and the Counsellor pointed towards the workshops and foundries on the other side of the Neva) "and would hurl itself on all these beautiful palaces!"

From the beginning of the war, as I have said, the Germans were awaiting with feverish impatience the outbreak of revolutionary disturbances in Russia. These disturbances as yet showed no signs of occurring; on the contrary—miracle and malediction!—the entire Russian people seemed seized afresh with true patriotic ardour. But in 1915, the reverses of the Russian armies, the grumbling caused by the lack of munitions, the terrible sufferings of the populations who were fleeing and whose flight was encouraged, before the German invasion, the fatigue of the working-classes, the mistakes made by the Government—all that combined to cause Berlin to hope that the ardently wished-for Russian revolution—the one which alone could save

Germany—was at last becoming visible on the horizon. From that moment everything was done to bring about the outbreak as soon as possible. On one side the agents who influenced the working-men redoubled their efforts; on the other, the invisible but numerous wires which still—in spite of the war—connected Russian society with Berlin were set working. Gossip, false rumours, exaggerations were disseminated in the capitals, the provinces, even in the ranks of the Army. The conscious and unconscious agents of Germanic influence incited the Court and the rulers of the hour to the worst follies, whilst on the other hand public displeasure was skilfully stimulated and exasperated.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1916 the principal forces of the Russian Opposition, forces which, as I have said, had sworn not to allow the revolution to break out as long as the war lasted, still remained loyal to their pledge. In order that their formula, "no revolution in war-time," should be abandoned and replaced by "a revolution to save the war," it was necessary that, by a series of actions and measures of calamitous absurdity the supreme power should give them the illusion that the reactionary party was contemplating an understanding with the enemy; it was necessary that rumours cleverly exaggerated and disseminated should lead even the allies of Russia to doubt the fidelity of the Russian Monarchy to the common cause. All this was necessary and all this was done from the month of July, 1916, through the strenuous efforts of the agents and partisans of Germany in Russia; through the ingenuousness of Russian public opinion—not to mention foreign public opinion; finally through that *fatality* which presides over the great events of history, setting at nought all human prophecies, weighing men and nations in the scales of destiny and hurling into the abyss all those who are found wanting.

CHAPTER XXII

EVIL OMENS IN PETROGRAD

On arriving in Stockholm, I took care at once to solicit an audience of King Gustaf V., in order to transmit to His Majesty the words of the Emperor.

I was received in the King's private study, a small room, with walls covered with purple brocade, and filled with a fine collection of old Swedish silver. The King was in plain clothes (I had been ordered to wear the same) in order the better to accentuate the purely private character of my audience. I transmitted to His Majesty the message entrusted to me by my august Master. The King first asked me if I had informed his Minister for Foreign Affairs of all that I had just told him. My answer being in the affirmative, Gustaf V. said that it was with sincere pleasure and gratitude that he received the message of His Majesty the Emperor. "I cannot hide from you," continued the King, "that the question of the Aland Islands has been seriously preoccupying the Swedish Government all this time. Swedish public opinion has been excited about it repeatedly. In a few weeks a new session of the Riksdag will open and my Ministers think that they will have questions—possibly very insistent ones—to answer on that subject." The King then alluded to the alarm that Sweden and he himself had felt in 1908 at our intention to revise—in consequence of the separation of Sweden and Norway—the additional treaty of 1856 which dealt with the Aland Archipelago. The recent events of the war had disclosed possibilities and dangers which did did not exist before; so the Swedish Government had

a legitimate desire to settle the Aland question in a definitive manner which would not lend itself to any ambiguity, and this could only be done by a direct and formal conversation between the two Governments.

In answer, I told the King that M. Wallenberg had already given me to understand that the Swedish Government wished to make the question of the Aland Islands the object of a new special convention between Russia and Sweden; that I had not omitted to transmit this wish to M. Sazonoff, and that as far as our Foreign Office was concerned there was no objection to beginning such a conversation, provided that it only applied to the peace régime and not to that of the present war.

The King then asked me—but laying great stress on the fact that it was private and confidential—whether in Petrograd they did not see any possibility of stopping the war. I replied that I had received no indication of anything of the kind; that on the contrary we at home were more than ever resolved to continue the struggle till it led to victory.

"I must tell you quite frankly, M. Nekludoff," said the King, "that personally I do not see a possibility of victory for either side; this awful carnage has now lasted more than eighteen months; there is no reason why it should not last another two years, with no result but death, ruin, misery to innumerable people. And what would be the state of Europe if the war did last another two years? One can hardly picture it! That is why here we continue to utter the most fervent prayers for the restoration of peace." Gustaf V. said all this in short, detached sentences which seemed to be escaping him in spite of himself. He made no allusion to the means by which the war might be stopped, still less did he outline any scheme. It was a cry from the heart, prompted by the humanitarian feelings of the King and by the very sincere dread of seeing his country involved, if not in the sanguinary vortex of the war, at any rate in the material ruin and the political dangers which the continuation of the world-wide struggle must

inevitably bring to the neutrals as well. This was, moreover, *the only occasion* on which the King spoke in this strain to me.

During my visit to Petrograd I had been informed that a delegation of Russian "parliamentarians," *i.e.* members of the Duma and of the Council of the Empire, were soon going to pass through Sweden on their way to the allied countries.

These gentlemen did arrive in Stockholm in March; a few of the members of the Council of the Empire were missing and were to join their colleagues later; but the members of the Duma—with the Vice-President of this assembly, M. Protopopoff, at their head—were all there. Among the "cadets" there were M. Miliukoff, whom I had known for a long time, M. Schingareff and M. Itchas, a Lithuanian whom I had also met before. The other delegates were "grandees of lesser importance." M. Protopopoff, "Octobrist of the Left," attracted my curiosity; I had heard him spoken of as a particularly intelligent man, very independent with regard to the Government, although he did not nurse any "subversive" opinions; he was also quoted as one of the very rare members of the Duma having any practical knowledge of great industrial enterprises. During the few hours that I was able to talk to the Vice-President of the Duma, he did not appear to me to belie his reputation: a frank way of talking, devoid of all exaggeration, a faculty for assimilating new ideas quickly and thoroughly; absence of prejudices and of pre-conceived opinions. Side by side with that, a slight tinge of affectation and an obvious wish to be very much the recognised head of the parliamentary delegation.

Having received these gentlemen at the station and accompanied them to the hotel, I invited them to come and have lunch at the Legation to meet my colleagues. After lunch, I gathered my guests together round a green table so as to give them the opportunity of asking questions on all matters relative to our relations

with Sweden and in which they were interested. My colleagues and I answered them to the best of our ability. The deputies appeared to be much pleased with this colloquy. It enabled them to clear up certain points which had remained obscure to them and to amend their judgment on others, which they did with a very good grace.

The sitting terminated on the arrival of my allied colleagues and a few Swedish personages[1] whom I had invited to meet our delegation. The French Minister brought with him another "delegation"; this was M. Albert Thomas, at the time the very popular Minister of Munitions, who was going (for the first time) to Petrograd to confer with our military administration. A few Frenchmen accompanied him.

Very soon the drawing-rooms of the Legation were filled, and there was a hum of conversation. Protopopoff, who spoke with great volubility, was surrounded; Miliukoff (a distinguished linguist) with the airs and graces of the late Mezzofanti entertained every one of his listeners in his mother tongue; Albert Thomas, with his characteristic head, his mop of hair and full beard, and the energetic and uncommon expression of his face, attracted the attention of everybody.

"He does look clever, that Albert Thomas," said one of my compatriots of the Duma to me. "It would interest me so much to talk to that *working man*, that real man of the people risen to a post as Minister. Unfortunately, I can hardly speak any French."

"Ah, yes!" I replied; "he has a very characteristic and clever head; but do not deceive yourself: he is no more a *working-man* than you or I; he is, like most Western politicians, a clever lawyer."

The speaker was M. Schingareff, the most striking and congenial of the delegates of the Duma; unfortunately his almost complete ignorance of foreign languages prevented his being noticed and appreciated at his true value in France and England.

[1] M. Wallenberg was away temporarily.

The very next day the delegates pursued their journey.

Meantime the question of the Aland Islands was examined more fully between M. Wallenberg and me, and I asked M. Sazonoff to authorise me to address a note to the Foreign Secretary of Sweden, in which the assurances given by me to the King from His Majesty the Emperor would be recorded. I had an impression that we ought to take into consideration the fears which were being manifested in Sweden and which were kept up by Swedish Activists and German instigation. If we refused to explain ourselves explicitly on this question and to give formal promises to Sweden they would consider it a proof that we were only intent on gaining time and contemplating using the Aland Archipelago eventually as a naval or aviation base, which, as it was about thirty nautical miles from Stockholm, would effectually constitute a permanent menace to our neighbour. Whereas if on the contrary we accepted the negotiations proposed by the Swedish Government we should prove by that the absence on our side of all ulterior motives and of any scheme prejudicial to the safety of Sweden.

M. Sazonoff, without committing himself as yet on the question of the parleys demanded by M. Wallenberg, authorised me, however, to record in a note addressed to the Swedish Government at a fitting moment the assurances concerning the fortifications which we had erected on the Archipelago since the beginning of the war. Hence I awaited with more confidence the agitation which the reopening of the Riksdag was to bring with it.

As the Swedish Government had clearly foreseen, the Activists and the whole Conservative party, from the first sittings, began to raise the question of the Aland Islands vehemently, as well as that of the harm done to commerce and to the economic existence of Sweden by the strict blockade maintained by the Entente

Governments against Germany. Violent speeches were made at the Riksdag, and the Swedish Press—without excepting even the organs of the moderate Liberals[1]—requested the Government to guard the interests of the country in a more effectual and stronger manner.

This campaign upset our Foreign Office. Whereas formerly I had pointed out without reticence the dangers of too great a feeling of security with regard to Swedish Activist agitation, I now thought it my duty to discourage a too abrupt "turn about," and to reassure my Government as to the real import of what was occurring in Sweden. As ever, the instant anything even rather unusual happened in Stockholm—often even when nothing extraordinary was happening—the Ministers of the Entente in Norway[2] uttered loud cries of alarm; five or six times during the war our Governments were much upset by news coming from Christiania announcing the immediate entry of the Swedes into the war on the side of Germany; my colleagues and I had to use all our faculties of persuasion to refute these fantastic rumours circulated with an assurance which might really impress our Governments and our General Staffs. We presumed that our colleagues in Christiania had to do with informants and agents who were particularly zealous and imaginative.

It was exactly the same this time; and after having spent some weeks in corresponding with M. Sazonoff on the subject of the declarations and concessions that we ought to make to the Swedes on the Aland question, I now had to calm the nervousness displayed by our General Staff and which naturally spread to our Foreign Office.

While all this fuss was going on my colleagues of the Entente and I were pressing M. Wallenberg to communicate to the Riksdag the assurances he had received repeatedly from us on the subject of the Aland Islands. I drew up a thoroughly explicit statement on this

[1] As to anything touching the Aland question.

[2] I ought to except the Russian Minister.

subject and handed it to the Swedish Foreign Secretary, but on condition that he was to communicate it to Parliament; in the event of his considering it inopportune to do so, he was to return the document to me and look on it as a verbal communication. M. Wallenberg was quite satisfied with the contents of the document, which he showed—as I heard later—to all the influential members of the Riksdag; but he did not wish to communicate it officially to this assembly and returned it to me as had been arranged.

At a certain moment I thought it incumbent on me to address a private and very friendly but most serious letter to M. Wallenberg, dealing with the dangerous activities of certain parliamentarians and of certain organs of the Swedish Press. This letter, much approved of by my colleagues, was worded so that the Minister could submit it to the King and to the political personages in view—which Wallenberg made a point of doing.

Finally the Minister for Foreign Affairs made detailed declarations at the Riksdag with respect to the questions which seemed to be affecting the Assembly so strongly. He did so with much frankness and at the same time very cleverly, for he persisted in not communicating the statements coming from the Entente Governments and which would have proved in black and white that the fears of the country were exaggerated, to say the least of it. At the time my colleagues and I wondered why the Swedish Government thus persisted in not "showing their vouchers." I discovered later that neither M. Hammarskiold nor M. Wallenberg himself wished to create a precedent by virtue of which the Riksdag might demand the communication of certain statements of German origin. Now the communication of the latter might excite anger in Berlin, and as I have said the Swedish Government did not feel sure enough of the final victory of the Entente to risk drawing down on itself the vengeance of Germany.

M. Wallenberg's declarations were received at the

Riksdag with a satisfaction beyond our expectations. In a few days' time the tone even of the Press had changed and by the 1st June all was serene again. But M. Wallenberg owned to me that this hostile attitude of the Activists—which he trusted would be the last—had been the strongest that had occurred since the beginning of the war and that at one moment he himself had been somewhat frightened about it.

It was during this crisis that I had an opportunity of improving my acquaintance with M. Branting, the recognised head of the Swedish Socialist party. Knowing that he was frankly opposed to the intrigues of the Activists, I went to see him once or twice. I had some heart to heart talks with him, and I amended a few of his judgments on Russia and gained some information for myself relative to the programme and aspirations of the Swedish Socialist party.

I found in Hjalmar Branting a distinguished and eminently honest mind; many convictions but few preconceived opinions. He was the true head of a *school*, not the head of a *sect*. I have often said to myself since, that if the Socialist party throughout the world had more leaders like Branting and possessed everywhere social ground as relatively wholesome as that of the Swedish working-classes, the doctrine of Socialism, instead of rousing well-founded fears and irreconcilable opposition on the part of those who hold to the old and tried principles of world-wide civilisation, would find useful and powerful adherents amongst the very people who desire, not the downfall, but the reformation of this civilisation and the victory of mind and moral principles over the power of money and brute force.

Soon after the visit from the members of the Duma, we began to receive disquieting news from Petrograd. M. Stürmer was revealing himself more and more as the agent of an absurd, confused and suspicious policy, and was surrounded by a deplorable set of

people. At the same time the Ministers who had acquired the greatest popularity disappeared one by one—all those who were known to be animated by the desire to work in with national representation and who were sincerely and whole-heartedly devoted to the common cause of the Entente. M. Klaritonoff, Controller of the Empire; M. Krivocheïn, Minister for Agriculture and a continuator of the wise agrarian policy of Stolypin[1]; Count Ignatieff, the congenial Minister for Education; finally General Polivanoff, whose admirable work for the reconstitution of the armed forces of Russia in the very midst of the war was to bear such splendid fruit during the summer of 1916—were all dismissed one after the other. All these changes were explained by the influence—increasing day by day—of the Empress Alexandra who leant on Stürmer and his acolytes, whilst the infamous Rasputin and the Vyruboff served as speaking-tubes through which the most harmful and most suspicious characters obtained a hearing and ruled the poor hysterical woman. The disreputable reactionaries, the worst schemers, were soon brought into prominence and began to find their way into the Tsarskoe Palace. Amongst all sensible people of Russian society there was soon a general outcry. What was Russia being led into? Where would the scandal stop? And what was the Emperor about in all this?

Alas! it was becoming clear to every one that the unfortunate Nicolas II. was abandoning his real power more and more into the hands of his wife. In October, 1915, he had assumed the supreme command of his armies by dismissing the Grand-Duke Nicolas, who was appointed Viceroy of the Caucasus. This was done at a time when our armies were in a most difficult and dangerous position, the Germans having just advanced as far as Courland, White-Russia and Volhynia. To

[1] This consisted in decreasing gradually on one side the *latifundia*, and in increasing by all the means possible that class of peasants who were proprietors on their own account and not as members of the *mir*.

assume the responsibility of commanding under such circumstances might seem a great and noble sacrifice, and many Russians—I amongst them—considered that the Emperor had done well in assuming the supreme responsibility. Moreover, one hoped that this decision, by removing him from the unwholesome and mad atmosphere of Tsarskoe-Selo and by bringing him forcibly into closer touch with his generals—all animated by the same patriotic anxiety as most of Russian public opinion was—would have a beneficial action on the home policy of Russia. But the men who understood the situation best did not share this hope. Hence at a Council held in October, 1915, all the Ministers who were described as "Liberal" had spoken, in the presence of Nicolas II., in a frank and explicit way against the change of Generalissimo and the Emperor's departure for Headquarters. Sazonoff and General Polivanoff were the most vehement on the subject.

It was even then being said that His Majesty was offended with the opposers and had decided on principle to dismiss them. Towards the end of October, 1915, there was much persistent talk of M. Sazonoff's retirement. The President of the Council, the aged and feeble M. Goremykin, was, it was said, to be appointed Chancellor of the Empire, with M. Schebeko at his side to share in the part of director of Foreign Affairs. But this change did not take place. In June, 1916, M. Sazonoff was still in office, whereas all his former friends in the Cabinet had been dismissed and replaced by Stürmer's creatures or by people who were absolutely inexperienced and new to their work.[1]

The presence of Nicolas II. at General Headquarters and his absence from Tsarskoe were of no use—as well-informed people had foreseen—either to the affairs of the Empire or those of the Army. The Empress Alexandra's influence was becoming greater and

[1] With one exception: M. Klaritonoff's successor was M. Pokrovsky, a man of undeniable intellectual worth and high moral qualities; I shall have occasion to allude to him again.

greater; sometimes the Emperor was summoned to her, sometimes she herself went to Mohilev, occasionally accompanied by the four young Grand-Duchesses. At Mohilev Nicolas II. continued to lead his usual life side by side with the strenuous life of G.H.Q. The Chief of the General Staff of the Russian armies, General Alexieff, assumed as a matter of fact the whole direction of the war; the Army heads and the heads of departments had to deal with him alone, and he gave daily reports to the Emperor who, plunged in the study of the matter supplied to him by the General Staff and of the voluminous papers which his Ministers brought to Mohilev, hardly found time to make occasional trips to visit the troops of such and such an army, in order to display during ordinary reviews the same imperturbably benevolent face and to utter the same few and carefully chosen words. There was no intimacy with the generals who lived at or came to G.H.Q.; always the same surroundings as at Tsarskoe; meals were taken with the same uninteresting set of people and with the little Tsarevitch, whom the Emperor had brought with him and whom he kept with him until December, 1916.

Among the people who passed through Stockholm during the year 1916, I saw, with the sincerest pleasure, the worthy M. Odier, Minister of the Swiss Confederation to Petrograd, where his high qualities had gained him many friendships. During our conversation, I asked M. Odier whether he knew the tutor—a young Swiss—just engaged for the Tsarevitch, who up till then had only had an old sailor to look after him, as his august parents undertook all the details of his education themselves. M. Odier replied that he knew the tutor in question very well, that he was a cultivated, conscientious and distinguished man, and that he had already succeeded in gaining the affection of his pupil; they were together at Mohilev and both shared the simple, well-regulated and studious existence of the Emperor, who found time to give his son lessons in Russian and history and who

liked to have the child working beside him whilst he himself pored over maps and the reports of his Ministers and Generals. The young Swiss tutor, according to M. Odier, was full of admiration for the goodness, the kindness, the simplicity, the calm serenity of the Emperor. And now when one conjures up that touching picture of the father and son—the Sovereign and the heir of a mighty Empire—working side by side in the peace of a small room, and when one is then seized by the nightmare of the tales of the appalling butchery of Ekaterinburg, of the father clasping in his arms that same child who had fainted at sight of the guns levelled at them by bloodthirsty brutes,[1] one is filled with grievous and deep pity, such as no other drama in history has ever evoked!

But on the other hand what a curious character, that of this Sovereign who, at a time of the supreme straining of all the forces of the country, of imminent perils, faced by death which was hovering over millions of his subjects and above all over him and his, yet possessed the faculty of preserving the same quiet habits, of cultivating the same touching and eminently domestic virtues, just as if all personal effort was forbidden him, all direction of events impossible, and as if there was nothing left to him from henceforth but to bow to destiny ("to the decrees of Providence"—he would have corrected me!), simply accomplishing his daily duties, and having his share of innocent pleasures!

"Il y a des lacs limpides dans nos forêts profondes ;
Couverts d'une fraîche verdure et fleuris sont leurs bords,
Mais cette herbe et ces fleurs recouvrent des marais sans fond,
Qui engloutissent le pâtre et le troupeau imprudents.
Le peuple dit que ces lacs recouvrent des églises
(Que la miséricorde divine fit disparaître devant des hordes sans merci),
Et par de claires et calmes soirées un son de cloches retentit de leur profondeur
Et des cantiques sacrés.

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[1] Pray God these tales be not true!

Tel m'apparaît le Tsar Théodore:
Un lieu saint mais pas sûr. . . . Dans son âme
Qui ne sait distinguer l'ami de l'ennemi,
Habitent l'amour, la bonté et la prière ;
Un doux son de cloches semble y retentir. . . .
Mais à quoi bon toute cette bonté et toute cette sainteté,
Lorsque ni l'empire ni ses serviteurs n'y trouvent un ferme appui ?"

It is in these terms that Alexis Tolstoy in one of his historic dramas has described, through the lips of Boris Godunoff, the character of the Tsar Theodore,[1] the pious and timid son of John the Terrible. These verses appeared in 1868, the very year in which the future Emperor, Nicolas II., was born, and it is as if the poet—the *Vates* as Victor Hugo would have said—had seen before him the image of the most indulgent, the most mystical, the weakest and the most unfortunate of the Sovereigns of the tragic dynasty of the Romanoffs. And yet it is this Sovereign who clung so firmly to his *autocracy*; it is he who considered it a crime against history and against his people to renounce his empty privileges of omnipotence and who intended to hand these down in their original integrity to this same adored son!

In June, 1916, the offensive in Galicia was begun, commanded by General Brussiloff, and the heroic—and

[1] "The Tsar Theodore Joannovitch," the second part of the well-known trilogy. Count Alexis Tolstoy, lyrical poet, who was rather popular in Russia, must not be confused with his cousin the famous Count Leo Tolstoy.

"There are some limpid lakes in our dense dark forests, covered with green reeds and flowers near their banks ; but these reeds and these flowers mask bottomless swamps which swallow up the imprudent shepherd and his sheep. People say that these lakes conceal churches (which Divine Pity wished to shield from merciless hordes), and on clear and calm evenings a sound of bells echoes from their depths, and sacred canticles. Such, meseems, is the Tsar Theodore : a holy shrine but not sure. . . . In his soul, which cannot tell friend from foe, dwell love, goodness and prayer ; a sweet sound of bells seems to echo there. But what avails all this goodness and all this holiness if neither Empire nor servants find in them a firm stay ?"

at first fortunate—incidents of this offensive drew the attention of Russia and of Europe temporarily away from the dangers of our domestic situation. The operations of our armies had been originally fixed for the month of July and were to have coincided with an Allied offensive. But the Austrians' attack on the Asiago plateau, by placing Italy in danger, hastened the Russian offensive by a month.

The operations were crowned with success from the outset. It was during a dinner which we were giving to some colleagues that I received the telegrams containing the communiqués from our G.H.Q. on the taking of Lutsk, the breaking through the strong Austrian lines, the capture of tens of thousands of prisoners. From this day operations developed with increasing success. The Russians were soon occupying Eastern Galicia again, and the army of General Scherbatcheff, hurriedly leaving their quarters in Bessarabia, succeeded in reoccupying the Bukowina after sanguinary fighting. The spoil already amounted to hundreds of thousands of Austrian prisoners and thousands of guns. Throughout the month of June and during the early part of July the general political atmosphere appeared to be clearer. Hopes of complete victory were dawning for all the Allies, although the German front was still intact in Volhynia and in Courland, and although the Anglo-French offensive was beset by delays and difficulties.

Such was the position when our parliamentarians who had passed through Stockholm at the end of March, stopped there again on their return from London, Paris and Rome.

They did not all arrive together. First came: M. Protopopoff, Vice-President of the Duma, and two elect members of the Council of the Empire, Count Dmitri Olsufieff (of the Monarchist Centre) and Professor Vassilieff (of the Left). Their short stay in Stockholm gave rise to an incident which was subsequently greatly commented on.

The very day of their arrival I invited these gentlemen to dinner at the summer-restaurant, the Hasselbaken, where they were to meet some Swedish financiers in order to discuss the question of the hour: commercial exchanges between Sweden and Russia. M. Protopopoff replied that he would be enchanted to come, but he begged me to invite also—if I thought it suitable—some travelling companions of his, M. and Madame Polak. I at once sent them an invitation, and that evening at the Hasselbaken the young Polak couple were amongst my guests. The husband was that same Polak whom I mentioned in a previous chapter and who had been entrusted with a politico-commercial mission to Bulgaria. His wife, *née* Achkenazi, was a charming young woman, intelligent and lively; she was wearing two rosettes of St. George, tokens of courage displayed with the ambulances at the front. It did not take me long to discover that M. Protopopoff was a complete victim to the charms of his delightful and fascinating travelling-companion.

The next day I was to take my three compatriots to see M. Wallenberg, who had been apprised of their presence in Stockholm. After an excursion and a lunch which they had arranged with these same Polaks, M. Protopopoff and Count Olsufieff—a pleasant and intelligent man of the world—asked me to meet them and Professor Vassilieff at the hotel where they were staying. When we arrived there Protopopoff said to me, in front of his two colleagues: "Monsieur, I must tell you that after our visit to Wallenberg I am going to have a very interesting interview; I am to meet a German at the Polaks' over the teacups. It is a certain Herr *Warburg*, a great Hamburg trader with whom the Polaks were connected through business and friendship before the war, and who, having met them here by chance, has suggested calling on them."

"But, M. Protopopoff," I said, "I could tell you straight away all that the German trader will say to you; he will deplore the misunderstandings brought about

by the war, will utter fervent prayers for the restoration of peace, and will insinuate that *with a few small concessions on our part* this blessed peace could be at once restored. Is it worth your while to have a conversation of that kind?"

"But, my dear Minister, it would interest me enormously all the same to see for myself the frame of mind of a German at the present time when we are on the road to victory. It might constitute valuable information for St. Petersburg. Moreover, I will repeat to you all that this German says."

"In that case I can make no objection," I replied.

Count Olsufieff also manifested a desire to "meet the Boche"; Professor Vassilieff, a quiet, thoughtful man, preferred to keep away. I was somewhat shocked at this meeting to which Protopopoff had consented without first asking the advice of the Russian Minister; but I did not consider myself called upon to guide the head of our parliamentary mission. And what is more, he would not have listened to me.

All the four of us then went to see M. Wallenberg. There my impressions were disastrous ones. Protopopoff, who the evening before had been excited and extremely loquacious, definitely took the bit between his teeth as soon as he found himself in the presence of the eminent Swedish statesman. Without allowing M. Wallenberg or his own colleagues to get a word in, he held a monologue for half an hour with disconcerting volubility on the political and commercial questions relative to our relations with Sweden, and on the impressions he had formed in England and France. At last, recollecting the interview awaiting him, the Vice-President of the Duma closed his monologue and we took leave of M. Wallenberg, who looked at me with a somewhat dumbfounded expression. We went out. Protopopoff promptly disappeared.

"Gentlemen," I could not help exclaiming to Olsufieff and Professor Vassilieff, "what on earth is the matter with your colleague to-day? I was on tenter-hooks the

whole time! Was that the way to talk to a foreign statesman, above all to a Swede?"

I saw a bitter smile on both their faces. "But it has been like this during our whole journey," replied Olsufieff; "he allowed no one else to talk, he was always thrusting himself forward."

"*Always* is perhaps saying too much," amended the cautious M. Vassilieff; "but latterly he has certainly become excited and loquacious to a degree!"

Three or four hours later when I went to fetch these gentlemen in a motor-car to take them to the station, Protopopoff related to Professor Vassilieff and me (Count Olsufieff had taken part in the Polak tea-party) his conversation with Herr Warburg; the latter had apparently hastened to express—as I had predicted—complaints about the war, and his desire for immediate peace-making.

"But I did not allow him to talk too much" (I believe you! thought I). "I told him how clearly assured was the ultimate victory of the Russians and Allies which would end the war. Yes, war is a ghastly thing, but it has its good side. It has taught France the need for prayer, it has brought compulsory service to England, and the suppression of drunkenness to Russia." Since the day before this was the third time that I heard that aphorism, of which Protopopoff seemed inordinately proud (it appears that he had given vent to it countless times during his journey). At the station we bade one another farewell, and the three gentlemen left for Petrograd. The Polak couple stayed on a few days in Stockholm, but I had no opportunity of seeing them again.

On my return from the station I sent for the one of my colleagues who knew most about the affairs of Germany, and I made inquiries about this Herr Warburg whom MM. Protopopoff and Olsufieff had just been meeting. I learnt that he was not the famous Warburg of Hamburg, but a brother or a cousin of his; that he was on the German committee for revictualling, and at

the head of the Scandinavian section of that committee; that in that capacity he made frequent journeys to Stockholm, Christiania, and Copenhagen, and that although he did not figure in the list of the members of the German Legation in Sweden, he often saw Baron von Lucius.

Later on, when recalling Protopopoff's last journey through Stockholm, I came to the conclusion that it was from the journey to our western Allies that must date the beginning of that nervous or *mental* state of the Vice-President of the Duma, a state which eventually made him the absolutely irresponsible factor in the worst misfortunes of Russia. It was decidedly not the same man as the one with whom I had talked in March, and who seemed intelligent and well-balanced, although somewhat of an actor and slightly conceited. This time I had to deal with an excited being, inordinately loquacious, and who jumped, without apparent reason, from one subject to another, while the failings inherent in his character seemed to be exaggerated and caricatured.

A few days afterwards the Controller of the Empire, M. Pokrovsky, arrived; he had been taking part, in London and Paris, in conferences and parleys, the object of which was the unification of the economic measures and efforts of the Allies. I knew that he had made an excellent impression in France as well as in England by his tact, his cleverness, the clearness of his ideas, and his thorough knowledge of financial matters. For many years he had been head assistant to Kokovtzoff at the Treasury, and it was he whom Kokovtzoff recommended as his most appropriate successor. Pokrovsky had left the Treasury with his chief; but at the first opportunity he had been given the ministerial post of Controller of the Empire, a post to which his eminent services gave him every right.

I had the honour of knowing M. Pokrovsky, but very superficially, never having exchanged ideas with him

nor discussed any questions. Hence I was most agreeably impressed when I had the good fortune to converse at great length with this very intelligent and eminently congenial man. I disclosed our political position in Sweden to him, and the economic questions (exchange of produce, technical and military orders, transit, etc.) with which I had to deal, and which I wished to settle as quickly and as satisfactorily as possible. We talked in this strain for two good hours. I admired the lucidity of my guest's mind, and the value of the questions he asked me. The following day I begged his permission to present him to M. Wallenberg. "This will be my revenge for the Protopopoff visit," I thought, as I accompanied M. Pokrovsky to the Swedish Foreign Office. I thought it quite superfluous to take part in the conversation. "Gentlemen," I said, when I had presented them to one another, "you are both particularly well versed in economic and financial questions, so I will not disturb you." And I left.

Two hours later Pokrovsky came to see me. "Well!" I said, "and what are your impressions?"

"Excellent! We have reviewed all the leading questions. Thanks to the imformation and matter supplied by you, I had a most valuable discussion with M. Wallenberg, who on his side was full of good sense, and also most friendly. I even ventured to outline with him a scheme or rather a conventional programme dealing with all the questions which we discussed verbally. Here is the little statement; do you approve of it?"

I read the statement carefully, and returned it to M. Pokrovsky, assuring him that for my part I could only thank him for it, and wish for the prompt conclusion of an arrangement on the principles which he had just worked out with M. Wallenberg. The day after M. Pokrovsky's departure I asked Wallenberg what he thought of him. "Highly congenial, and possessed of deep knowledge. It was a pleasure to me to talk with him. We even allowed ourselves to

negotiate without your being present." "I know, and I am delighted about it; if only your draft of the arrangement could be accepted, and above all carried out!"

Besides his ability, M. Pokrovsky had impressed me favourably by the complete absence of all bureaucratic pomp. Any other Minister would have brought with him at least two or three subordinates mainly occupied in giving their chief his cue, in advertising him well amongst the natives and in flattering him cleverly at meals—which is a tremendous aid to digestion! The Controller of the Empire only had his son with him, a charming young man who had just completed his studies and who was going into the Army; his two elder sons had been at the front since the outbreak of war.

Pokrovsky was closely followed by a whole group of our parliamentarians, the remaining members of the Duma, and three members of the Council of the Empire: Prince Lobanoff, Baron Rosen, and Count Sigismund Wielopolski. The Swedes, on their side, had arranged beforehand a large luncheon party in honour of these guests at that same Hasselbaken restaurant, where they were to be received by the most notable Swedish manufacturers and financiers, also by representatives of the Press.

The day before, we made an expedition, with MM. Miliukoff, Schingareff, Itchas, and a Lithuanian poet whose name I have forgotten, to that beautiful spot Saltsjöbaden, and we dined at the restaurant. The expedition was thoroughly successful and favoured by perfect weather. Schingareff and one of his colleagues were rather late in arriving at the meeting-place, but they arrived at last, and were profuse in apologies: "At one of the places where our boat stopped we were told we could get here on foot through the forest, and we could not resist the pleasure of an hour's walk in this divine weather. It was truly delightful; it reminded me so vividly of the forests of Russia."

I can still recall the very pleasant and typically

Russian face of the eminent cadet deputy, his high and intelligent forehead, his rather thick lips, and his smile showing all his strong white teeth. A country doctor, employed by the "Zemstvo" of one of our central provinces, he was, from the beginning of the Duma, one of the most prominent and most esteemed members of his party. Scrupulously disinterested in his private life—a noble life without blot or stain—he had specialised in economic questions, more especially those of rural interest. His speeches, always admirably padded and always a little too long, but logical and sincere, provoked rejoinders which were quite as circumstantial, as sincere and as well padded, from M. Kokovtzoff. They were more like academic than political encounters, discussions of two schools rather than of preconceived opinions; and these discussions often led to wise and practical "decrees of the Senate." Steadfast faith in the Russian people, intense love for this people and for his country, formed the basis of the political and private character of this good man. Turguenieff sketched some of these types in his later novels. The Bolsheviks murdered him as soon as they could. Schingareff and another eminent member of his party, M. Kokochkin, were lying rather seriously ill in a hospital in Petrograd, when a band of Red Guards broke open the doors and riddled the two men with bullets *in their beds.* MM. Lenin and Trotsky pretended afterwards that it had been a "mistake."

The banquet at Hasselbaken was most successful. One of the members of our parliamentary delegation made a very well-turned speech in which he advocated the development of the closest economic relations and the cultivation of feelings of friendship between Sweden and Russia. The Swedes replied to this in the same strain. Every one talked quite intimately, and some journalists who a few short months previously had hurled their thunder-bolts at Russia, were the first to display feelings of sympathy towards their Russian guests. At this banquet I could prove with a certain

amount of satisfaction to what an extent Russo-Swedish relations had changed to the advantage of both countries since the days when I took up my post in Stockholm, and that in spite of the World War, at the outbreak of which Swedish sympathies had seemed to be all on the side of Germany, and notwithstanding that this war had brought so much tribulation and so many trials to commerce and to the economic position of Sweden.

Baron Rosen and Count S. Wielopolski remained on a few days after the departure of their colleagues, and naturally we saw a great deal of them. Rosen, ex-Ambassador of Russia to Washington, had been my chief in Belgrade in 1895 and 1896, and since then I had always borne in mind his great kindness to me and his broad and wise political views. During the year 1915 he caused a great deal of talk on account of an impromptu speech he made at the Council of the Empire, and in which, without any regard for the reactionary breeze which was blowing then in high circles, he criticised the policy of intolerance of the Government and of Russian public opinion towards the heterogeneous elements of the Empire: Poles, Finns, Israelites. He did not touch on the Baltic question, not wishing most likely to be judge and plaintiff. But what surprised me more was that he did not say one word on the subject of the constitutional guarantees of Russia, or about the despotism of the State Police, which still continued to make itself felt, just as if national representation had never been granted. Now, without these guarantees and without the free and sovereign exercise of justice over the whole extent of the Empire, how could the question of the autonomies and of equality in the eyes of the law for the heterogeneous nationalities have been solved? In Stockholm I heard Baron Rosen say some things which might lead one to believe that he considered the immediate conclusion of peace essential for Russia; and at the same time he lavished the highest praise on the endurance and patriotism of the English, for whom he had always had a marked predilection and

whom he had just been seeing at work. I could not make out what was at the back of his mind; I understood later on.

Count Sigismund Wielopolski, whom I had seen a great deal of formerly, was very much upset about the Polish question. He knew that from various sides the Emperor was being advised to solve this question promptly by supplementing the manifesto of the ex-Generalissimo of the Russian armies by an Imperial declaration which should decide in a more definite manner the future régime of Poland. But there were many controversies on the subject of this régime; and Wielopolski was expecting to be summoned to G.H.Q. to submit to the Emperor the point of view and the desiderata of the Polish party who accepted the necessity of a sensible union with Russia in the sphere of foreign policy and of economic interests.

One evening when we were talking about the war, we naturally spoke of our sons, who had been great friends during their time at the military college, and who had got their commissions the same day in the Infantry of the Guard. He was expecting the Guards to go into action again, and the thought bound us by ties of mutual sympathy.

These gentlemen left Stockholm soon after, and all the interest of the moment was concentrated, as far as I was concerned, again on the military operations in Galicia. These were not proceeding as rapidly as at the beginning; the Germans having thrown large forces into Volhynia, and stubbornly contested the railway centre at Kovel. But only a few days had passed and my attention was again distracted from the events of the war by a political occurrence of a very serious nature.

One morning towards the end of July the representative of our telegraphic agency came to me very much upset with the news that Sazonoff had resigned and had been replaced by . . . Stürmer! At first I

refused to believe it, but I soon had to yield to evidence. I was sincerely and deeply affected by the news.

In the course of these reminiscences I have often mentioned my former colleague and chief. The policy adopted by us in 1913 on the Bulgarian question could not meet with my approval and I said as much openly; I also could not refrain from criticising the lack of foresight with regard to what was shaping itself in Germany and Austria, and I was astonished at the imperturbable calm of M. Sazonoff; but this criticism did not prevent me seeing him as he really was, that is to say, an essentially honest man, and a judicious and sometimes even perspicacious diplomat, when he formed his own judgments and did not allow himself to be influenced by his surroundings and his intimate friends, of whom only one or two at the outside were his equals in intelligence and character. And to the minds of those who considered that the World War was inevitable, and that Russia *might* come out of it victorious and with valuable acquisitions—*I was not among the number*—M. Sazonoff's policy must have appeared absolutely impeccable, at least in its broad outlines. He had counted on the absolute fidelity of our Allies and his hopes were completely realised; as soon as he was in office he had sketched out an agreement *in spe* with Italy in the sphere of Eastern questions, and particularly that of the Adriatic, and Italy ended by abandoning her former alliances and siding with us; he had openly demanded Constantinople and the Straits for Russia as the price of our sacrifice in the World War, and the Allies had ended by recognising our rights to this supreme recompense;[1] but first and foremost he enjoyed the complete and unlimited confidence of our Allies, a confidence he fully deserved, for from the outbreak of war he had considered their cause and their interests just as sacred as those of Russia herself. To sum up: one might criticise, one might disapprove of, Sazonoff's pre-war policy; but once war had broken out he became

[1] And on this question the whole of Russia was then with Sazonoff.

the right man in the right place, and one could not interfere with him without endangering the result of the terrible conflict in which the world was plunged.

Hence Sazonoff's retirement was in any case a sharp blow struck at those who were fighting with us; but to replace him by a personage as suspicious and of such a bad reputation as Stürmer might seem to be a blow *struck at the alliance itself.* This is how it was viewed in Paris, London and Rome. If Sazonoff had been replaced by another diplomat, M. de Giers, for instance, or even M. Schebeko (of which there had been a question at one time), our allies would certainly have greatly regretted his departure, but they would not have considered that the cause of the alliance itself was in peril. But as it was, Stürmer's appointment endorsed the legend which was promptly circulated (perhaps by German agents themselves) and spread abroad in Russia and in Europe. The legend ran that the Empress Alexandra, who was daily taking a more active part in the affairs of the State, actuated by her Germanic sentiments, wished to save her former country at all costs by bringing about a separate peace between the latter and Russia; that M. Stürmer—of German origin—was her agent and her accomplice, whilst Rasputin was in receipt of Boche money to keep up the Empress's pacifist sentiments. This legend was untrue. The Empress had never been an agent of the Berlin Court; on the contrary at one moment her sympathies had been frankly English. Rasputin—whose mentality was not far removed from that of the Cossack who, on being asked by a friend what he would do if he became Tsar, replied: "I should promptly steal a hundred roubles and bolt!"—Rasputin accepted a hundred roubles here and five hundred there from the numerous people who solicited his protection; he did not hide himself from them in any way and was perfectly satisfied, loaded as he was with presents and supported, as well as his family, at the expense of the Court. Stürmer was not more "German" by origin than many

other Russians who, in spite of their foreign name, were often unimpeachable patriots. But in himself this individual, of a low class, and always *to be bought*, constituted a real danger to those most weighty interests which had been confided to him. Fortunately he had not the time to perpetrate deeds of real treachery, but his presence in the Government injured to a certain extent Russian effort in the war, if only through the wide breach which the promotion of *a Stürmer* caused between the Emperor and the public opinion of the country.

I had not recovered from the emotion which the news of M. Sazonoff's departure had roused in me, as in my allied colleagues, when a telegram was received at the Legation begging that the news of the death of our youngest son, killed in action on the 28th July, should be broken to us as gently as possible. His body, as well as those of his comrades killed in the battle, was to be brought to Tsarskoe-Selo.

We were utterly unprepared for this grievous news; we did not know that the Imperial Guard had been taking part near Kovel in some glorious fighting, but which, alas! was to be rendered fruitless by the marshes of the Stohed.

Destined by fate to be in the attacking party, my son, who was under the terrible fire of modern warfare for the first time, did his whole duty. When his captain fell he took command of his company and led it to the enemy trenches. He was shot dead at once. His men, deprived of their officers and having had all their non-commissioned officers killed or wounded, succeeded even so in getting into the enemy's trench. (And one year later the soldiers of the same regiment were the worst rioters in the Army and deliberately left the battlefields.) "Your son died like a hero," wrote the colonel of his regiment to me, "leading his men to the attack of strong enemy positions. He died during a glorious fight which will remain one of the finest pages in the history of his regiment."

But we only heard all these details when we arrived at Petrograd. Meanwhile the confusion was so great in our Foreign Office, suddenly deprived of its head, that I had had to wait a whole week for permission to come and attend the obsequies of my son!

We paid the last honours to his mortal remains at an imposing and never-to-be-forgotten ceremony, when we realised to what an extent a regiment is a real family —a family that the blood of its members cemented more firmly every day.

Two days after I thought it my duty to go and see Sazonoff, who was still residing in the Foreign Office. I expressed my sincere feelings of regret. "Our reactionary party is really mad!" I said amongst other things. "How can they, given the state of people's minds and the very comprehensible suspicions of the Allies, risk an appointment like that of Stürmer?" "You are wrong, my dear M. Nekludoff," interrupted Sazonoff, "the reactionary party has nothing to do with it; it has ceased to exist for the last few months, having become fused in the moderate Right. There is a *band of malefactors* who at the present time are endeavouring to assume the reins of government; and Stürmer is one of the heads of this band." M. Sazonoff went on to tell me that almost on the eve of his enforced resignation he had been to Mohilev, where the Emperor had received him most graciously and had approved of all that he had submitted to His Majesty's decision.

I paid no other visits. We stayed with an intimate friend of my wife's, who surrounded us with the most touching care. Only relations and real friends were allowed to come and see us. The first person my wife wished to see was Count S. Wielopolski, whose son had been killed the same day as ours. We had a long talk; besides the sorrow inflicted on him by the death of this beloved child, the Count was terribly anxious with regard to the fate of Poland, about which nothing was settled. He was still awaiting permission to go and see the Emperor, but this permission did not arrive. "I

understand your state of mind," I said to him. "*I* know why and for whom my son has died; and *you* do not even know if the death of yours is a holocaust offered to your country, or if it is a useless sacrifice." Weeping bitterly the poor Count pressed my hand.

The excellent M. Pokrovsky also hastened to visit us, and his sincere sympathy with our sorrow touched us deeply. I went a second time to see Sazonoff, who was staying temporarily almost next door to us. I told him about Protopopoff's last journey through Sweden and his meeting with Warburg, which had just got into the papers and been vehemently criticised by the *Novoye Vremya*. "But Protopopoff told me all that on his return here, and I saw absolutely nothing to object to in it," said Sazonoff. "He has brought back on the whole some very interesting impressions of his journey, and the last time that I was at G.H.Q. I earnestly recommended the Emperor to send for him and to make him relate these impressions. I have not heard since whether His Majesty has acted on my suggestion."

In spite of the above-mentioned opinion of Sazonoff's on the Protopopoff-Warburg incident, I thought it necessary—on the advice of an experienced friend—to go and see the Vice-President of the Duma and to discuss it with him. Protopopoff knew nothing of the cruel sorrow which had befallen us, and uttered many expressions of sympathy.

I then embarked on the question which had taken me to him. "The newspapers," I said, "have been making such a fuss about your meeting with Warburg that I consider it imperative—with your assistance—to refresh my memory with regard to your last stay in Stockholm." I recapitulated all that he had said and all that I had replied to him. "Is that right?" "Perfectly; that was exactly it," was his answer. The speaker no longer betrayed any of the same agitation as in Stockholm. He rather seemed to be taciturn, pensive and absent-minded. He said he was expecting to be

summoned to G.H.Q., and it was probably this that was making him dreamy.

Although we were seeing very few people, my impressions of Petrograd were frankly unfavourable ones. Our offensive was dying down. The Guard and the army corps which had started the attack on Kovel so well were sinking into the Volhynian marshes, and their forces were reduced by more than a third. In town every one appeared more then ever to be tired of the war; they were dozing. One evening when, from the window, I was admiring the extensive view of the quays, of the Neva and the sky, already autumnal and lit up by the soft tints of sunset, a very young friend who was at my side said: "Are you looking, as I am, to see if a Zeppelin is not coming over Petrograd? That would really do some good! that might wake up all these people here and restore some of their patriotism." "Alas!" I replied, "you are voicing a feeling of which I cannot rid myself since I have been in Petrograd!"

The day before our departure for Stockholm, I at last made up my mind to call on the new Minister for Foreign Affairs. I was received in the big office where I had seen M. de Giers, Prince Lobanoff, Count Lamsdorf and others seated, where I had talked at great length with Sazonoff five months previously. I saw in their place an individual with a common face and manners which were completely at variance with the surroundings. Everything about him was sham, one felt it in his every word, in his every movement. Sham simplicity, sham good-nature, sham courtesy, sham dignity. We had known his white hair as red; his backbone now stiff and straight had formerly been servilely bent. I felt that he was worried by his new rôle—which spoke rather in his favour, and by my presence—which spoke decidedly in mine. Nevertheless, my antipathy was in no way lessened thereby. He gave me no information relative to Swedish affairs, pleading his inexperience in the

matter; but he did not question me either. He confined himself to a few patriotic commonplaces, and expressed his submission to the will of the Emperor who had *imposed* on him these functions—so new to him. The shades of the famous Boyar *Ordyn-Nastchokin*, Chancellor to the Tsar Alexis Mikhaïlovitch, were once more evoked, and the interview terminated. This *Ordyn-Nastchokin* was quoted to all comers with good reason. All who wished to please Nicolas II. compared him as frequently as possible to the "very calm," the "very gentle"[1] Tsar, the father of the fiery and cruel Peter the Great; hence naturally he, M. Stürmer, ought to figure as the reproduction of the pious and enlightened Boyar, the intimate friend of Alexis. I went out somewhat disgusted. "It is not worth while to get upset about it," I said to one of the exalted functionaries of the Foreign Office whom I met on the stairs and who began to "slate" his new chief. "That individual will not remain here more than two months. Mark my words; it is now the 1st September, by the 1st November he will have left." I was only wrong by a fortnight. And I learnt meanwhile that my prophecy had been faithfully repeated to the subject of it.

During my short stay in Petrograd, I had an opportunity of getting to know the contents of the minute that M. Sazonoff had presented to the Emperor on the Polish question. It was a scheme for the new autonomous Statute of Poland. Wielopolski and his friends who had read it were not pleased with it. According to this minute, at the head of the new Poland there was to be a Governor-General *appointed* by the Emperor, and not a "Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom" *elected*, or at least recommended to the Imperial choice, by Polish national representation. This was the principal point on which the opinion of Poles of Russian persuasion differed from that of M. Sazonoff; there were also others. On the whole, the scheme in question gave to

[1] "Tishaïchi Tsar."

Poland the autonomy that Finland had had before the reforms denounced by the Finns. There was also an intentional gap in the scheme. The Poles asked that in the provinces of White-Russia and the Ukraine their kinsmen, whose rights had been subjected to considerable restrictions,[1] should be placed on an absolutely equal footing with their Russian fellow-citizens; now there was no mention of this in the scheme.

Considering the tremendous stock of grievances which for more than a century had been accumulating in Poland against the Russians—and vice-versâ; considering also that the former Finnish statute had not spared us either the hostility of certain Finnish parties or the temptation to infringe this statute ourselves, I was not at all satisfied with Sazonoff's scheme. I heard later that the latter had sketched out his minute on far broader and more liberal lines, but that having given it to M. Krzyzanowski—former Secretary to the Empire[2]—to correct, the latter, under pretext of co-ordinating the future Polish constitution with the general principles and the necessities of the Empire and of specifying the judicial terms of this constitution, altered the whole spirit of the scheme. Now, if M. Sazonoff allowed himself to be influenced by considerations which demanded the restriction of the future liberties of Poland, what opposition would a M. Stürmer not raise

[1] These were mainly large landed proprietors belonging to the Polish nobility. The restrictions concerned the right of purchase of land and tended to diminish the number of Polish proprietors in favour of Russian purchasers or indigenous peasants (Ukranians, White-Russians or Lithuanians).

[2] The Secretary of the Empire was the Director of the Chancellery and the Editor of the Council of the Empire, who, before the institution of the Duma, alone framed and elaborated the text of the laws. The post of Secretary to the Empire was hence a most important one. M. Krzyzanowski, a very clever and experienced lawyer, was of Polish origin, and in his youth was looked on as very Liberal. A "turncoat" and having passed over to the Conservative camp, he had, under Stolypin, an influence which our Liberals condemned as fatal. It was at his brother-in-law Stolypin's that Sazonoff became intimate with Krzyzanowski.

to these liberties? And in spite of all the honeyed assurances of the latter, the Poles who were the most favourably inclined towards Russia and towards Nicolas II. realised that for the time being nothing good was to be expected for their country. All this confirmed me still more in my belief that there was in reality but one way only of solving the Polish question definitely, and of freeing Russia from a lot of internal worries: *i.e.* to grant to Poland, within the confines of really Polish territory, absolute independence and complete sovereignty.

I said above that the public spirit of the capital, with regard to the war, was not at all what I should have wished. Quite at the end of my short stay in Petrograd, there was a semblance of movement and of enthusiasm roused by Rumania's entry into the war; but this movement was hardly perceptible.

M. Ordyn-Nastchokin—*alias* Stürmer—having become Minister for Foreign Affairs, naturally wished to prove his worth from the outset. With this object in view, he took care to dispatch to Bukharest a kind of ultimatum, in which our Cabinet warned the Rumanian Government that if Rumania did not come into the war at once Russia would withdraw all the promises she had made and all the concessions she had agreed to. As for several months already Rumania had worked on the lines of "virile decisions" through a French special mission, and as our advance in Galicia and in the Bukowina was awaking the aspirations of Rumanian patriotism, the step taken by M. Stürmer was not long in reaping the desired result, and on the 28th August, 1916, the Rumanian troops entered Hungary. On this occasion there were some "popular" demonstrations in Petrograd, but they were meagre and half-hearted. Our Minister to Bukharest, M. Poklewski-Kozell,[1] a wise and clever diplomat, had never been enthusiastic about Rumanian intervention, although he cultivated

[1] I mentioned him in Chapter XVIII.

the best relations with the society and Government of Bukharest. With regard to this, he was even the object of an intrigue got up by a kind of naval agent, inclined to drink and very bellicose, and by the Counsellor to the Legation. This intrigue nearly caused Poklewski's fall; but, as a former comrade and personal friend of Sazonoff's, he had only to come to Petrograd to frustrate all these machinations and to cause the Minister to uphold him in exalted circles. But then, and with Stürmer in office, Poklewski was considered incapable of facing the fresh situation, and a new Envoy Extraordinary was appointed to Bukharest, in the person of the amiable General Mossoloff,[1] head of the Lord Chamberlain's Office. Nevertheless, Stürmer did not make up his mind to "shelve" Poklewski entirely, and so there were two Russian representatives in Rumania. Alas! this diplomatic plethora was of scant assistance to our new allies in the campaign—disastrous to them—which was about to open.

On the 28th August, towards mid-day—it was the eve of my departure for Stockholm—I met M. Sazonoff, accompanied by Baron Schilling, in the Square of the Winter Palace. We stopped to talk. "I saw you coming out of the Foreign Office," said Sazonoff to me; "what have you heard there about the Rumanians? Can one consider their entry into the war an accomplished fact?"

"Yes, yes! the deed is done," I replied; "it will be announced in the papers to-day."

"Thank God! Thank God!" exclaimed Sazonoff. As I could not help evincing a great deal of scepticism, Sazonoff pressed me to say why this excellent news left me cold. I then related to him the interview that I had had six months previously with General Polivanoff. "That is curious," said Sazonoff in a hurt voice; "Polivanoff never told me all that and yet we were very intimate." This time it was my turn to be hurt, and we parted somewhat coldly.

[1] The same whom I mentioned in Chapter VIII.

CHAPTER XXIII

RUSSIA IN DECLINE

On my return to Stockholm I at once took up the threads of current political questions and of the daily round again.

At our very first meeting M. Wallenberg asked me if I considered it an opportune moment for formal negotiations between the Russian and Swedish Governments concerning the Aland Islands. "Most decidedly not," I unhesitatingly replied; "you will arrive at nothing owing to the confusion reigning at this moment at the Foreign Office. And then it is hardly worth while; in two months, or two months and a half at latest, M. Stürmer will have ceased to be at the head of our Foreign Office." M. Wallenberg believed me and took this for granted. It is probable that the Swedish Minister to Petrograd had meantime confirmed my opinion.

My allied colleagues cross-questioned me with the deepest interest on Rumania's entry into the war. We agreed that the whole importance of this entry lay in the possibility for us of throwing troops into Bulgaria and of showing the disloyal aud ungrateful people what it cost to raise their hand against their liberator and benefactor, Russia. "How many troops have you sent to the Dobrudja?" asked my colleagues. I did not know but I supposed that a Russian army would attack the Bulgarians on that side. Just then the French General de L. arrived in Stockholm; he had been attached to our G.H.Q. since the beginning of the war. He came to see me and I asked him the same question—that of the number of our contingents

engaged near the Lower Danube. "You have two divisions and a half there," he replied, "but another one is to be sent." "What, not more than that?" I exclaimed. "I know what you mean," interrupted the General; "you are afraid it is not enough. Well, I can reassure you. Several generals at your G.H.Q. had thought that you ought to send at least four army corps to the Dobrudja, and Alexeieff himself was inclined to that opinion. But on due deliberation they came to the conclusion that an attack by all the best Rumanian troops on the Austrians' flank in Transylvania would have such a disastrous effect for the latter that it would only be necessary to concentrate the efforts of the Russian armies in Galicia and the Bukowina to bring complete disaster to the Austrian Army. Under the circumstances one could not divide the Russian forces, but on the contrary make the maximum effort on the principal front." All the same this news was a great blow to my hopes and to those of my colleagues, and very soon events proved that our fears were well-founded. On the Lower Danube the Rumanians had only got territorials, who were quite unable to stand up against seasoned troops of four years' standing like the Bulgarians, so that ferocious and unequal fighting soon played havoc with our ten regiments, and one of the most disastrous results was that the Bulgarians had the illusion that they were stronger than their former protectors and masters in military skill. Hundreds of Russian prisoners were exhibited in Bulgarian centres. It was Bulgaria anew and irrevocably linked to the Central Empires.

Soon after news quite as bad arrived from the other parts of the Rumanian front; the Rumanian and Russian troops evacuated Transylvania, then bit by bit the whole of Wallachia, and Mackensen made his triumphal entry into Bukharest; the Sereth front was formed on which Russians and Rumanians were henceforth to concentrate all their efforts solely to hold the Germans and their allies. The Rumanian campaign was lost.

I have no doubt whatever that this bitter deception, added to the disastrous memories of 1915, had a great deal to do with the exasperation of Russian public opinion. Revolutionary machinations were certainly increased thereby, especially in the Army.

Whilst all this was going on in the war area, the internal ferment of Russia and the disorder in the Government were increasing in a truly alarming manner. Each day we received grievous news through the newspapers and from Russian travellers. First there was Stürmer's private secretary and factotum, an ex-agent of the State Police and later on one of the editors of the *Novoye Vremya*, who was arraigned for extortion of a considerable sum from a rich trader. And M. Stürmer still remained at his post! Then one heard that the Empress Alexandra *received the official reports of the Ministers and appended her decisions thereto.* What one heard about the "good old man's" exploits almost exceeded the bounds of possibility; I feel sure that a great number of these tales were untrue; but what were left were enough to make every good Russian patriot blush. Our Allies soon began to suspect that Stürmer and his acolytes, whose actions at first sight appeared to be absolutely disconnected, were in reality aiming at a definite, though carefully concealed end, that of leading Russia and the Emperor to a separate peace with Germany. Were these suspicions well founded, or did they emanate from the side of the Germans and of the revolution which was being organised? I cannot say. In any case I will not answer for M. Stürmer.

The Duma was agitated by the startling defection of Protopopoff. Summoned to Mohilev and having succeeded in captivating the Emperor, he was, two weeks later, appointed Home Secretary and as such supreme head of the State Police. He accepted without even asking the advice of his party; at first he made a few confused declarations at the Duma, but very soon revealed himself in his new post as an out-and-out

reactionary and what is more an incoherent reactionary. There was a stormy meeting at which his former political friends called on him to resign his post and on his refusal struck him out of the party. He had many bitter things to hear. One man only amongst those concerned really understood the situation, and this was Schingareff. In his capacity as doctor and as a good and charitable man he made an urgent appeal to Protopopoff: "Listen to me, I otopopoff; you are ill, very seriously ill. Give up all your occupations, go home, put yourself into the hands of good doctors, go into a nursing home if necessary, and come back to us cured; you will be received by all of us with open arms." This voice of a friend went, of course, unheeded, and Russia endured the shame of possessing, for five months and at a most critical hour, a Home Secretary suffering from tabes and on the high-road to creeping paralysis. The wretched man was completely off his head when he was executed by the Bolsheviks after a few months' confinement in the Peter and Paul fortress.

Abroad people have often been surprised—in Conservative circles especially—that the monarchical régime and the good and honest Emperor himself, did not find any supporters when the Revolution broke out; that all Russia should in a few hours have sided with the most Radical ideas, the most violent measures. I myself, as I said above, have frequently and bitterly criticised later on the *chameleonism* of the upper classes of Russian society. But in pronouncing judgment one ought to take the months immediately preceding the revolution into consideration. The most steadfast partisans of the monarchical régime, the most devoted servants of the Sovereign were then dominated by one feeling only, that of deep and bitter humiliation. "Things cannot go on like this; in some way or other this must end!" Such were the words one heard on all sides.

Now if this was the state of mind in Russian Conservative circles, what must the excitement have been

amongst the men who for a long time had been marching to the attack of the former régime, of its manifold inconsistencies and original blemishes? Towards the end of 1916 one can assert that the "sacred union," planned since the war, no longer existed either at the Duma or elsewhere. All wishes were turning towards a radical metamorphosis of things; only some pictured this metamorphosis as a sort of *coup d'état* or palace-revolution, like those of the eighteenth century in Russia, which would set the Emperor and more especially the Empress on one side, and place the little Tsarevitch on the throne with a firm and wise regency supported by national representation; while others contemplated a popular and complete revolution whence would spring a new order of things strictly in accordance with their opinions or their dreams. As I said above, both sides abjured the word of command "no revolution in war-time," and to excuse this repudiation of a principle agreed on, rumours, becoming daily more persistent, were circulated of treachery to the cause of Russia and the Allies contemplated by the Empress Alexandra, Stürmer *e tutti quanti*.

In the course of this autumn of nightmares I was surprised one day by a visit from Prince Nicolas of Greece (married to the daughter of the Grand-Duchess Vladimir), who was on his way through Germany to Petrograd. The Prince, who omitted to explain whether he had been summoned to the Russian Court or at least formally authorised to go there, asked me to *viser* his passports. During our conversation he did not utter any categorical complaint of the doings of the Allies in Greece, nor did he seek to justify the conduct of his brother, King Constantine; nevertheless, I felt that he had been sent by the latter to offer the King's apology to the Court of Tsarskoe and to explain to what extent it would be difficult for Greece to place herself resolutely on the side of the Entente and to declare war. After having listened attentively to the Prince, I contented

myself with recommending him not to lose sight of one thing only, *i.e.* that Greece had no enemies more bitter and more irreconcilable than the Bulgarians, and that if the Bulgarians got the best of the struggle which was beginning in the south of the Balkans, Greece would lose all the acquisitions purchased with Greek blood in 1912 and 1913. Prince Nicolas replied that he himself was imbued with that idea.

I *viséd* the Prince's passports, but I considered it necessary to warn our Foreign Office that His Highness—as far as I could see—was being sent by King Constantine to make his defence against the accusations of our Allies.

A few weeks later Prince Nicolas, who in the meantime had been received at Tsarskoe and at Mohilev, wrote to me from London to express his intense surprise at my "behaviour" to him; for he knew from "reliable sources" that I had represented him as an opponent of the Entente and of Greece's participation in the war. I answered by return of post that the "reliable sources" of which the Prince had availed himself were lying ones, and that if I had held the opinion ascribed to me about his sentiments, I should certainly not have hesitated to tell him so quite frankly during our conversation in Stockholm.

I realised without any effort that it was from our Foreign Office—perhaps from M. Stürmer himself—that the Greek Prince had heard what he asserted in his letter. And the proceeding did not surprise me in the least.

I knew perfectly well that if the Stürmer régime continued I should sooner or latter have to give up my post in Stockholm, and to retire from the service.

Already in May, 1916, two months before Sazonoff retired, the Foreign Office had sent out a certain M. E—— to work side by side with me as a supernumerary counsellor. I was well aware that this gentleman, who was very intelligent, was the worst of

intriguers and had always sought to injure his chiefs or his colleagues. I knew later that the idea of sending M. E—— to Stockholm had come to several of the leaders of the Foreign Office when the success of my work in Sweden became accentuated. At any cost they had to guard against the possible promotion of a man so little liked in the departments of the Foreign Office as I was. So I was given as associate an individual who promised *to write* from Stockholm, that is to say to spy on my words and actions and to report them—distorted of course—to correspondents eager for this kind of information. In the present case these correspondents were two officials in the Foreign Office who played a somewhat important part in M. Sazonoff's set, and who remained under the same conditions with M. Stürmer.

As long as Sazonoff was Minister, I thought very little of all this intrigue; moreover, it had not become very apparent. But on Stürmer's appointment, M. E——, who during his career had repeatedly professed reactionary principles, felt certain of supplanting me; he cast off all dissimulation, and spoke quite openly about my approaching "dismissal" from Stockholm. Towards the middle of October rumours of the approaching departure of Count Benckendorff from London, and of M. Isvolsky from Paris, reached us from Petrograd; and a fortnight later I heard from several well-informed quarters that I was going to leave Stockholm without receiving any other post abroad. M. Stürmer had already chosen my successor; only it was not M. E——. It was a gentleman quite as unworthy of esteem and adding to his other qualities that of being a thorough good-for-nothing as regards his knowledge and work.

Stürmer's retirement in November, 1916, put an end to all these rumours, and to all these schemes. And a month later M. E——, implicated in a society scandal of which he was the sorry and ridiculous hero, had to leave not only Stockholm but also the service of the State.

The fall of Stürmer was due to intense public indignation, and to the deep-rooted suspicions of our Allies, who did not hide these suspicions either from the Emperor himself, or from our generals and politicians. In November, M. Miliukoff, in a speech at the Duma which made a tremendous stir, enumerated one after the other all the suspicious or obviously pernicious deeds of the Prime Minister, putting in each case the query: "Say now, is this madness, or is it treason?" It has since been contended that the Russian Revolution dated from this speech.

I have already quoted the words of M. Sazonoff about the "band of malefactors" who ruled Russia under Stürmer and who, although priding themselves on the designation of Conservatives and loyal Monarchists, were disowned even by the most ardent reactionaries when these reactionaries were honest men.

One of the Ministers of the Stürmer Cabinet who with his two brothers was amongst the pillars of the ultra-Conservative party—M. Alexander Trepoff—became the appropriate author of the resignation of the Premier. The Emperor, whose choice had fallen on Stürmer because the latter was supposed to be Conservative and Monarchist, was much affected by rumours of "Bochephile" intrigues which Russian public opinion and that of the Allies ascribed to Stürmer, and most willing to get rid of this compromising Minister as soon as he could replace him by such a universally recognised Monarchist as Trepoff. Advantage was taken, from different sides, of a rather longer stay made by His Majesty at Mohilev without seeing the Empress, to persuade him to exercise his authority, that is to say to replace Stürmer by Alexander Trepoff (Minister of Ways and Communications). This was done very suddenly. I was told that the Empress was furious, but she was powerless when once the deed was done.

Trepoff's first care was to make a speech at the Duma in order to reveal the political position of Russia and to affirm in the most impressive way our unswerving

loyalty to the Allies' cause. This speech, which one felt was perfectly frank, made the best impression at the Duma as well as abroad. Nevertheless the Trepoff Ministry could not succeed in calming the tremendous ferment reigning in Russia. First there were the colleagues of M. Trepoff: a certain Dobrovolsky, appointed Minister of Justice, was more especially known for his occult exploits—one knew that he had at once become *persona grata* with the Empress Alexandra, for whose benefit he arranged spiritist sittings at Tsarskoe; and then there was Protopopoff in particular, who was becoming every day more excited, more enterprising and who did not in any way conceal his ambition to play the leading part at Court and in the Government.

And in view of such an unusual Ministry, the Duma called loudly for the formation of a homogeneous Cabinet responsible to national representation. The institution of a responsible Cabinet became the watchword of all parties, for all were now in the Opposition.

I have already alluded to the sensation caused in the Russian Press in August, 1916, by the news of the meeting between M. Protopopoff and the German Warburg in Stockholm; I have also related my conversation with Protopopoff on the subject. During the month of November this story reappeared in the Russian Press and was vehemently discussed.

I learnt through this controversy, that towards the middle of September, that is a fortnight after I had seen him and received the assurance that his recollections tallied perfectly with mine, Protopopoff, who was not yet Home Secretary and who was combining his mandate and his position at the Duma with the elective functions of Marshal of the Nobility of the Government of Simbirsk, went to Moscow for a meeting of Marshals of the Nobility. And there he gave a truly fantastic version of the famous Warburg incident: the meeting with Warburg was supposed to have been arranged by Baron von

Lucius, German Minister to Stockholm; it was he himself who was to have come to talk to Protopopoff, but on his way to the meeting-place he was supposed to have sprained his ankle on the stairs and so had had to send Warburg, the Counsellor to the Legation, in his place;—and so on. Protopopoff's colleagues must have listened open-mouthed to this strange confession. They discussed it a great deal amongst themselves, then they told their friends about it. Count D. Olsufieff, whose reputation was involved, was obliged to intervene and to set things right in the Press. This raised a fresh controversy; Protopopoff himself, who was already Minister, was appealed to; and he, with graceful ease, gave each of his interviewers a different version. Meanwhile public opinion was vehemently taking note of the whole incident, which seemed to prove the existence of a combine between the Court, Protopopoff and the Germans to bring about a separate peace between Russia and Germany.

A few days after Stürmer's retirement I received a telegram from the Director of the Foreign Office, telling me that M. Protopopoff was supposed to have *published* amongst other things that his interview in Stockholm with Warburg had taken place not only with the consent but *at the express request* of the Russian Minister. M. Neratoff begged me to furnish all necessary information.

I replied that M. Protopopoff's assertion was absolutely untrue, and that if the Home Secretary did not retract what he had said I was prepared to tender my resignation.

That very day several of our parliamentarians were in Stockholm on their way to Petrograd: M. Itchas, Lithuanian member of the Duma; Baron Meyendorff, ex-President of that assembly; M. Zveguintzoff, member by election of the Council of the Empire; and some others. I invited these gentlemen to come and see me; I gave them all the details related in this book on Protopopoff's stay in Stockholm and on his interview with Warburg, and I begged them to contradict emphatically

in my name amongst their colleagues the assertions of the Home Secretary. I gave M. Itchas, who was leaving first, a free hand to make my contradiction known at once and in any way that he deemed best. He did so almost on arrival in Petrograd in a letter published in the Russian Press.

At the same time I wrote a letter to M. Neratoff in which I reiterated that in the event of M. Protopopoff wishing to uphold his assertions, I should insist on being recalled, "for it was inadmissible that abroad and in Russia herself any one could remain under the impression that either a Russian statesman or a Russian Minister in a foreign post could be a *liar*. In consequence one of the two ought to retire or to be dismissed."[1]

Naturally I kept my allied colleagues informed of the whole incident, and on this occasion they gave me all their sympathy.

My letter to M. Neratoff crossed with M. Pokrovsky's appointment to the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs. At first this appointment surprised a great many people. Pokrovsky was held to have been an admirable Minister of Finance; he had never concerned himself with questions of foreign policy; he did all he could to decline the post, but was forced to yield to the will of the Emperor and the remonstrances of most of his colleagues and of all honest men. Because, in spite of his inexperience in diplomatic matters, M. Pokrovsky's reputation as far as intelligence, soundness of views and uprightness of character were concerned, was so firmly established that every one was enchanted to see the foreign affairs of the country, above all its relations with the Allies, in absolutely safe hands. At the Economic Conference of the Allies which had just taken place, this man, thoroughly versed in the matter, calm, modest, and speaking French well—which facilitated intercourse with him tremendously—had produced the best impression. As far as I personally was

[1] Quoted from memory.

concerned, I was delighted to have once more as Minister a man of honour and one whom I felt to be sincerely disposed in my favour and in that of my work in Sweden.

I no longer considered it necessary to insist on my recall; moreover, M. Protopopoff had completely relinquished all discussion on the "Warburg" case, and the Russian public had also more or less forgotten it, preoccupied as they were by other scandals, more exciting and more closely connected with the daily life of the capital.

During the month of December, 1916, the whole attention of the Russian public was centred on what was going on at "the Court of Tsarskoe," that is, in the Empress Alexandra's environment, and on the person of Rasputin.

Russian travellers, who had become more and more numerous in Stockholm, told us that excitement had overtaken all social circles in Petrograd, including the Imperial Family itself. One heard that some members of the family—notably the Grand-Duchess Cyril[1] and an "ally" of the Imperial Family, Princess Zenaida Yussupoff, who was universally esteemed—had tried to persuade the Empress to change her environment, above all to send away "the good old man," to be better informed as to the frame of mind of the country, as public opinion was exasperated against the men in power—the Empress's elect and intimate friends. These ladies received the haughty answer that they did not understand anything about the true frame of mind of the country; that as they exclusively frequented the aristocratic circles of the capital, they were entirely ignorant of the opinion of the great mass of the Orthodox people, of the poorer classes, of the peasants—who would remain, as in the past, devoted to the Emperor on condition that he protected them from the exactions of the great, the politicians, etc. The

[1] Sister of the Queen of Rumania.

unfortunate Empress acquired this information from her interviews with the moujik Rasputin, and from the notes and telegrams which the organisers of the "hundred Blacks" rained on Tsarskoe.

There were then many conferences in the bosom of the Imperial Family, much coming and going of Grand-Dukes and Grand-Duchesses. "The Grand-Duke Nicolas Mikhaïlovitch dined with the Grand-Duchess Vladimir," wrote one of my correspondents to me; "henceforth all is possible." These august personages—both of them particularly clever—had been at variance all their lives; hence their reconciliation must be the precursor of extraordinary events. "We are not living now, we are on fire," wrote another of my friends from Petrograd, "sugar and sensational news—*panem et circenses*—this is the cry that greets you on all sides." That was the frivolous echo of the situation, but there were also more serious echoes. A Russian colleague told us of things he had heard straight from the lips of the people. When he was returning to Petrograd from his property in Voronezh he could only find a seat in a third-class carriage; the compartment was filled with well-to-do peasants: millers, rural traders, etc., men who did not fail to cross themselves each time the train passed a church. Many of them were acquainted with the *barine*, and greeted him most politely; but, in no way constrained by his presence, they continued their conversation on what was occurring in Petrograd and at Court. Rasputin and the Empress Alexandra were the chief topics of this conversation, and there were jokes, some truly filthy talk and horse-laughs without end. Now, one might almost bet that several of the speakers belonged to organisations called "Monarchist," or "true Russian," and that they had often signed those professions of devotion of which Tsarskoe-Selo was so proud!

At last there was a thunder-clap which according to the Russian public would purify the atmosphere, but which only accelerated the dissolution of the régime,

and upset the unsteady equilibrium on which, nevertheless, the whole edifice of the State depended.

Towards the end of December, shortly before Christmas, O.S., we learnt through the newspapers of the assassination of Rasputin, effected in the Yussupoff Palace, and the triumphant joy with which this deed had been received by the entire Russian public, without distinction of parties. As soon as the news had spread in Petrograd there was loud jubilation; in the theatres the National Anthem was played and sung; if it had been possible thanksgiving-services would have been held in the churches. The names of the principal authors of the deed were on every one's lips; these were: the Grand-Duke Dmitri (son of the Grand-Duke Paul); Count Felix Sumarokoff-Elston,[1] son-in-law of one of the Emperor's sisters; and M. Poushkévitch, the hot-headed deputy of the Monarchist extreme Right of the Duma—a sort of Russian Paul de Cassagnac—whose sallies, violent outbursts, and offensive invectives hurled at the Liberals had formerly filled the scandal-records of the Assembly. Becoming wiser and enrolled in the "sacred union" since the beginning of the war, he had devoted himself to a most successful organisation of Russian baths and of canteens for supplying the front in special trains *ad hoc*.

But a few days later other news had come to trouble all minds again: the Emperor summoned post-haste from G.H.Q.; thorough search, by his orders, for Rasputin's body, which was found under the ice on the Neva; funeral given by the Emperor and Empress to these odious remains; the arrest and banishment to the army operating in Persia of the Grand-Duke Dmitri; the appeal against this sentence, signed by the whole of the Imperial Family, headed by Queen Olga of Greece (grandmother of the delinquent); the removal of

[1] Son of the Princess Zenaida Yussupoff mentioned above, and sole heir to the enormous fortune of the Yussupoffs. Count Sumarokoff-Elston got his name from his father. The young man might have chosen some other place than his mother's palace in which to play Lorenzaccio!

the Grand-Duke Nicolas Mikhaïlovitch to his property in the south of Russia. The public scandal grew from day to day.

Then there was the resignation of Trepoff and the appointment of Prince Nicolas D. Galitzin (I mentioned him before) as Prime Minister—an absolutely unexpected appointment, which could only be explained by the personal wish of the Empress. However, with regard to this appointment, every one realised that henceforth the principal part in the Government would be played by Protopopoff, who was becoming more and more excited, and heaping folly on blunder and blunder on want of tact. He arrived at the Duma in the military uniform of the "head of the police," a costume to which he had a vague right as Home Secretary, but which none of the most "police-like" of his predecessors had ever donned. In town every one was saying that he had convinced the Empress that Rasputin's soul was reincarnated in him; consequently he indulged in prophecies and extravaganzas which deeply impressed the exalted personages to whom they were addressed.

I do not know to what extent these tales were true. I only know from experience of one fact which would appear to corroborate them. Just at that time a kind of American spiritist appeared repeatedly at our Stockholm Legation, clamouring to have his passports for Petrograd *viséd*, the Consul-General not considering his position quite in order. The American boasted of the protection of M. Protopopoff, who, he said, was impatiently awaiting him. To confirm his words he showed us some telegrams from his powerful protector, who was actually inviting him to come. I caused inquiries to be made about this individual by the police of my allied colleagues; it was discovered —as moreover was to be expected—that the said American was a German who quite recently had become an American citizen, that he passed himself off as a spiritist, mesmerist, medium, and I know not what besides, but that he was strongly suspected of

being merely a Boche agent. Upon this, I received a telegram from M. Protopopoff himself—a telegram couched in the most friendly terms—asking me "as a personal service" to *viser* the passports of the American. Then I got angry and I wrote immediately to the Foreign Office to relate the story of the "American," and to have it brought to the notice of our *military* police at Torneo, in case—our refusal notwithstanding—the "astral body of the medium should wish to cross the frontier provided with a passport issued by the spirit of the late Rasputin." Well, a fortnight later the American came again to the Legation, bringing a fresh telegram from Protopopoff, in which the Minister expressed his keen regret at not being able at once to summon the spiritist to him, in order to profit by his excellent "advice," but hoping that this would soon be possible. Obviously this was madness.

The reader may perhaps be wondering what had happened to politics in all this, and what Russia's relations to Sweden were during these months. My answer is that no one thought or concerned themselves about those matters now. The Swedes themselves appeared to consider all that was occurring in Russia to be so serious and big with immediate consequences that all steps and all action could and should be avoided until the internal crisis which was upheaving the mighty adjacent Empire had been settled in some way or other. In Stockholm there was some information coming from Swedish sources *and from German sources* which represented the position in Russia as excessively precarious. However, for a short time my attention was diverted from my worries with regard to the internal affairs of my country by an entirely unlooked-for incident or rather apparition.

One morning towards the middle of January I was rung up on the telephone. A voice asked me in Russian if I was really M. Nekludoff? "Yes, it is I; who is it speaking?" "I am Rizov, the Bulgarian Minister to

Berlin; I want very much to talk to you. Could you receive me, and when?" I took a few minutes to recover from my surprise and to think out my answer; then I said that I could not tell him before mid-day; that at twelve o'clock he might ring me up again to know my decision.

I at once summoned my English, French and Italian colleagues and submitted the case to them: should I receive Rizov or not? M. Tommasini was the only one of my three colleagues who knew Rizov; but he knew him through and through. Between us we arrived at the following conclusions: Rizov's presence in Stockholm and the step he was taking must be perfectly well known in Berlin; it was even possible that Rizov had telephoned to me from Baron von Lucius' house. Nevertheless it would be as well for me to receive Rizov, if only to see what he was after. Consequently, when Rizov rang me up at noon, I said that I would receive him at two o'clock.

Punctually at two o'clock Rizov was shown into my study. I did not put out my hand to him, but I begged him to be seated and offered him a cigarette. "What is the object of your visit, M. Rizov?" I asked after a minute of mutual silence. Somewhat abashed by my frigid reception, my visitor began to speak with obvious embarrassment. He said that the step he was taking was entirely of a private nature, that he was coming to me to tell me of political opinions and combinations which were within the sphere of his personal convictions; and that he was in a position to know—having recently visited Sofia—that the opinions of the Bulgarian Government concurred on all points with his. Here I interrupted him: "Tell me, M. Rizov, is this proceeding of yours known to Berlin? It seems to me impossible that it should not be, and that Baron von Lucius should not know exactly why you have come to Stockholm." "No," was the reply, "I have not confided this matter to the German Government. The avowed object of of my journey has been to form closer commercial and

political relations with the Scandinavian countries than have existed up to now; also at the present time we are in need of many commodities which Sweden alone can supply; I am going from here to Christiania; I have just come from Copenhagen; I am travelling under an assumed name and they do not even know my address at the German Legation." I looked at the speaker with such an obviously incredulous expression on my face that he began to stammer and to become confused; then he resumed his political thesis. He said absolutely nothing definite; his opinion was that the present war between Bulgaria and Russia was an absolutely abnormal thing which ought to end as quickly as possible. The Bulgarians had had (I am still quoting Rizov) plausible reasons to bear malice against *official* Russia; but in their hearts they nursed unalterable sympathy for the Russian people; it was a question of both sides facilitating a reconciliation; would not this be the moment to begin entirely confidential conversations which might end in actual negotiations?

While Rizov was retailing all this I kept completely silent, always in expectation of some concrete suggestion which did not come. At last, disconcerted by my silence and my expression, Rizov stopped and after a short pause said: "Could I hope, Monsieur, that you will transmit to Petrograd all that I have just told you?" "Listen to me, M. Rizov," was my reply; "you have been in the diplomatic service long enough to understand that it is my duty to inform M. Pokrovsky of your visit and of all that I have heard from you; only I wish to warn you that I shall not add any personal opinion thereto." "But may I hope that in Petrograd they will attach to my proceeding the significance it deserves, and that they will send me an answer through you?" "Ah! as to that," I replied, "I can make no promises whatever. You yourself informed me that this proceeding of yours is a *personal* one. Now, however interesting the opinions and words of M. Rizov may be, it is

possible that in our country it may not be considered necessary to reply to them. It is, however, more than likely that I shall receive some answer to the telegram which I shall send off this very day." "May I hope for this answer within the next four days, for I am due in Christiania then, and could not defer my departure beyond that?" "Oh no! I could not possibly guarantee such a prompt answer—if answer there be!" "Then will you inform me on the telephone on Tuesday if the answer from Petrograd has come? My number is . . ." "No, M. Rizov, I shall not telephone to you; you may telephone to me a few hours before your departure for Christiania and I will answer if I have anything to tell you." Rizov got up to go. "I see," he said, "that you will not pay attention to what I have told you, nor will you speak openly with me. *But in a month, a month and a half at latest, events will occur after which I feel sure that on the Russian side they will be more disposed to talk with us.* Perhaps you will see me again then."

That evening I sent Pokrovsky a telegram in which I related my whole conversation with Rizov and the opinion of my allied colleagues on the subject of this step taken by the Bulgarian Minister to Berlin. I added that if those in Sofia really did wish to enter into negotiations, Rizov—by virtue of his present position and all his antecedents—would be the person the least qualified to inspire confidence in us. In that case it would only be interesting and profitable to speak with influential Bulgarian generals or with their mouthpieces; and as the two armies were face to face on the Lower Danube, it would be quite easy for the Bulgarians to arrange an interview with us there.

Four days later, Rizov rang me up on the telephone. "Have you received an answer, Monsieur?" "No, not yet." "In that case I cannot wait any longer. I am leaving for Christiania this evening. Only I have one more request to make to you: I trust that my proceeding is not known to the representatives of your Allies." "Listen, Rizov," I interrupted; "I avoid all such

conversations on the telephone. We may be overheard. I wish you good-bye. *Slut!*"[1] and I replaced the receiver.

Two days after Rizov's departure I received a telegram from the Foreign Office instructing me—in the event of another visit from Rizov—to listen attentively to him and to endeavour to make him formulate more definite propositions; the same instructions were being issued to my colleague in Christiania.

I heard later that my colleague—it was M. Gulkevitch—in accordance with these instructions, had more pregnant conversations with M. Rizov than mine had been. But these conversations ended in nothing.[2] Rizov, who appeared to be in good health when he came to see me in Stockholm, died suddenly very soon afterwards.

When the Russian Revolution had broken out and was in full swing, I recalled the words uttered by Rizov as he was leaving my study in Stockholm: "in a month, a month and a half at latest, events will occur after which I feel sure that on the Russian side they will be more disposed to talk with us." Hence Rizov had accurately foreseen our revolution. Now, he came from Berlin, and the steps taken with regard to us had in all probability been suggested to him by German diplomacy, and the German General Staff. And in my eyes this constitutes one more proof that our revolution had one of its main sources in German action. The wires of this political cataclysm converged in Berlin, and there they calculated in January, 1917, with remarkable accuracy, even the day on which the skilfully laid mine would explode.

[1] Finis!

[2] The *Times* published in its issue of the 4th October, 1918, an article relating the episode of negotiations which were supposed to have taken place between Rizov and some Russian representatives in Christiania *and in Stockholm*. I hastened to correct, in a letter written from Nice to the Editor of the *Times*, the account in this newspaper, as far as I personally and Stockholm were concerned. Unfortunately the *Times* did not think it possible to publish my correction, alleging as an excuse the forced economy—"in these days"—of paper.

What had passed in the sphere of international politics, and in Sweden in particular, during the six weeks which preceded the Russian Revolution? To tell the truth I have no recollection. There are spaces of time before great historic events which appear to one's memory later as blank spaces, like those minutes of deadly calm preceding the first violent gust of wind and the first clap of thunder of a mighty storm. This must come from an illusion of "retrospective vision"; the events themselves are so colossal that anything that immediately preceded them seems insignificant, and vanishes from one's memory.

I remember that the season was beautiful in Stockholm; bright sunshine, dazzling snow, moderate frosts, beautiful blue sky, the town enlivened by winter sports and a busy life of pleasure. The Russian birds of passage were more numerous than ever. Some had merely come to rest and divert themselves in this pleasant atmosphere, and under this kindly sky, after the icy fogs of Petrograd and the political nightmare which was oppressing every one.

I remember taking luncheon in the sunlit dining-room of the Grand Hotel with an agreeable and witty compatriot who was in Stockholm for the third time, nominally for political meetings, but really and above all to amuse himself. He was an elected member of the Council of the Empire who formerly had had a brief moment of fame. Always a Liberal, and airing the most independent views in the salons of Petrograd, he was, at the time of the first Duma, one of the three or four courageous people who, without abjuring their political convictions, yet opposed the outbursts of the assembly and founded a sympathetic—though later on absolutely colourless—party called "the pacific renovation." Years had gone by since then, and my friend, older, stouter, and more or less ruined, had passed from the Duma into the ranks of the elected members of the Council of the Empire; had had to accept a post on the board of directors of a large banking business, a

post which enabled him to have his customary good time; and, somewhat unnoticed in the legislative assembly that sheltered him, was mainly occupied in finding an audience amongst the young and pretty society women of Petrograd, to whom he still preached, in a deep and musical voice, generous ideas of political liberty and of sympathy towards the humble.

We had got to the cheese, and the second bottle of excellent claret (of which a few drops were still glistening in the flowing beard of my amiable messmate) was open beside him, when he, with heightened colour and animated as usual towards the end of a good meal, leant towards me and said, continuing the conversation on current events: "Ah, well, no, my dear Nekludoff, latterly *we* all have arrived at the conclusion that there is no possible remedy for the situation as long as the Emperor Nicolas II. is at the head of Russia. At the present time every one is decidedly turning against him. It is absolutely necessary that *he* should go. The rest would then be quite easy."

This confidence impressed me at first, but on mature reflection I only attached slight importance to it. What does one not say after a good luncheon and two bottles of good wine? And besides who were these "*we*" who had decided on the downfall of the Sovereign? If they were recruited from amongst the same good fellows—friends of the musical world, and of charming dancers, of good cheer and unconstrained gossip—the Emperor could sleep peacefully.

Infinitely more alarming echoes reached me. In the Caucasus big parties of armed "brigands" were beginning to overrun the country and terrorise whole districts. On the Russian north-western front, one had signalled a clandestine revolutionary propaganda, which was gaining more and more adherents among the soldiers. The Government of Petrograd was beginning to take police measures, now in one town, now in another, against clandestine organisations of workmen. It was always the same measures, despotic but inadequate: nocturnal

perquisitions, arrests of *prominent* leaders, incarcerations, internments in the northern provinces. Persons who were at the head of the "organisations of the Zemstvo and of the towns to assure military supplies," protested against these measures, which embittered the working-class circles with whom they had to do business. As usual both parties were in the wrong: the former because their police measures displeased every one without stopping anything; the latter because they did not see that the mass of the people, the workmen especially, were being worked by clever agents, well guided and supplied with enormous sums of money in order to stir up a revolution at all costs, and to make Russia powerless against the external foe.

On Saturday, the 10th March, some telegrams appeared in the Swedish newspapers announcing that some workmen's demonstrations—peaceful ones, however—had taken place in the streets of Petrograd. Simultaneously the news arrived that the Government was going to prorogue the Duma *sine die*. On Monday, the 12th, in the morning, the representative of our telegraphic agency rushed in to see me to announce that the newspapers were going to publish the news that on Saturday night there had been fighting in the streets of Petrograd, and that there had been masses of victims; this news had come from Haparanda, brought by a Swede who had been an eye-witness. The representative requested my permission to contradict it. "Do not do so," I said, "let us wait for the evening news." In the evening we did receive news of rather serious disorders having taken place in the Russian capital. And by Tuesday telegraphic communication with Russia was cut off. Things were decidedly becoming serious.

And then, one after another, between Wednesday, the 14th, and Friday, the 16th, consecutive news of all the events in Petrograd reached us: street fighting; the reserve regiments of the Guard going over to the side of the people; the Duma refusing to dissolve—like the *Tiers État* formerly in the Hall of the Jeu de Paume;

the regiments arriving to guard the representatives of the people, and acclaiming the President of the Duma, who congratulates them; the Grand-Duke Cyril being the first to bring his seamen of the crew of the Guard; the last strongholds of the police taken by the people armed; finally the Emperor abdicating for himself and for his son, and passing his crown on to his brother the Grand-Duke Michael. A Provisional Government was being installed, at the head of which names as universally respected as those of Prince Lvoff, Miliukoff, Rodzianko, Gutchkoff, were allied to those of a few revolutionary Socialists such as Kerensky, Tseretelli, Tchkeïdze, etc. The entire town appeared to be given over to festivity, and all the towns of Russia, and all the heads of the armies gave their adherence, their homage of fidelity, their spontaneous admiration to the new Government! One really thought one must be dreaming. But news continued to pour in, one bit confirming the other, arriving from all corners of allied Europe; and all spoke ecstatically of the generosity of the people in the struggle, of their moderation in victory, of the unanimity of public feeling. No revolution had ever been so easy, or so glorious; one could be proud of being Russian!

And all that contrasted in such a striking manner with the humiliations, so bitterly felt, of the closing months of the disastrous former régime. Patriotic feeling beat in unison with generous sentiments of liberty and justice. The country was saved, victory definitely assured!

Such were the quite sincere illusions of the enormous majority of Russians living abroad during the weeks succeeding the triumph of the Revolution of Petrograd.

When I received the telegram from the official agency announcing the abdication of the Emperor in favour of his brother; the refusal of the latter to accept power otherwise than from a constituent assembly; and the formation of a responsible Ministry under the presidency of Prince Lvoff, appointed to this post by

the Emperor himself on the eve of his abdication, then all the doubts I could have entertained as to the legitimacy of the new régime and the Provisional Government were dispelled; and it was with genuine satisfaction that I sent a telegram on Friday, the 16th March, to M. Miliukoff, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, announcing my complete and sincere adherence to the Provisional Government.

CHAPTER XXIV

REVOLUTION

TRAVELLERS who have been to India tell strange tales about the phenomena which certain fakirs can produce. Although meeting these tales with a strong dose of scepticism, yet one cannot reject wholesale the evidence of so many honourable people; the illusive "experiences" of the fakirs have been really seen and observed by serious-minded and truthful people; and it is only when one submits these phenomena to a strictly scientific inspection and analysis that the illusion vanishes. But then how is this illusion to be explained? One theory which seems extremely sound, holds that the fakir acts on the spectator, now by auto-suggestion, now by the use of some process of a physical nature. The Indian accomplishes nothing supernatural; at the most he indulges in some sleight-of-hand; but the spectator, swayed by suggestion or else under the influence of subtle intoxication, *believes he sees* all that the fakir wishes him to see, and then tells the tale in all good faith.

Exactly in the same way do I explain, at the present time, the impression produced on the world at large, *except in the camp of our enemies*, by the Russian Revolution.

In the first place this revolution was desired and called for by the *conscience* of the whole of the West. There they knew that the Russian people were deprived of those primary rights which by now have become indispensable to every European. This idea was often exaggerated; ancient prejudices, old political grudges

side by side with clever and tenacious modern propaganda had fixed in Western mentality the picture of a Russia in which absolute and despotic power, an aristocracy of the Court, a class of employés who were all concessionaries, uneducated clergy, all weighed on the existence of the country, oppressing, exploiting, purposely brutalising the people in town and country, persecuting and exiling to the frozen deserts of Siberia all people whose hearts were in the right place, above all, those young people who dreamt of better conditions for their country. "*Tsarism*" was the monster against which all upright consciences ought to revolt, against which loud appeals were made to the whole of European public opinion. And yet within the last few years, first France, then England and finally, since the war, Italy and Belgium, had concluded a close alliance with this same *Tsarist* Russia, with this same criminal Government. In the columns of one and the same newspaper one could read flattery addressed to the Tsar, imprecations against the governmental system of Russia, dithyrambs on the might of the allied Empire and lamentations over the fate of the victims to its odious régime. The public conscience of the West must in the long run have felt the anomaly, I would even say the indignity, of such proceedings. The Russian Revolution occurred in the nick of time to set everything right: Russia, so absolutely indispensable to the welfare of Europe, had herself thrown off her fetters; there was no longer any need to use humiliating circumspection towards a thoroughly detested régime; one remained closely bound to the Russian people and all the more loyal to the principles and aspirations of liberty and integral democracy. Truly a considerable relief to one's conscience!

Then it must be borne in mind that during the few months preceding the Revolution, skilfully circulated rumours represented the existing régime as won over to German influence and striving for peace. The tremendous mistakes of the Government, the

odious choice of persons whom the Emperor placed in power and who could not inspire any confidence, gave credence to these suspicions and fears in Russian public opinion itself; towards the end of 1916 every one believed them more or less. The Revolution came just in time to scatter all this dreaded accumulation of Court intrigues. It gave the Russian people a free hand for the carrying out of their most cherished schemes which were—the continuation of the fight to a finish with Germany and the complete victory of the Allies! Consequently the latter were at once delivered from the agonising nightmare of Russia's possible defection.

Finally Russian military action would derive fresh life from the renovation of the country, final victory would be considerably hastened, and in this victory itself there would no longer be any fear of the transports of ambition and pride of an autocratic ally and the extension of a régime of oppression over a fresh portion of Europe.

Such was the point of view of our Western Allies which was shared by Russian public opinion. In our country, what is more, every one had been so justly displeased with the Government, so deeply humiliated by what was occurring at Court that a change was prayed for on all sides; and when this complete change occurred in consequence of the days of the 10th to the 15th March all thinking Russia, beginning with the best balanced elements, thought in all good faith that it was they who had brought about the Revolution because they had desired it so ardently.

Hence one can hardly wonder that all that occurred in Petrograd during those memorable days should have assumed a dazzling, glorious and triumphant appearance in the eyes of the whole world. Spontaneous enthusiasm appeared to have seized all the inhabitants of the capital; every one fraternised; from Moscow, the provinces, and finally from all the armies enthusiastic adherents arrived. The *Novoye Vremya* wrote articles worthy of the *Père Duchesne*, and M.

Rodzianko presided, with fine gestures, over the civil burial of the noble victims of the splendid March days—an imposing and brilliant apotheosis of this unique Revolution, in which the people displayed truly admirable moderation, discipline and mildness.

A Monarchist or counter-revolutionary current? No, that did not exist; that had never existed. A few reactionaries still considered dangerous and the members of the last Government, it is true, were arrested and took the place in the cells of the Peter and Paul fortress of the martyrs to liberty triumphantly set free. But even these reactionaries and these fallen Ministers were in no way opposed to the new principles; from their prison they appealed to the Provisional Government and to the Press, assuring them that they had always been friends to liberty, that all that had happened was but a misunderstanding and that they were prepared to serve the people with the same devotion with which they had formerly served the Monarch. In short every one was of one mind, every one rejoiced, every one fraternised, and what is more, amongst a large majority these sentiments—at first anyhow—were absolutely genuine. And this frame of mind spread to foreign parts and returned thence enlarged and developed to increase Russian enthusiasm still more.

The fakir having shut up a child in his basket had stabbed it repeatedly through the wicker-work with a sword; piercing shrieks had been heard and streams of blood seen; and when the magician opened the basket it was full of roses. Innumerable white mice, coming out of the operator's hand, mounted an upright pole in a spiral curve and disappeared one by one into the blue sky. Finally a silken ladder, thrown with a skilful movement, suspended itself *in the air* and the fakir ascended it—immaterialised and triumphant!

We existed in Stockholm for a fortnight under the spell of these admirable illusions. But gradually, alas! the deceptive vapour began to disperse and things

appeared in their true light, that is to say with their repulsive sides and their very real threats.

About a week after the Emperor's abdication I received a visit from an eminent member of the Danish Red Cross who was returning from Petrograd and who had been an eye-witness of all that had happened. Amongst other things he told me that on the morning of Tuesday, the 13th, summoned to Tsarskoe-Selo to be presented to the Empress Alexandra, he had had the greatest difficulty in reaching the Tsarskoe station on foot. The rioters appeared to have got the upper hand since the day before, and on his way sharp firing had begun round the barracks of the Semenovsky regiment. When he arrived at Tsarskoe and into the Empress's presence he did not conceal from her what he had just seen. The Empress listened in silence and without betraying the slightest emotion, then she passed on to the object of the audience, talked with animation for more than an hour on subjects relative to the Danish gentleman's mission to Russia, went over plans for huts and accounts with him and dismissed him gracefully. The very next day in this same palace she and her children were the prisoners of the rebel soldiers of the Tsarskoe garrison!

Well, this same Dane, having in his detailed account mentioned the murder of several officers of the Pavlovsky regiment (committed on Sunday or Monday night), I asked him with *surprise*: "Then there were some officers murdered after all?" "But of course, did you think a revolution could occur without? But when I left Petrograd all recollection of these sanguinary scenes was effaced; officers and men, military and civilians were all one." Other eye-witnesses made me realise that in any case the revolutionary days had not been so free from massacre and cruelty as I had imagined, relying on telegrams from agencies and newspaper articles.

Finally towards the end of March a distinguished compatriot of mine passed through Stockholm on his

way to England. Eminent professor at the University of Moscow and enlightened jurist, he had had, some time back, to give up teaching because of difficulties raised for him by the Board of Education, which was intensely reactionary. His merits gained him a Chair in one of the oldest and most celebrated universities in Europe. He had continued to keep up close relations in Russia with the heads of the cadet party (constitutional-democratic), particularly with Miliukoff, Golovin, and Kokochkin. It would seem as if he ought to have been pleased at the downfall of the old régime and at the favourable turn that the Revolution had taken. Nevertheless he wore a worried look when he came to see me. To my questions, imbued with that enthusiasm which we were still feeling in Stockholm, he replied with a reticence that surprised me. At last, as we were going into luncheon (to which I had invited him), he said: "It would take too long to explain everything to you just now; I will do so later; meanwhile to sum up: there will infallibly be some *Journées de Juin* in Russia, which would be very sad, but if these days do not come it will be still worse: Russia will be done for. Do you understand me?" "Of course I understand you! But how truly grievous it is!"

After luncheon my guest added a few details to the brief prognostication he had made before. The Duma virtually dissolved and its premises invaded by the "Council of the deputies, by soldiers and workmen"; the Petrograd garrison increased by all the garrisons of the neighbouring towns and so to speak administering the law to the Government; in the Government itself—the Socialists and Labour members with Kerensky at their head trying to seize on the real power. I rapidly dropped down from the clouds. But a few days later, through the tales of compatriots passing through Stockholm in greater numbers than ever and through what I could read between the lines in the newspapers, I was able to form a clear idea of what had really occurred.

In the first place the Revolution had been infinitely more bloody than any one would acknowledge: all the men of the police force, even those who had not taken any part whatever in the repression of the first riots, were massacred in the most brutal way; there were savage hunts through the streets followed by ghastly scenes. Many officers and generals were killed long after the Revolution had triumphed without any motive, merely to gratify the whim of a band of demoniacs or of an armed and drunken soldier.

It was not only the cells of political culprits which were thrown open by the triumphant people. All prison doors had been broken open and all the criminals of the worst order infested the capital dressed as soldiers and mingling freely with them.

And horrible news—suppressed for some time—came through at last as to what had taken place in the Fleet at Cronstadt and then at Helsingfors: admirals treacherously and cruelly assassinated, officers martyred —a hell of blood and heinous tortures. And finally Cronstadt and the Fleet forming themselves into a republic of savages, with which the Government had to treat at every turn!

What also made me very anxious—on account of the actual fact and as a symptom—was the fate reserved for the Emperor and his near relations. According to the terms of the parleys which had preceded the abdication, the Emperor and his family had full liberty to establish themselves in the Crimea or in some other residence far removed from capitals and all political intrigue. A few days later, one heard that the Provisional Government had decided to make them merely leave Russia, that an arrangement *ad hoc* had been made with London, and that they were to go by Murman. But days and weeks went by and the Emperor and his family were still prisoners in their Palace of Tsarskoe, exposed to the offensive curiosity of the crowd and to insults of all kinds from their guardians. It became clear that the famous "Soviet" was against the removal of the unhappy

family, wishing to keep them as hostages; and I realised perfectly well that if men like Rodzianko, Gutchkoff, Prince Lvoff, Miliukoff and Schingareff tolerated this base deed and this breach of their pledged word, it was because they were absolutely powerless to object; in other words all authority was entirely escaping from the Government, or at least from the sane section of it.

But this was by no means all. I remember one morning on which our military attaché came in like a whirlwind, his face crimson with emotion, his eyes starting out of his head. "Have you seen this, Monsieur?" and he handed me the famous *Prikase No* 1,[1] settling the new rights of the Russian soldier. "Yes, I have just read a short summary of it in the Swedish newspapers of yesterday. It appeared to me to be a little too liberal, especially in war-time: there are always some exaggerations at such times. Yet you must admit that it was high time to replace the absurd discipline imitated from the Prussians which prevailed in our Army by discipline similar to that of the French or the British?" "Ah! but no, Monsieur! do read the *prikase* itself; read it carefully." I took it from the hand of my colleague and as I read and was given the needful explanations by the Colonel, I became more and more aghast. "It is madness!" I said when I had finished. "Yes, it is madness! but above all it means the end of the war for us. In the state in which our troops will be after a few weeks of such proceedings it will be impossible to take them into the fighting lines. In a few months we shall no longer exist for our allies." I could find nothing to oppose to this mournful verdict except the expression of a few vague hopes to which I clung.

It became perfectly clear that the origin of the Revolution had been quite different from what had been supposed. While the members of the Imperial Family

[1] Or of the day of the Army.

were becoming alarmed aud holding meetings, while the heads of the Liberal parties were conferring, while the public was getting exasperated, the German agents working amongst the labouring classes, and the real leaders of these classes—extreme Socialists and Labour members—were acting.

A scene which occurred at the Duma shortly before the Revolution had caused much comment: the orators of all the parties having in turn attacked the Government and demanded explanations, the new President of the Council, the aged and correct Prince Galitzyn, at last decided to ascend the tribune and make a so-called declaration, but it was weak, toneless, meaningless. Then one of the extreme Socialists, Tchkeïdze, jumped on to the tribune and in a few words ridiculed the declaration and rejected it. "We are still displaying patience; we have entreated the Government to speak out, to dispel the doubts and suspicions that its actions are raising all over the country. And now 'an old man' (*odine starik*) ascends the tribune and . . . tells us nothing at all. Take care!" continued the orator, making a threatening gesture towards poor Prince Galitzyn, "you will repent, but it will be too late!" The specifically Caucasian accent of Tchkeïdze and the expression "old man" applied to Galitzyn roused the laughter of the assembly, and the Government was once more made to look ridiculous. It was a duel to the death which was beginning between the police power of the Empire and the extreme revolutionaries. Protopopoff, daily becoming madder, accepting the challenge and taking all measures to *provoke* the outbreak of disorder in the capital as quickly as possible, was at the same time organising the most energetic repression which, according to him, could only end in the complete triumph of the Government. The revolutionary leaders, absolutely sure of the working population, hoping much also from certain military elements, and counting on the neutrality at least of the educated classes and of the majority of the officials, the revolutionary leaders, I say,

and the *German agents* on their side hastened the outbreak of the riot. The victory of the Revolution was, at the vital moment, brought about by some of the reserve regiments of the Guard going over to the rioters; *these regiments having been recruited*—in defiance of the rules strictly observed up till 1916—*a few months before the Revolution from amongst the working classes of the capital.* Naturally, the men of these regiments, not yet inured to discipline and commanded by young officers who themselves were novices, ended by going over to the side of their brothers and comrades.

From that moment, Petrograd was entirely at the mercy of a soldiery drunk with success, with the flattery lavished on it and with the alcohol seized on at every opportunity. M. Alexander Gutchkoff, the new Minister of War (the first civilian in this rôle that Russia has ever seen), was loudly clapped when with his own hands he pinned "la croix des braves" on the breast of the first soldier who had had the *courage* to kill his officer by shooting him in the back. This same Gutchkoff was scouted, reviled and dismissed, when he wished to take measures to dispatch gradually to the front the useless surplus of the garrison of Petrograd. The Government had to give in and to promise that all these soldiers should remain in the capital as recognised guardians of popular rights and of the Revolution. On that day the Provisional Government signed its own death-warrant.

Since then the *Soviets and those who were secretly directing them*, i.e. *the German agents*, had become the actual masters of Russia. All those who had greeted the fall of the Tsarinian régime with enthusiasm, and who from the very first adopted the cause of the Revolution; all those who rallied to it to increase the number of sane elements, this entire coalition of the best intellectual forces of the country whence came the majority of the Provisional Government; all these men, I say, found themselves from the outset *on the edge of the real power.* All the actual power was exclusively in the hands of the

Soviets. Even the hot-headed and obstructive Kerensky and his acolytes had no real voice in the matter; they possessed influence in so far as they obeyed the Soviets.

And then a dramatic dialogue began between the so-called Government and the so-called "People," the like of which history has never yet recorded.

"We give in to you on all the principles which we have always cherished," said Prince Lvoff, MM. Rodzianke, Gutchkoff, Miliukoff, Generals Alexeieff, Brussiloff, Korniloff, Ruzsky and others; "we give up the constitutional monarchy, we abrogate all the honorary prerogatives of the officers, we abandon for ever the right to own land, we are ready to welcome with open arms and to accept as colleagues and collaborators all the revolutionaries who come to us out of prisons, from Siberia, from abroad, including Anarchists and Bolsheviks—only allow us to preserve the minimum of order in the country (and the Army), and above all leave to us the direction of the war and the accomplishment of the recognised objects of that war. Recognise with us the great principles of a *free, undivided* and *powerful* country—the principle of Danton and Robespierre: will you?"

But the "people" who scoffed at Robespierre and Danton answered in coarse terms and finally drove away these boring personages with the butt-end of their rifles.

"We surrender to you the few principles we have recognised up to now," said M. Kerensky and his friends; "we accept the formula *no indemnities, no annexations*, we are ready to guide your footsteps towards the communist paradise, we joyfully consent to the most broadly 'federative' dismemberment of what up to now has been Russia; only permit us to save our face before strangers, preserve at least the *appearance* of a country faithful to its allies, persuade your brothers at the front not to desert the trenches entirely, not to run away all in a body!"

But the "people" of the soldiers, of the criminal sailors, of the workmen and of the peasants, greedy

for gain, replied with insults and finally drove out M. Kerensky and his friends with broomsticks, installing Bolsheviks in their places. The latter at last made the wished-for speech: "Comrades, we are all animated by the same ideal and are all aiming at the same proximate objects: 'No more war! Peace at any price! a peace which will permit us immediately to enjoy all the good things that you have won and that you are still winning!'"

This speech was greeted with unanimous applause, and with joyful heart they left for Brest-Litovsk.

The origin of the Revolution had warped its whole character and course and led Russia down a natural slope to the abyss in which she is still struggling.

If the sensible elements of the Provisional Government had realised this in time they might *perhaps* have been able to check the rapid progress of disorder and political corruption. But alas! we all of us were, just at the outbreak of the great cataclysm, under the influence of suggestion and of strong poisons. We believed in all good faith that the fakir and his silken ladder could remain suspended *in the air!*

It was quite natural that after the Revolution had triumphed in Russia the convicts and political exiles of note should have agreed to meet together in the capital of the regenerated country and should have enjoyed an enthusiastic reception from their former associates. But it was difficult to understand—for our Allies at least—why in war time and when the journey between the West and Russia was so difficult, so long and so costly, we need have allowed the whole body and, alas! the riff-raff also, of our revolutionary emigrants to come back to us from France, Switzerland, Italy? It would have been so easy and yet so rational to subsidise them liberally on the spot until the end of the war and the resumption of normal communications.

But it was just because those who were *actually* organising the Revolution needed to reinforce the most

detestable elements amongst their clients and zealots. And above and before all things they wanted to welcome the *Zimmerwaldians*, the friends of the German *Sozialdemokratie*. And when the British barred the way to the Lenins, the Trotskys and their staff, the Provisional Government was constrained to tolerate their arrival by Germany, to receive them ceremoniously and to allow their open and vehement progaganda of peace at any price.

I saw all this crowd of exiles passing through Stockholm, I made the acquaintance of a few amongst them, I heard a great deal of talk about others.

One of the first who passed through and stayed for one day in the Swedish capital was the celebrated Prince Kropotkin, a Revolutionist of the old stamp, the spiritual heir of Bakunin, the head of the Anarchist school, the pillar of the former International, and with all that an eminent geographer and collaborator with Elisée Réclus.

I expected to find a peremptory, intransigent personage, airing the most extreme theories with great assurance. I saw before me a very polite old man, with the courtesy of a bygone age, exceedingly simple in manner but with the dignity of a gentleman of the old school, and the impetuosity of youth becoming apparent occasionally—and just at the right moment—through this modest exterior. A sympathetic current at once set in between us and we talked quite openly. At one moment, when the conversation had turned to the person of Nicolas II., I took up his defence as a *man* and did not think it necessary to conceal the sincere sympathy I still felt for him. Kropotkin's face darkened. "I do not agree with you in the least," he said. "From *us* he has only earned anger and contempt." "But for *you* it is quite another matter," I broke in; "'Thou hast not served him. From thine earliest youth thou hast thrown off his bloodstained fetters.'[1] And I have served him all

[1] Celebrated lines of Lermonteff's on the death of the *Decembrist* Prince Odoievsky. The poet speaks of the "great world" and of its

my life, I have in no way found this service to be a reproach; on the contrary I was proud of it. So that if I did not take up the defence of my unfortunate ex-Sovereign now, I, too, should not deserve the esteem of the Russian people."

The old Revolutionist was silent for a few minutes, then allowed that from my point of view I was right.

A respectful crowd of Russian exiles, reporters, etc., were awaiting their turn to talk with the "great man"; meanwhile, in the modest room he was occupying, his wife, so good, so unaffected and such a perfect *lady* in her dignified simplicity, was busily packing into a small chest some remedies which might be needed on the journey by her adored *man*, who was old and often ailing after his long career of work, travels, dangers, prison.

The correspondent of a prominent Russian newspaper came to talk to Kropotkin in front of me. At one moment this gentleman—who seemed sympathetic and to be possessed of sound principles—touched on the question of a peace "without annexations and without indemnities" which had just been raised by the Zimmerwaldian clique and even by the neutral democratic Socialists. It was curious to see how the old man, with such a calm manner, started. "What? so that Germany should always have Alsace-Lorraine in her hands? So that the French frontier should still be as near Paris as it was before the war? But that is inadmissible, absolutely inadmissible. France could never breathe freely. And who, if not Germany herself, is going to pay for the ruins she has heaped up with joyous heart wherever her troops have passed? She is to pay for them. I am genuinely sorry for the German people, but they also have their share of responsibility and they must contribute by their work and by their money to the work of rightful reparation."

When I returned to see Kropotkin again later on in the day we, like the two good old Muscovites that we

chains; but he clearly means the whole Tsarinian régime and the somewhat cruel Emperor Nicolas I. to be understood by that.

were, ended by reviewing our recollections of Moscow, our mutual friends, our relations, our acquaintances. Those who have read the very vivid memoirs of Prince Kropotkin know that he was brought up by a grasping and often brutal father in an atmosphere of revolting abuse of the serfdom which still existed then. I myself was fortunate enough to have been only about four years old when the ever-blessed hand of the Emperor Alexander II. swept away this blemish which was disgracing Russia ; my parents had just left foreign parts and the diplomatic world, and they sought the society of people, refined like them, like them detesting vulgarity and coarseness, having like them intellectual interests. Now Moscow society at that period possessed many persons and many families with similar tastes. Consequently my memories were infinitely brighter and softer than those of my host. But nevertheless this recalling of the past in its setting—so original, so dear to every really Russian heart—of old Moscow, established one more link between me and the old Revolutionist, the old gentleman who had become an Anarchist through reaction against the injustice, the cruelty, the exploitation which had embittered his soul from his earliest youth. I was sorry to part from this sympathetic, interesting and sincere man, with whom I had a greal deal more in common than with many of my good friends in society or in my profession.

But other revolutionaries were about to return to Russia—via Stockholm—in quite a different frame of mind from that of Struve, Burtzeff, or Kropotkin.

I have a most vivid recollection of my first encounter with the kind of people who have since become so notorious under the epithet of Bolsheviks (majority party). I went to a public meeting in the great "Auditorium" of Stockholm, a meeting presided over by M. Branting and at which Madame Marika Stjerrnstett, the brilliant and congenial Swedo-French lecturer, was to speak on the horrible Armenian massacres and to rouse

the sympathy of the Swedish public for these unhappy people.

In the outer hall I found myself by chance next to an individual of the Armenian type; I asked him in Russian if he did belong to that nationality and on his answer in the affirmative I got a place for him in one of the front rows so that he should hear the lecture well.

Branting's stirring speech and then the brilliant account of the lecturer brought home to a much-moved audience the awful scenes of massacres, tortures, wholesale deportations—during which the greater number of the deported died from privations—the whole thing having been skilfully organised so as to extirpate once for all the whole Armenian race, whose existence and misfortunes were leading to the interference of Russia and Western Europe in Turkey. I walked home from this meeting and the Armenian whom I had befriended accompanied me. Very naturally we discussed what we had just been hearing. But my companion, without dwelling much on the misfortunes of his fellow-countrymen, passed rapidly on to general political questions and ended by advocating in eloquent terms the necessity of stopping *all* carnage as soon as possible and the present war first of all; he was impudent enough to draw up—probably in order to tempt me—a picture of a Russian diplomat who would throw off current conventions and place the "true" interests of the Russian people above the needs of the Allies! I stepped back a pace. "But are you really Armenian? And if you are, how can you speak of peace so long as your unhappy country has not been freed and avenged? Who in the world are you?" The individual was beginning to reply that when the ideals of those who thought as he did were realised, there could no longer be any massacres, any national persecutions. . . . But I quickly took off my hat to him and fled as from some noisome beast. I heard a few days later that he had left for Russia.

I also remember on one occasion, when I had gone to the station to see some one off, noticing a group of

young people—of a type that had absolutely nothing Slav about it—singing and dancing the *trepak* very ostentatiously on the platform before their carriage door. The faces of the dancers were completely at variance with the typically national Russian dance and the whole thing looked like intentional parade. At that minute one of the members of the "Emigrants' Committee," with whom I had had to discuss the help lent by the Legation, came up to me. "Do you see—those are all *our* young people who are rejoicing over their return to Russia," he said with a malignant smile. "Your Excellency may rest assured that they are going there for the greater well-being of the Russian people." And the smile became more malignant, more triumphant.

At this same time also my wife, returning from meeting an ambulance-train, told me that in it, besides the usual wounded men, there were some very suspicious-looking individuals, well-fed, well-dressed, and who passed themselves off as *Ukrainian* medical officers. The wounded complained of the conversation of these men, who scoffed at all that they held dear and who foretold a good peace with Germany at no distant date. The real wounded wished to draw the attention of the military authorities at the frontier to these people. Soon after and little by little the Russian ambulance trains assumed a completely different aspect. From the German side they were making use of them to pass into Russia not wounded men but soldiers who had undergone skilful preparation in special camps, and who were to swell the ranks of the "friends of peace" in Russia.

These ranks continued to swell. The army of treachery was forming. Only the headquarters staff was wanting. That arrived at last from Switzerland, *via Germany*, in the persons of MM. Lenin, Trotsky and others. When they passed through Stockholm—I did not see them—they did not conceal from the Swedish Socialists and interviewers their intention of preaching the conclusion of peace at any price.

It is absolutely futile to speak of the tremendous mistake made by the Provisional Government in consenting to their entry into Russia and in not taking any measures against their pernicious and open propaganda in Petrograd and the other great centres. The Provisional Government could neither forbid nor prevent anything against the will of the great *Soviet* of Petrogad. And this *Soviet*, by its very origin and from its beginning, was the organ of German policy and the lively and perfectly-formed embryo of the future Bolshevist republic.

In chronological sequence I ought here to mention an incident, or rather a conversation, which has but a distant connection with the progress of the Russian Revolution, but which has one all the same and which is of special interest at the hour in which I write these lines, that is to say in May, 1919.

At the beginning of April Sir Esme Howard told me that he had had a visit from an Esthonian political agitator, a certain M. Keskula, whose views had appeared to him to be interesting; that consequently he wished that I would check his impressions by having a conversation myself with the gentleman. My English colleague added that he had asked Keskula if he knew me; but that the latter had replied that although he was desirous of having an interview with me, he did not consider it the right thing for him to take the initiative and to present himself at the Russian Legation. I told Sir Esme that I saw nothing unseemly in my meeting the person in question on neutral ground, and so we arranged that on the appointed day I was to go to the First Secretary to the British Legation, Mr. Clive, whose mind, tact and judgment had always impressed me, and who in addition to all his other qualities was a thorough master of the German language, in which I should probably have to converse with my Esthonian "compatriot" so that the master of the house should understand us.

When I arrived at Clive's house at the appointed hour I found myself in the presence of a correctly-dressed gentleman whom the master of the house introduced to me as M. Keskula. We began to talk at once in German—as I had foreseen.

I asked M. Keskula about his antecedents. He replied with perfect frankness that he had commenced his political career as a partisan of German policy. Son of a well-to-do farmer, he began his scholastic career at the gymnasium of Reval, and then went to the University of Berlin, where he remained and took up Esthonian national politics.

"But I have always understood," I observed, "that the national movement in Esthonia, just as amongst the Letts, is closely bound up with an irreconcilable antagonism towards the Baltic Germans—especially towards the proprietors. Thus how could you seek to link the cause of your nation to German policy?"

"In that respect there is a great difference between Letts and Esthonians," was the reply. "Whereas the former are above and before all vehement nationalists with decided leanings to the most extreme socialism, we others hold fast to Western civilisation. The police order which reigns in the country, our prosperous little properties, our schools, our hospitals, our good roads—all that has become a habit with us which we could not sacrifice; then from the national point of view we have already acquired far more than the Letts; we have bought back a great deal of land from the *barons;* we are listened to and sometimes coaxed and flattered in the councils of administration, in which formerly all power, all influence, belonged exclusively to the Germans; our fellow-countrymen hold most of the rural livings; we possess a prosperous and influential national Press. For this reason in Esthonia, far more than amongst the Letts, we have always dreaded having much recourse to Russian protection; we dreaded your despotic methods, which would be the ruin of our local civilisation."

"But it seems that you have not come to an arrangement with the Germans of Berlin?"

"No; in spite of my labours of more than four years I have not arrived at any positive result. It was not that there were no enlightened minds in Germany: these understand that Germany could not but gain if in the Baltic Provinces two little States were formed, enjoying complete national independence, yet permeated with Germano-Western civilisation and guarding this independence and this civilisation against the attacks of the barbarian power which threatens them in the East—pray forgive me, Monsieur! But with regard to Baltic questions, German Government circles and the Berlin Press were, and are still, completely in the hands of the Baltic "emigrants," of a Kayserling and his confederates. Every one sees everything through their eyes. Thus, realising that I had taken the wrong track, I sought to find a support for our nationality from another side. I went to reside in Finland. You are aware of the ties of origin which bind the Esthonians to the Finns; latterly the Pan-Finnish idea has made remarkable progress; there are entire populations in your country—in Northern Russia, on the Volga, in Siberia—who for centuries had not even an idea what they were, and Russified themselves *ad libitum*, but who will know to-morrow that they are Finns. You will forgive my plain-speaking, Monsieur? But what concerns us at the present time is only the western and civilised agglomeration of the great Finnish race—Esthonia and Finland, which, in order to safeguard their liberty and their civilisation, ought first to unite their efforts and then to seek a power in Europe on which they could lean if necessary. This power might well be that of the Scandinavian States, beginning with Sweden. The historic ties of Sweden and Finland are universally recognised, and even much exaggerated. What are less well known are the ties that unite Sweden to the Baltic Provinces. . . ."

"I have often heard them spoken of," I interrupted

the speaker. "During the hundred odd years that Esthonia and Livonia were under Swedish domination the people, who up till then had been shamefully oppressed by the German conquerors, their lords and masters, knew for the first time what justice, order, humanity, and good administration were. At that time —the period of Gustavus Adolphus, of the Oxenstjernas, of Charles X. and Charles XI.—Sweden was the best governed State of the whole of Europe, and justice in particular was studied and respected. In extending their power to the domain of the Knights—Brothers of the Sword, the Swedish laws no longer tolerated the crying abuses of these knights. The Lett and the Esthonian, even the serfs amongst them, found protection from the Royal authorities. Schools were founded, roads made, proprietors who abused their power too much were judged and punished. Later on, under Russian domination the oppression of serfdom began again. Then the spirit of the age brought its own remedy. Amongst the Baltic nobility itself there were humane and just men to be found who wished to march with the times, and who advocated extensive reforms granted by Catherine II., and subsequently by Alexander I. Serfdom was abolished in the Provinces long before it was in Russia. Nevertheless, the recollection of the benefits of Swedish domination had never been effaced from the memory of the people of the Provinces, and even now the Swedish name is very popular amongst them—among Esthonians particularly."

"You are perfectly right, Monsieur; that is exactly the case."

"Well, then, have you succeeded this time in your work of binding Esthonia, Finland, and Sweden into one sheaf?" I asked.

"Not in the least! In the first place, Sweden does not really understand these matters. And then I have come to the conclusion that Finland has but one policy only—*German* policy."

"Yes, I have often heard that the Swedish party in Finland sought Germany's support long before the war."

"Not the Swedish party only, but far more the Young-Finn party, even to its most extreme elements. Finland would not even hear of a Swedish policy. Salvation could only come from the German side. Some time before the war an agreement was made between Helsingfors and Berlin that on the day when the Germans should occupy Esthonia, and when a German military governor should instal himself at Reval, and it becomes a German naval base—the Revolution should break out: not before. This arrangement still holds good. But in that case what would the fate of Esthonia be between Finland where a German prince, son or relation of William II.'s, would reign, and the Prussian 'Statthalter' installed at Reval?"

"I understand your patriotic anxieties thoroughly. But allow me to ask: who is preventing you—now that the Revolution has swept away the old tendencies to Russification amongst us, and professed the principle of national autonomies—who is preventing you, I say, from turning openly towards us, and from seeing the future of your nationality in an open union, based on wide autonomy, with Russia?"

"Be good enough to forgive my complete frankness beforehand, Monsieur: in the first place I must confess that we have no great confidence in your present régime, and in the possibility of your issuing triumphant from the struggle; then we always fear that even the new Russian régime might easily become narrowly nationalist again; such things have occurred before in history; then finally and chiefly there is the question of the future frontiers of Esthonia."

"But I thought that those were as perfectly traced by nature as by history. The frontier between the Russian nationality and the Esthonian nationality is Lake Peïpus (Pskoff) and the course of the river Narova up to its mouth in the Gulf of Finland near Narva."

"Ah! that is just the point, Monsieur! No, no! we take a very different view of our national frontiers. In the first place, south of Lake Peïpus the limits of your Government of Pskoff do not coincide at all with the limits of Esthonian nationality; the latter predominates in the western portion of the Government in question. The district and town of *Izborsk*, in particular, must absolutely belong to us."

"What? Izborsk? But from the legendary beginning of Russian history Izborsk appears as a Russian town; it has remained one. Listen: I know through the genealogy of my family that in the time of the Tsar Theodore, son of John the Terrible, a Nekludoff was made Lieutenant of the Tsar in Izborsk, and was given a large property there which has belonged up till latterly to his descendants—distant relations of mine—and which was sold quite recently to the local peasants—good and true Great-Russian *moujiks*, if ever there were any!"

"I must renew my apologies to you, Monsieur, but this only proves that your ancestors figured amongst the oppressors of the Esthonians, and established Great-Russian colonists on their soil! But let us leave Izborsk out of it.[1] What are you doing with the whole of Ingria? Yet from time immemorial it has been inhabited and cultivated by Esthonians; now Ingria extends east of the Narova as far as Lake Ladoga, that is to say it includes the whole northern half of what you have since called 'the Government of St. Petersburg.' All this country is undeniably ours."

"But, then, what would you do about the large agglomerations, of purely Russian population, which constitute large villages, or rather small towns, manu-

[1] An Esthonian *infiltration* does really exist in the province of Pskoff; but only since 1861. The noble proprietors having sold much land, it was mainly Esthonian immigrants who bought it, divided it up and settled down there. The instituting of the "Peasants' Bank" caused this colonisation to cease, for from that time onwards it was Russian peasants who bought the large properties which were for sale.

facturing centres numbering—as at Kolpino—tens of thousands of purely Russian workmen? And above all, what should you do about the great town of St. Petersburg—now Petrograd—the capital of the whole of Russia, with its two million inhabitants, of which barely fifty thousand are *tchouhontzy* (Esthonians)?"

"Oh, well! the Russians would enjoy the guarantees assured by modern arrangements to *minorities*. And as to Petrograd, once it is to be the capital of the whole of Russia—that is to say of a federation of different nationalities—why are you set on this capital being within the limits of the *Russian* part, and not within those of the *Esthonian* part of this great federation?"

There was a long silence. I felt that I had gathered all that I wanted to, and did not consider it necessary to set any further questions. On his side M. Keskula realised that he had said quite enough. He rose, and we bade him a friendly farewell. When he had left, Clive and I went to the drawing-room to beg a good cup of tea, hot and strong, from charming Mrs. Clive; it was decidedly necessary for us—for me in particular—to be braced up after the astounding things we had been listening to for over an hour!

Towards the end of April I received a telegram from M. Miliukoff, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Provisional Government, announcing my appointment as Ambassador to Madrid.

I had known Miliukoff for a long time; he had passed through Stockholm three or four times before the Revolution, and we had talked at great length then, and these conversations had led to a common point of view between us on many questions of home and foreign policy. What particularly pleased me about Miliukoff was his frankly Western, European, .mentality, his tremendous energy and his way of asking questions plainly, without reticence or evasions. I have reason to believe that in appointing me to Madrid Miliukoff was actuated by the wish to remove me from a country

too near Russia, too much overrun by the most extreme Russian elements; he was aware of my irreconcilability on certain principles, and he feared a clash of opinions which might create difficulties for the Foreign Office. My appointment as Ambassador to Spain constituted undeniable promotion, and at the same time it afforded me a haven till happier days should dawn. Moreover, the post in Madrid might become a most important one in the event of negotiations for universal peace. I fully appreciated these friendly intentions. As to the post in Stockholm, Miliukoff was giving that to an intimate friend, our Minister to Christiania, who had a shrewd and adaptable mind quite capable of coming to terms with all the Russian elements who had, or thought they had, a voice in the matter of our relations with Sweden.

I had only just accepted the appointment, and thanked Miliukoff, when sad news arrived from Petrograd, the taking up of arms of the *Soviet* of Petrograd—the first taking up of arms of the Bolsheviks we can now say—directed against the moderate elements of the Provisional Government and especially against their patriotic point of view on the questions and the objects of the war. The garrison of Petrograd—already called "the Red Guard"—held an armed demonstration against certain Ministers to the watchword of "peace without annexations or indemnities." The movement was directed more particularly against Miliukoff, who on that day displayed admirable personal courage and went down to the Square to harangue the soldiery, loudly upholding his principles about the objects of the war—and first and foremost the necessity for Russia to possess the Straits. The demonstration continued throughout the night, and the next day the Council of Ministers of the Provisional Government broke up. The majority, with Kerensky at the head, consented to subordinate their policy to the needs of the "people." Thus Miliukoff and his friends were turned out. General Korniloff—a hero *sans peur et sans reproche,* and a proficient upholder of the most advanced political views

(there were many such!)—also relinquished his duties as head of the Petrograd garrison. Prince Lvoff remained as Prime Minister a little while longer; but the real and almost the whole power passed to Kerensky, who took unto himself as Minister for Foreign Affairs young M. Terestchenko—up till then Minister of Finance—and who replaced Miliukoff's friends by revolutionary Socialists of renown. As to the President of the Duma, M. Rodzianko, and a few officials who with him were supposed to represent the supreme power —no one mentioned them any more; they had been tacitly suppressed like the fourth Duma itself. It was a *decisive day* which really decided the fate of the Revolution and with it the fate of Russia. All reasonable people were filled with dismay.

However, man is so constituted that he always clings to a hope; this is more especially true of the Russian intellectual. Now in this case the hope lay in Kerensky's personality. Son of a high official at the Board of Education (at that period the citadel of Russian reaction), impetuous, excitable, not altogether reliable in some matters, having gone in for revolutionary Socialism like others go in for Futurism or Cubism, prosecuted and interned during the first Revolution, an eloquent member—always pushing himself forward—of the fourth Duma, where he sat at the head of the Labour members—this lawyer felt his hour had come when the Revolution triumphed. Whereas all the other members of the Duma, even the most advanced ones, had lost their heads, he, assisted by a few colleagues from the Socialist revolutionary camp, promptly placed himself in evidence, harangued the people, harangued the troops that were occupying the halls and lobbies of the Duma, caused the former civil and military officials who were being arrested in the town and whom the emissaries of the revolutionary party were conducting to the Duma, to be brought before him, and decided their fate, either setting them free or ordering them to be transported to the fortress; in short, he and his friends represented a

kind of executive power even before the Provisional Government, in which he became Minister of Justice, was formed. There is a Russian proverb dating from the eighteenth century, which says : " He who has taken the stick becomes corporal." Kerensky had at once become this corporal or rather this commander-in-chief of the Russian Revolution. At least it appeared so to others. As a matter of fact he had never been either the promoter or the conscious leader of this Revolution. So long as he agreed with the *Soviets* he had some power, the moment he disagreed with them he was powerless. Moreover, he realised that at once, and until his final downfall he indulged in a game of see-saw between the Soviets and their adversaries.

Not at all bloodthirsty (I imagine he could not have killed a fly himself), very much inclined, like Bonaparte when *he* had attained supreme power, to protect the aristocrats who rallied to him, he had at once an enormous clientèle, for who did not rally to him in Petrograd ? Families well known for their undisguised sycophancy had hastened to bring this hereditary servility to the new régime, and as soon as it was Kerensky who personified this régime, they adored and fawned on M. Kerensky. The "Dictator," as well as his new colleagues in the Ministry, made laudable efforts to save innocent people—even generals and officers—from ever dangerous prisons and from the fury of the *comrades*. There have never been so many people sent abroad on special missions, civil and military, and authorised to take considerable sums of money with them, as during Kerensky's term of office ; in this way those officers, officials or private individuals, to whom a longer stay in Russia would have been dangerous, were sent, or allowed to go, away.

Young M. Terestchenko did his best to help in these masked flights. He was a man of the world, very well educated, intelligent, and thoroughly good and sincere. During the few months that he was in office he represented "Our Lady of Perpetual Succour" to all

the former smart world of Petrograd. This same world will probably revile him later on. For our Foreign Office staff his appointment was invaluable; all kept their posts and those who had had some influence over M. Sazonoff had a great deal more over the new Minister, who had no experience of his work. Abroad all Miliukoff's appointments were adhered to, including mine. There were, however, a few victims on the list, some Consuls were sacrificed to the spite of the former political exiles suddenly become the undisputed heads of Russian colonies abroad. And as the Socialist principle is as a rule against State pensions, these poor functionaries, of whom some were old and the fathers of families, were just turned into the streets after twenty-five and thirty years' service!

Kerensky's attitude towards the fallen Emperor and his family was also most favourably commented on by the Press and by rumours in circulation. And when the unfortunate family was sent to Tobolsk, in Siberia, every one thought that this measure had been dictated by the new Government's—*alias* Kerensky's—wish to save Nicolas II. and his family from the dangers which might arise for them at any moment from the Soviet of Petrograd, and to cause them to be as it were forgotten through absence till such time as they could be surreptitiously sent abroad.

But above and before all Kerensky proved his worth by his untiring zeal and feverish activity in favour of the cause of the Allies and of the prosecution of the war. In fiery speeches, becoming ever more numerous, and during propaganda trips which he made to the front, to Moscow, to Kieff and back again to the front, he exhorted "the soldiers of liberty" to remain loyal to the Allies, to fight, to conquer. Through the telegraphic agencies we abroad read the text of his stirring speeches, the accounts of the enthusiasm of the "revolutionary army," the promises of an early renewal of the most splendid military operations. And everybody—Russians and Allies—*wished* to persuade themselves

that this little man with the clean-shaven face like Bonaparte—untiring like him, and thundering out his speeches like Danton—would be capable of changing the spirit of the Russian soldier completely, and of causing the troops on our front, so passive and quiet since the triumph of the Revolution, to take up the struggle for victory once more. What mattered the principles and the extreme measures adopted by the new Government in the interior of the country, and the complete disorder which seemed to be reigning there? What mattered the watchword "peace without annexations or indemnities" which had definitely triumphed on the Russian side? Let us save Russia's honour with regard to the Allies; let us fight and conquer; the rest can be arranged afterwards and never mind how.

Such were the hopes, such the frame of mind which prevailed at the outset of the Kerensky régime. Alas! it soon became obvious that these hopes were exaggerated to say the least of it! News began to arrive again in Stockholm, representing the Russian Army and the entire country as being involved in increasing dissolution. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers with their arms were deserting in a body and returning to the interior of the country in order to participate in the "dividing up of properties." These deserters seized the railways, forced any trains they could get hold of to run, plundered and burnt private properties, formed themselves into bands, infested the towns, took the prisons by assault and freed the prisoners, who formed themselves into other bands still more dangerous. Meanwhile the Ukraine proclaimed its independence; the Caucasus did likewise; chaos became universal; everything was at a standstill except the printing-presses for bank notes and the fiery eloquence of Kerensky. As to the propaganda of the *Bolsheviks* it was more energetic and open than ever.

When I was preparing to leave for my new post in the beginning of June I had almost entirely lost all

my illusions. I did not conceal from any one that I considered the continuation of my public duties as most precarious. And on leaving Stockholm on the 14th June I said to myself and to my friends that my term of office would in all probability be short-lived.

When I left Sweden the Hammarskiold-Wallenberg Ministry had ceased to exist, having been replaced by another Cabinet, Conservative also, but which was known to be a transition Cabinet, for every one was expecting that the next elections would produce a tremendous Liberal and still more Socialist majority.

I took my leave of King Gustaf V., who on this occasion showed me the same kindness as he had done throughout my time in Sweden. His Majesty was deeply moved when he talked about the fate of the ex-Emperor Nicolas II. and his family, but he shared my hopes as to the chances of safety still remaining to them; more especially if every one kept quiet about them for a time.

I was genuinely sorry to leave Stockholm. In spite of the terrible events of the war and of the Revolution, I had got on well in the country; I had learnt to like and esteem the Swedish people. For myself personally and for my country the future seemed to hold nothing but terrible trouble.

CHAPTER XXV

IN SPAIN AND IN EXILE

My journey from Stockholm to Madrid was performed under conditions unavoidable in a World-War. At Bergen I had to submit to an enforced halt of a few days to wait for the English boat in which we were to cross the North Sea, and of which the day and hour of departure were kept strictly secret, on account of German submarines. At last the old *Vulture*, dirty and packed with passengers, started, escorted by two fine British destroyers which awaited her outside Norwegian waters.

On board I met a few French Socialist parliamentarians who had been visiting Russia with M. Albert Thomas; I had made their acquaintance when they passed through Stockholm on their way to my country.[1] At that time they were loudly proclaiming their intention to talk sense to our extreme Socialists and especially to fight the propaganda of the Bolsheviks. I was somewhat disagreeably surprised to find that on their return from their mission to Russia they appeared to be upholding the *Soviets*. The head of the mission, M. Albert Thomas, had gone on board a French destroyer at Bergen.

Towards the end of the crossing a thick fog enveloped the sea, and we were suddenly stopped; signals were exchanged between us and our escort; we started again, but when the fog lifted it was discovered that we were not going into Aberdeen but into Peterhead, a small

[1] This was M. Albert Thomas's second journey, the one that had such an indifferent influence on our internal situation.

fishing-port much further north. The commander of one of the destroyers, friendly Lieutenant Lyon, then came on board the *Vulture* and explained to me what had happened. We had been stopped by a wireless message, saying that the Germans had laid mines during the night off Aberdeen (probably aimed at Albert Thomas); in a few hours the flotilla of trawlers would have picked up those mines and then we should be able to resume our journey. Towards evening we did arrive safe and sound in Aberdeen, and I immediately took the train to London.

When I arrived in Paris two days later, I heard the news of the Russian offensive in Galicia, an offensive due to Kerensky's eloquence. There had been some brilliant successes, strong enemy positions had been taken, etc. All the Russians who were in Paris were in a high state of jubilation: at last one could look the Allies in the face without any bitter feeling of shame! Moreover, this was but the beginning; fighting was starting again on the Russian front, and our soldiers had shaken off their torpor.

That was the opinion of the moment. Two or three weeks later the whole truth was known in Paris: the June attack had been due solely to the devotion of a few *battalions of officers* and to the *women's battalion.* After losing more than half of their numbers, these enthusiasts of duty and patriotism had succeeded in taking strong enemy positions, but no help came to them from the soldiers, who watched the attack with arms crossed and sneering expressions, *when they were not shooting the officers and heroic women in the back!*

But, I repeat, this ghastly truth was only known a fortnight later. Hence I left Paris in splendid spirits, and after a normal journey of thirty-six hours I arrived in Madrid very early in the morning of the 28th June.

Two days after my arrival, my formal reception by the King took place.

This is the third time in the course of these

Reminiscences that I have had to describe an audience of reception. This may perchance astonish the reader; but who knows whether in the near future some one may not be grateful to me for having recounted these Court ceremonies—ceremonies formerly considered so all-important which have since become the continuation of a traditional custom, now only of interest to street-loiterers and Court circles, and which will soon fall completely into disuse together with all the outward show and all the pomp of the most ancient monarchies?

Moreover, Madrid has remained the capital in which the solemn audiences of the Ambassadors have preserved all their grandeur and take place in a singularly appropriate setting and according to the rites religiously kept up since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I at least cannot remember any Court ceremony more imposing and grander in its every detail than the one held for me on my arrival in Madrid.

The procession through the streets of the capital was really magnificent. Each of the gilded coaches was worthy of a place in a museum and in history; I occupied the one built for the coronation of King Joseph (Bonaparte), which was simple in outline with the most delightful paintings on a gold-lacquered ground. The harness and trappings of the beautiful horses dated from the eighteenth century; the liveries of the postilions, heavily embroidered in gold and silver dulled by twenty decades of wear, were of the same period; all the other liveries have not changed in fashion since the days of Philip V. The horses of the escort, of Arab breed with glossy coats, were all beautiful, and admirably ridden—Spanish riders are undoubtedly the best in the world.

The procession at last reached the Royal Palace, the only really beautiful and majestic building in Madrid, and entered the great courtyard where the guard of honour was drawn up, with their colours hallowed by warlike memories, to salute the Ambassador. In the outer hall of the Palace members of the Royal Court came to be presented to the Ambassador and to precede

him up the magnificent and monumental staircase between two rows of halberdiers, wearing the authentic gold-laced costume of the eighteenth century. To the strains of the National Anthem I passed through the rooms of the Palace, magnificent rooms full of the most beautiful bronzes, furniture, brocades, Gobelin tapestries, representing the best specimens of the Louis XIV. and Louis XV. periods.

After a few minutes' delay I was shown into the presence of His Majesty.

The Royal throne, on which His Majesty was seated, was approached by several steps flanked by four life-sized lions in gilded bronze. On the King's left stood the Ministers, the Court, the Generals and military commanders of the capital, all in full uniform; on his right stood the Grandees of Spain. It was pointed out to me that more Grandees than usual were attending the audience: they were curious to see a "Muscovite revolutionary" being presented to the King. They were somewhat disappointed when they saw me appearing in my diplomatic dress, heavily embroidered in silver, and observing all the traditional precepts and rules of etiquette!

After the usual ceremonial greetings I read my speech to the King, who listened to it seated. In this speech I recalled the very great services rendered to humanity, and more particularly to the Russians, by Spain and her King who had undertaken the protection of our civil prisoners in enemy countries, the protection of military prisoners, and also the task of the possible alleviation of the fate of the victims in this ghastly war. As I was still labouring under the impression of the good news received in Paris, I mentioned with great satisfaction the "ardent patriotism," and the "unswerving loyalty to alliances" which constituted one of the points of resemblance between the Russian popular soul and the Spanish one. Alas! how promptly was this portion of my oration belied by events!

My speech concluded, I handed my credentials to

the King, and His Majesty, still seated, read his answer in Spanish. Then he rose, descended the steps of the throne, and taking me by the hand, bade me welcome.

Just then the course of the ceremony was interrupted by an unusual pause: the King advanced a little towards the centre of the room so as to be able to speak a few words to me without any formality, and said: "Monsieur, in your speech you were good enough to allude to the help we have been able to render to your prisoners. Allow me to tell you of the deep interest I take in the fate of other 'Russian prisoners,' I allude to His Majesty the former Emperor Nicolas II. and his family. I come to beg you, Monsieur, to transmit to your Government my fervent prayers for their liberation."

The King's words touched me deeply. "Sir," I replied, "will Your Majesty permit me to be quite frank in my answer?"

"Not only do I permit, but I desire you to be frank, Monsieur."

"You see before you, sir, a faithful servant of the Russian people and of the new order of things in Russia; but at the same time, by virtue of all my traditions, all my antecedents, the person of him who was once my Sovereign is and will always remain *sacred* to me, without speaking of the feelings of personal gratitude and sympathy which bind me to him. If anything on earth can be done to help him and his, you may be absolutely sure and certain, sir, that I shall be ready to lay aside my interests, my career, perhaps even more. So I shall not hesitate to transmit to my Government the words that Your Majesty has just spoken. But I would beg you to consider one thing most carefully: I know for certain that the Provisional Government has but one wish and that is to allow the Emperor and his family to leave for foreign parts; if it does not do so, it is on account of the extreme elements. Now, any official intercession coming from abroad would not fail to excite these extreme elements, and the agitation

which would ensue would only harm the unfortunate exiles of Tobolsk."

The King thought for a minute. "But tell me, Monsieur, something that I do not quite understand. *Who is really at the head of the Russian Government at this moment?*"

"Sir, I have just handed my credentials to Your Majesty; these credentials are signed by the President of the Council, Prince Lvoff, and countersigned by the Minister for Foreign Affairs."

"Then it is Prince Lvoff? I am told he is a good and honourable man. Very well then, Monsieur, please write from me to Prince Lvoff to say how interested I am in the fate of the Emperor Nicolas II. and his family, and that I should be intensely happy to know they were in complete safety!"

"I will do so to-morrow, sir, in a private letter addressed to the Prince."

"Yes, yes, please do so."

The King's words and his expression denoted so much frankness, so much nobleness that I at once felt his charm. Moreover, what he had said stirred me deeply. The ceremony then concluded by the presentation of my suite to the King. On which His Majesty withdrew with great pomp.[2]

After the usual presentations and a few minutes' waiting in another room, I was conducted first to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and then to Her Majesty the Queen-Mother Marie Christina.

One could not imagine a more graceful picture than the one that met my eyes when I entered the audience-room of the young Queen. Slim, very beautiful (her photographs do not show the great charm of her features), very fair, wearing a lovely white dress which still further enhanced her beauty, the Queen was standing

[1] Alas! no one knew exactly!

[2] Up to now I do not know if other Sovereigns, other Governments—allied or neutral—have ever taken any similar steps in favour of the unfortunate Nicolas II. and his family.

up surrounded by the ladies of her suite. Her Majesty's smile and her gracious welcome did but confirm my first impression—that of being face to face with some one endued with transcendent qualities, moral as well as physical.

When one approaches the Queen-Mother, Marie Christina, who was Regent of the Kingdom for many years, one at once receives the impression of a person inured to supreme power, to duty, to tribulation, to the claims and subtleties of politics. Above all she is *grande dame* in the highest sense of the term. A long line of ancestors seem to rise behind her image, august personages draped in the imperial purple, heroes of great triumphs or of great trials which formerly cast their shadow or shed their lustre over the whole of Europe. Often the vital powers of a race are not equal to such exalted destinies, such heavy tasks; the descendants suffer from atrophy, turn into idols or marionettes. But sometimes in one of the branches of the ancient family a curious atavism revives the old vitality, the old virtues. When one is in the presence of Queen Marie Christina, who for over twenty years and under the most difficult circumstances succeeded in governing Spain and consolidating her son's throne, one naturally calls up the historic images of her great-grandfather the Archduke Charles—the sole adversary worthy of opposing Bonaparte's military genius; then the Archduke Albert, an admirable army leader who covered himself with glory in 1866; both of them having left, besides their military fame, the memory of great nobility of character, intelligence and enlightened passion for art.

The Queen-Mother's conversation is imbued with frankness and intellectual charm. One feels at once that she has seen much, worked much, and thought much. As during the disastrous war which has just desolated the world, Austria-Hungary has been the loyal and absolutely inalienable friend of Germany, current opinion has ascribed Germanophile sympathies to Queen Marie Christina. Nothing is more unfair: the Queen, by her

whole nature and all her traditions, belongs to the proud Imperial line which looked on the Hohenzollerns as *parvenus*, as born foes who could not, and should not be trusted. It was when these historic traditions were abjured at Schoenbrunn, when Austria-Hungary definitely gave herself into Berlin's keeping, that the death-warrant of her Empire was signed! But in Austria herself and in the Imperial family many people still adhered to the ancient traditions and had foreseen the misfortunes inseparable from the new state of affairs. I think I am right in numbering Marie Christina amongst these.

When I returned home in the same coach and surrounded by the same pomp, all the usual ceremonies were not over. A few minutes later, accompanied by the cordial and friendly M. de Heredia, whose duty it is to introduce ambassadors, I got into another coach, rather less gilded and with no escort this time, and drove to the palace of the *Gobernacion* (Government), where the President of the Council, M. Dato, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Marquis de Lema, awaited me. In the courtyard of the palace a company of the famous *Guardia Civil*[1] was drawn up to salute me. In the great reception-room the two Ministers who, like me, were still in Court dress, greeted me with the customary civilities. As a rule during this ceremonious visit only the merest commonplaces are exchanged. On this occasion I thought it necessary to recapitulate to the two Ministers the conversation I had just had with the King, as although they were aware of the subject of it they could only partially have followed it. I explained quite frankly the position of the Russian Government, as I understood it, and added that in the interests of the unfortunate Royal captives it was

[1] The *Guardia Civil* is undeniably the best organised gendarmerie of Europe; it has an unblemished reputation, and the Spanish people appreciate and esteem it.

imperative to mention them as little as possible. "So long as the present Government, including M. Kerensky, is in power, one can feel assured as to the fate of Nicolas II. and his family. Heaven forefend that all the power should pass to the *Soviets !* then one could answer for nothing; but even so all intercession would only be fatal!"

The two gentlemen were sincerely grateful for the complete frankness of my explanations; from that hour relations of sympathy and perfect confidence were established between us, relations of which I allow myself to be proud, for M. Dato and the Marquis de Lema can rightly be considered the most esteemed politicians of Spain—esteemed even by their opponents.

A quarter of an hour after I had got home, I received a visit from the same two Ministers—still in full dress. Then *nunc dimittis:* I was at last free to discard my official finery, so particularly oppressive on these Madrid dog-days, and to rest.

But when I found myself alone in my room, with the blinds carefully drawn down, I was struck by the tragic contrast between what I had just seen and what had just been said to me so nobly and humanely by King Alfonso XIII. Over there, at the far end of Europe, also magnificent palaces stood in a setting of power and glory, and pompous and imposing ceremonies were held of which the centre of attraction was an Imperial couple surrounded by four enchanting princesses and a delicate and attractive boy. This was but yesterday . . . and to-day this family, before whom all bowed low, who saw no one and nought save in brilliant array and in the attitude of obedience—this same family was languishing in the solitude of distant exile in some mean and common dwelling, and, what is far worse, exposed to the continual supervision and the insults of brutal and dirty keepers. . . . The Royal family in the prison of the Temple; the two children of Edward V. listening with anguish for the footsteps of the assassins on the staircase of the Tower; the wretched John Antonovitch

in his prison at Schlüsselburg[1] . . . all these pictures, familiar to me from my infancy, and so many more besides, were conjured up before my mental vision, ever forming that tragic and bitter contrast between supreme pomp and supreme misery, of the innocent paying the debt of blood of the guilty; a state of things so terribly overwhelming and cruel, unless one accepts, in deep humility, the idea of a single Will who rules worlds as He rules each of us, and who at the appointed hour endues us with His Spirit and His Strength to endure all, to understand all.

The very next day I sent off a private and confidential letter to Prince Lvoff, thus discharging the commission entrusted to me by the King. I never received any answer. Soon after my letter reached Petrograd, Prince Lvoff disappeared discreetly from the scene, as the Duma had disappeared, as Rodzianko and the other "high commissioners" had disappeared, leaving the whole quasi-dictatorial power to Kerensky—President of the Council, then Commander-in-Chief, then President of the Republic which he had proclaimed unaided, but first and foremost the plaything of the omnipotent *Soviets!*

[1] Great-grandson of the Tsar John V. (the weak-minded brother and co-regent of Peter the Great), John VI. Antonovitch came to the throne at *the age of six months*, in succession to his great-aunt the cruel and cynical Anne Joannovna. A few months later he was dethroned by Elisabeth Petrovna, torn from his family and confined in the strictest seclusion. Having reached the age of twenty-three, *without ever having seen anything but his gloomy prison walls*, without ever experiencing in his infancy the endearments or the care of a woman, he was killed by his gaolers just when a young adventurer was striving to free him in order to proclaim him Emperor (1764). A sadder story has rarely been recorded in history!

Those who are inclined to believe in Divine vengeance extending—according to the Jews—*down to the seventh generation*, might extract an argument in support of their thesis from the fact that the Emperor Nicolas II. represented the seventh generation starting from the Empress Elisabeth Petrovna, and the little Tsarevitch Alexis the seventh generation starting from Catherine II., in the second year of whose reign the unfortunate John Antonovitch perished in such a ghastly manner.

The Court left Madrid for La-Granja immediately after my reception. I stayed in town for another three weeks in order to become thoroughly acquainted with the duties (as few in number as they were simple) of my new post and with my colleagues, I mean more especially my allied colleagues. France's Ambassador was M. Geoffray, a very distinguished and clever man, who, during a period of extreme difficulty for the representation of the Republic in Spain, managed to uphold the French flag while not offending Spanish susceptibilities, which the Germans would have been ready to enflame at any favourable opportunity. Great Britain's Ambassador, Sir Arthur Hardinge, had been a colleague of mine in Constantinople, where we had both been Secretaries to the Embassies; he had an original and quick mind, so that my association with him was as pleasant as it was useful. At San Sebastian I became very intimate with my Italian colleague, Count Bonin-Longare, a true diplomat, whose great tact and broad views I have always admired. Mr. Willard, United States Ambassador, with his sound, upright and serious mind, completed the quartette of my congenial colleagues. All these colleagues hesitated to start for the summer season at San Sebastian, for revolutionary movements were expected in Barcelona, Bilbao and even Madrid, and so the Government remained in the capital. But at last we had to flee from the terrific heat of Castile, quite torrid in summer, and to go to San Sebastian about the 20th July. And a few weeks later, when the Court and the Government were in Santander and the Diplomatic Corps at San Sebastian, the dreaded disorders did indeed break out. Dato's Government opposed a bold front, displayed much energy, but did not resort to useless reprisals, so that order was soon restored, except in Catalonia, where political unrest has become chronic.

But I will refrain from formulating judgments on the political situation of a country to which I paid but a fleeting visit.

I went from Madrid to San Sebastian by motor-car, and the country I passed through left a deep impression in my mind, particularly the beautiful old town of Burgos with its splendid cathedral, and the ever vivid memories of the Cid. The corn was already ripe all over Old Castile; the Basque country with its green mountains, its beautiful groves of chestnut trees, its large square farms surrounded by orchards, its magnificent roads, was most restful to the eye after the sad but grand aridity of the interior of the country. The population seemed to me to be dignified, sober, polite, as undaunted in work as they have always been in the fight. It is quite usual to describe Spain as a backward country and her population as wretched. In any case this does not strike one at first sight. But well-informed persons have explained to me the difficult position of the Spanish people—of the peasants and workmen—due to the very small revenue from their properties, and the low wages paid for labour; this state of things is mainly owing to Spain's difficulty in competing—as regards production—with the other European countries and particularly with America. Centuries had been wasted for the industrial and economic organisation of the country: Spain is behindhand with her neighbours and hence in an inferior position in the general competition.

Moreover, for centuries the Spanish nation has chiefly produced devotion, heroism, moderation; a time came when these "commodities" were no longer marketable, because the preference of the European public had been given to great industrial effort, and to the rapid increase of material needs. The events which have just occurred have caused many long forgotten things to become fashionable again, and will force the entire world—if it does not wish its civilisation to perish in terrible convulsions—to moderate the appetites of the few and the many, to simplify and restrain their needs. This evolution will be advantageous to the Spanish people if they are capable of preserving their old

traditions, their old virtues: that is my fervent wish for them.

Meanwhile the news arriving from Russia was becoming worse daily. As I said above, the famous offensive in Galicia had only served to emphasise the utter demoralisation of the Russian soldier; very soon the results became brutally apparent: the Austro-German Army having merely planned an attacking movement—at once there was a general disbandment on the whole Russian front; entire divisions, especially those being held in reserve, began to flee, dragging their officers with them by force, killing those who tried to stop them at all costs, carrying off guns, in order to *re-sell* them to the Germans later on. Horrible *pogrom* scenes, the victims being the Galician populations, Jews of the large villages and the towns, Orthodox peasants of the villages without discrimination, took place along the line of retreat of the "revolutionary army." The massacres of Kalusz have, alas! remained famous.

And to this final demoralisation of the Army corresponded the growing dissolution of the country. A Ukrainian *rada* (assembly) convened by no one and of which the members had not been elected by any one, assembled at Kieff and set itself up as the autonomous Government of the whole of South Russia; in the country the peasants took possession of the large and medium-sized properties and divided the land and all the accessories between them without waiting for any legislative sanction and without heeding the local administration, which yet had been elected by the people themselves. At the head of the State the despotism of the extreme parties worked the most radical changes without awaiting the decisions of the famous "Constituent," which nevertheless was on every one's lips. Kerensky first became Generalissimo on his own authority; finally, to crown everything, he and four of his colleagues—a kind of Council of Five—on their own authority and their own initiative proclaimed *the Republic*,

of which the Generalissimo naturally became the President. This was announced throughout the country by means of Government circulars and posters, whereas Russian representatives abroad received instructions to defer the notification of this important change to the Governments to which they were accredited!

On two occasions during the summer of 1917 circumstances appeared to furnish Kerensky and his collaborators with the opportunity and the means for restoring a certain amount of authority to the Government and for confounding the propaganda, more brazen day by day, of the Lenins and the Trotskys. The first of these occasions was when the Bolsheviks raised their shields and resorted to violence with the help of a few regiments of the Red Guard and the sailors from Cronstadt. This *pronunciamento* failed lamentably although the Government was only supported by a few hundreds of loyal soldiers and by the officers present in the capital, who performed feats of valour and energy. The Bolsheviks were ignominiously defeated and had to give in. It would seem as if after that the Government ought to have proceeded to arrest the Bolshevist leaders and to break up the greater part of the battalions of the Red Guard, the ones that had mutinied in any case. But Kerensky did nothing of the kind. Fearing a "counter-revolution" he did not wish to deprive himself of the *Soviet* and the Red Guard, which he still hoped to domesticate.

The second occasion was when the members of the four consecutive Dumas which had sat in Russia since 1906 and up to 1917, held a meeting in Moscow. Every one thought that the object of this meeting was to reconstitute a provisional assembly composed of delegates of all parties and which would have acted until the election and the convocation of the great Constituent. But the sole results were some speeches by Kerensky, a few triumphal processions at the head of which the Dictator-Generalissimo marched round "his good town of Moscow," and a few solemn sittings in the Opera-

house of the town. Nothing whatever resulted from these sittings; and as to the fourth Duma—the one for the defence of which the people had so to speak taken up arms—it was simply dissolved by a governmental decree—a decree of which no one took the trouble to inform the Russian representatives abroad. I at least only heard of this dissolution very much later.

As I continued to receive more and more grievous news I began to wonder whether I was entitled to keep my post as Ambassador, in view of the radical metamorphoses undergone by the Provisional Government. When I had sent in my adherence to this Government in March it was mainly composed of men whom I considered respectable and suitable. The abdication of the Emperor—except as concerned the rights of the little heir to the throne—had taken place in a regular and legal manner; the subsequent act of the selected heir, the Grand-Duke Michael Alexandrovitch, referred the question of the succession and that of the definite form of the Government of the Empire to the decisions of the future Constituent. Speaking theoretically and generally, I had no objection to the establishing of a great and sound Republic in Russia; but it was only the country itself—through a Constituent Assembly regularly and calmly elected—which had the right to proclaim such a tremendous change; hence the decision of M. Kerensky and his four colleagues was stamped with flagrant illegality in my eyes.

Finally, at the head of the Government—instead of Prince Lvoff, President of the Council, originally appointed by the Emperor, and of M. Rodzianko, President of the Duma—there was a Dictator with no mandate, belonging to an extreme party, surrounded by other protagonists of extreme parties, who laboured to secure to these parties a crushing majority in the future Constituent, and meantime the support of an armed force which had lost all notion of discipline. To remain in the service of the State under such conditions was, especially for an Ambassador, to lend one's name to a state of

affairs which was absolutely illegal and fatal to the country.

Of course there was an opinion prevailing that honest, reasonable and expert men should remain all the same in the service of Russia in order to save whatever could be saved; should not give up their places to dangerous quacks and reserve themselves—*at their posts*—for the future. This opinion was justifiable; only in order to profess it, it was necessary to believe firmly that matters might still be arranged and relative order restored in the country. That is what I aspired to do, but each day I lost another shred of hope.

Towards the end of August I went from San Sebastian to Paris on private business. I stayed there ten days. My impressions were truly depressing. Paris was full of Russians, all official personages, charged with some mission or other, having work to do either at the front, or with the Red Cross, or on some financial or economic commission—in short drawing salaries from the Russian Exchequer and receiving emoluments on credit still granted to Russia by allied France. Among these compatriots I noticed some metamorphoses which would have made the fortune of a Vauvenargues and delighted a Pailleron or a de Flers. A young but pompous official who owed his early career to the special protection of the Empress Alexandra and the Vyrubova, now held himself carefully and earnestly aloof from people whose orthodoxy in Socialist and revolutionary matters might be open to suspicion. Another gentleman—plausible but rather too clever at times—whom I had overheard a few years ago relating how he had gone down on his knees in front of the little Tsarevitch so that the delightful child could play more easily with his decorations, now aired the views of a Brutus and was always in the company of those beloved and worthy Russian revolutionaries come back as masters to that same Paris where they had formerly lived as poor exiles. The beaming and radiant smiles which had formerly broken out at the mere sight of a

fold of a grand-duchess's dress, the graceful bows, the discreetly warm handshakes were now all bestowed on former convicts—martyrs to that liberty at last triumphant! And all these people sought the approbation and the favour of the "special commissaries" of the Provisional Government and of the *Soviets* who were being established in foreign parts so that they could convince themselves of the fidelity and good behaviour of the former "agents of Tsarism" who had become the servants of revolutionary Russia so promptly and so spontaneously! These "commissaries" were sometimes sedate men quite capable of assuming the direction of affairs, but there were also some curious specimens, for instance, the famous M. Svatikoff who went abroad armed—according to him—with unlimited mandates, who caused ambassadors to tremble and dismissed military agents, and who was finally disowned by the Central Government for having abused his power, which was extremely limited as a matter of fact.

When I saw this spectacle of human frailty before me, I could not help cross-examining myself and thinking: "Is it possible that I should really be like those people? Should I fear so terribly for my personal career and for the comfort I derive from it?"

I was still in Paris when the news arrived of the taking of Riga and the islands of Oesel and Moon by the Germans and of their invasion of Livonia and Esthonia. The most fervent admirers of the Kerensky régime bowed their heads and admitted that things were going badly. Every minute one might expect to hear of an overwhelming advance by the German armies on Petrograd. It was not yet known that our adversaries were contriving a very different conclusion—that of a shameful treaty agreed to by the Bolshevist rabble.

The day before my departure from Paris my predecessor in Madrid, Prince John Kudascheff, came to call on me in my hotel. We talked mournfully of what was going on in our country. "No," I said in

conclusion, "I cannot bear it any longer, I shall go, I shall leave the service!" My colleague tried to dissuade me, but I repeated that I was at the end of my tether.

A few days after my return to San Sebastian the details of the surrender of Riga and the Island of Moon to the Germans appeared in the newspapers: the soldiers had bound their officers with ropes and given them into the hands of the enemy; other heartrending news, from different parts of Russia, came to add themselves to these revolting details. It was obvious to me that in less than two months we should have no more power and should not even exist as a constituted State, that in consequence we should no longer exist for the Alliance. I thought it my duty to impart this gloomy view to my allied colleagues, who—if I am not wrong—did not conceal it from their respective Governments.

Personally what had I still to expect? From the very beginning of the Revolution I had sacrificed many habits and points of view—"many prejudices" let us say—which up till then had accompanied me in my intellectual existence and throughout my long career; then later I had consented to recognise as directors of Russian politics men whose ideas were completely foreign to me and which seemed to be pernicious for my country; I am speaking of M. Kerensky and of the extreme revolutionary Socialists who surrounded him; I received orders from these men and I almost endeavoured to put myself on their level. In the name of who or what ought I to continue to make this sacrifice of my dignity, my past, my most cherished convictions? In the name of your country, I was answered. But Russia—I could see it clearly—could no longer be held back on the slope of treachery and dissolution on which she was descending lower and lower. Besides what could I do in Madrid to help the good cause and fight the bad? My position there was becoming an *otium cum indignitate* which I could not and should not endure.

Since my return to San Sebastian I had set myself to draw up the telegram which I should send to M. Kerensky as soon as I had definitely decided to leave the service. After several erasures I settled on the wording, and on the 10th and 11th September, I imparted my decision to my colleagues of France and Italy, with whom I was living in proximity and intimacy at the Hotel Marie-Christina. They both pressed me to give up my plan. The day before the news of the taking up of arms by General Korniloff had appeared in the papers; my good colleagues wished to extract from this some arguments to combat my decision by the hope of an early change in Russia which might alter the aspect of things. I replied that I did not share their hope; that Korniloff's attempt had come too late, that it would not succeed, and that this failure would bring about a still further dissolution of my unhappy country. On the morning of the 12th September, I sent off the following telegram in Russian and in plain language to M. Kerensky:

"The latest events have proved that the Provisional Government, as at present constituted, does not correspond either to legality or to the exceptional circumstances of the terrible epoch we are passing through. The Duma has been virtually abolished; by whom no one knows. On the other hand, the Soviet of the deputies, soldiers and workmen, of an absolutely despotic nature, acts side by side with the Government, and the Government humbles itself before it.

"This illegal state of things is the cause of: the shameful flight of the Rusian soldiers before the enemy, the impunity of the most bare-faced and brutal crimes, the open propaganda of treachery to the country and to the Allies, the destruction of all the vital functions of the country, the threatened dismemberment of the sacred body of the Russian nation.

"I have long awaited some bright spot, some more favourable turn of affairs, but all my hopes have been vain. The shame and the misfortunes of Russia only

grow and become worse, and the Government is powerless to remedy them, for it personifies the tyranny of an extreme party and only pursues the ends of that party.

"Under the circumstances I consider it my duty as an honest man to tell you this openly, and my duty as a citizen to give up all service to the State until such time as a lawful state of things is established in Russia, that is to say until the Soviet is abolished, the Duma convened and the Provisional Government returns to power such as it was constituted at the beginning.

"From to-day I no longer consider myself as Russian Ambassador in Spain. I do not solicit, nor would I accept any pension from the present Government.

"My decision will be communicated by me to the Spanish Government, and the contents of this telegram to the allied Ambassadors.—(Signed) Nekludoff."

Two days after the sending of the above-quoted telegram, to which of course I received no reply, His Majesty Alfonso XIII. arrived at San Sebastian from Santander, and was kind enough to grant me an audience of farewell. Although he did not conceal his displeasure at my abrupt decision, the King deigned to be much interested in me, and to show me much kindness. He kept me for some time, and I was able to explain to him all the reasons which had forced me to leave the service. We discussed what was happening in my unhappy country, and I had an opportunity of noticing the fairness of the King's views, his moderation and great cleverness. This last audience, incorporating itself with the recollection of the first, revived my regret at resigning my appointment to a Sovereign so eminently congenial to me.

Queen Marie Christina, with whom I had had the honour of talking at some length not long before, also wished to receive me before my departure. This time, as on the first occasion, I was charmed by the conversation of the ex-Regent, by her thorough knowledge of

political matters and of human nature, as well as by her extreme affability.

In view of my sincere sympathies with regard to M. Terestchenko, whom I had known when he was not much more than a youth at his worthy mother's house, I wrote him a private letter under date of the 23rd September, in which I revealed the whole origin of my resolution, and said, amongst other things, as follows:

"It has been proved to me that M. Kerensky, whatever his enthusiasm and sincerity, is neither a statesman nor a fit man to govern, but merely the leader of a party. His whole past grips him, and does not allow him to view the position frankly. And both he and you are surrounded by men with whom I can have nothing in common, and whom I rightly look on as enemies of our country.

"I see clearly," I concluded, "that in yielding one position after another, Kerensky and you are helping, though involuntarily, to pile up the monstrous and inappropriate erection of an anarchical Russia, an erection which will end by falling and by burying you under the ruins!"

This prophecy was fulfilled exactly six weeks later. If I had been able to foresee, when writing those lines, the base and treacherous rôle that M. Kerensky was to play so soon after over the taking up of arms by Korniloff, I should never have spoken of him in such indulgent terms, still less should I have bracketed his name with the honourable name of M. Michael Terestchenko.

What occurred immediately after the winding up of Korniloff's hazardous enterprise in the bosom of the Provisional Government of Petrograd does not come within the scope of these Reminiscences. But I am still wondering how, under those very circumstances, honourable men professing moderate opinions,[1] could have consented to be in the Government and sit next the "Dictator," instead of keeping carefully away from

[1] These were some young, very rich and ambitious merchants, and big manufacturers of Moscow.

him. If it was a combination of opportunism and the wish to bring a counterpoise to the pranks of the party in power, this combination failed miserably, for a month later the whole "erection" crumbled, and MM. Lenin and Trotsky took over the power and the destiny of unfortunate Russia. There are occasions on which opportunism becomes either pusillanimity or lack of discernment.

When I sent my telegram to Kerensky the Counsellor to our Embassy in Madrid, M. S——ff, was absent. He was resting at Biarritz, for prior to my arrival he had been at the head of affairs for a long time. Having arrived at San Sebastian and taken up his work with me, this gentleman, who was not lacking in wit or charm, but whom I had always considered to be devoid of real intelligence and moral distinction, hastened to telegraph to the Foreign Office in Petrograd to say that he himself and the other members of the Embassy (there were three altogether), thoroughly disapproved of my telegram, "which, moreover, had been dispatched by their chief when he was in a *state of acute neurasthenia*"; that they professed profound esteem and unlimited devotion for the Provisional Government and for M. Kerensky, and were entirely at his disposal, etc.

This proceeding, which I only heard of much later, did not have the desired result for my ex-colleague, *i.e.* the renewal of a long term of management at the Embassy. The post of "Ambassador of M. Kerensky," which I had resigned, very soon found a candidate in the person of M. Stahovitch, who had just given up the Governorship-General of Finland after three months of earnest but vain efforts at conciliation. The new Ambassador hastened to take up his post, and to leave Russia, where things were becoming far too hot. But all the same he started too late: a week after his departure the Bolsheviks were already masters of the Government, and his credentials, signed by M. Kerensky, had no longer any value. I do not exactly know what position has been allotted to him in Madrid.

As to M. S——ff, towards the spring of 1918, when every one in Europe was beginning to fear or to anticipate the final success of Germany, he paraded his German sympathies so obviously, was so often seen in public with German diplomats, that he was at last made to leave his post and Spain (his supplies were probably cut off). Still less was he allowed to reside in France, he only passed through on his way to Switzerland; from there he went to Poland—under German domination at that time—to endeavour to save a property he owned there.[1] I do not know what has since become of him.

On the 25th September, 1917, I finally left San Sebastian, bidding farewell to the beautiful Kingdom of Spain. I regretfully took leave of a few congenial Spaniards whose acquaintance I had made during my short stay, and of the four allied Ambassadors with whom I had had such pleasant intercourse; and I got into the motor-car of another charming colleague, the Rumanian Minister, M. Cretzeano, who was kind enough to take me as far as Biarritz.

By leaving San Sebastian I was giving up—not only my post—but my long diplomatic career, commenced in 1881. And I was not wending my way homewards—I was going into exile!

[1] A Polish patriot's estate confiscated in 1863 and given to M. S——ff's father, at that period Under-Secretary of State for Poland.

INDEX

ABDUL-AZIS, Sultan of Turkey, 39
Abdul-Hamid, Sultan of Turkey, deposed, 18, 22; reception of King Ferdinand, 116
Aberdeen, 500
Abo, 301
About, Edmund, *The Man with the broken Ear*, 225
Adana, massacre of, 22
Adrianople, 122, 128 *note*, 129; siege, 116, 122, 134; annexation, 130; captured by Turks, 146, 197, 208; taken by Bulgarians, 154; outbreak of cholera, 155; advance of the Turks, 195
Adriatic, the, 129
Ægean Sea, 121, 123, 124, 125, 132
Aerenthal, M. d', 14; interview with M. Isvolsky, 19; title of Count conferred, 20
Aland Islands, 248, 348, 354, 356, 412, 415–417; neutralisation, 357
Albania, 132; autonomy, 129, 161
Albanians, relations with Greeks, 157
Alexander I., Emperor of Russia, 489; policy to Bessarabia, 151; history of his reign, 405
Alexander II., Emperor of Russia, 40, 261; letter to Prince Alexander of Battenberg, 159; reforms, 483
Alexander III., Emperor of Russia, the *sixteen quarterings*, 258; aversion for Germany, 258
Alexander Palace, 72
Alexandra, Empress of Russia, gift to King Ferdinand, 62; under the influence of Rasputin, 67, 73, 419, 435; at St. Petersburg, 72; at Livadia, 224; indisposition, 224, 227, 230; adoration of Prince Galitzyn, 396; receives M. Nekludoff, 402-404; change in her appearance, 402; under the influence of Stürmer, 419, 435; influence over the Emperor, 419, 420; receives official reports, 446; refuses to stop the Rasputin scandal, 455; prisoner, 473
Alexandrovsk, port of, 264 *note*, 344. *See* Murmansk
Alexieff, General, Chief of the General Staff, 350; assumes direction of the war, 421
Alexis, Tsarevitch of Russia, 73; at Mohilev, 421; tutor, 421
Alfonso XIII., King of Spain, interest in the protection of prisoners of war, 361; receives M. Nekludoff, 500–504, 518; wish for the liberation of Nicolas II., 503, 504
Amalfi, Duchess of, 276
Amalfi, Duke of, Spanish Minister to Stockholm, 276, 290; work for the protection of Russians in enemy countries, 360
Anastasia, Grand-Duchess, 31; at Livadia, 229; unknown fate, 229
Andrew, Grand-Duke, at Sofia, 57, 74
Andronnikoff, Prince, 70
Anne Joannovna, Empress, 508 *note*
Apponyi, Count, at the Conference at Stockholm, 364
Arab-Konak Pass, 195
Archangel port, 336
Arda, the, 123
Armenia, 348; condition, 22; massacres, 318; lecture on, 484
Arras, 320
Asiago, attack on, 424
Asquith, Rt. Hon. H. H., policy respecting Serbia, 134
Assanovitch, Colonel, Russian military attaché in Sweden, 265; charges against, 265, 275, 293
Athos, Mount, or "The Republic of Twenty Monasteries," 203–207; position of the Russian monks, 205, 206; proposed independence, 203, 207, 210; result of dissensions among the monks, 212; sent to Russia, 213
Austria-Hungary, relations with Russia, 18; annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 19; policy to the Balkan States, 129; opposes Serbia's claim to an outlet on the Adriatic, 134

wish to attack Serbia, 197; demands revision of the Bukharest Treaty, 209; ultimatum to Serbia, 280, 288, 290; policy against, 295; change in the policy, 326
Austro-Hungarian army, advance into Poland, 322: defeated, 323; surrender of regiments, 323; amalgamated with German contingents, 326; attack on Asiago, 424
Azes, the, 255

Baden, Grand-Duchess Louisa of, 260
Baden, Grand-Duchy of, 260
Baden, Prince Max of, 260; at the Conference at Stockholm, 364
Bakst, the painter, in Paris, 223
Balkan States, 18, 22; climate, 115; demarcation of the frontier, 129, 208, 211; solution of the question, 161; relations between, 162; division of territory, 169; War, 91, 112, 130, 189; mobilisation of the armies, 108; declaration of the Powers, 109; armistice, 155, 169; signed, 202; negotiations for peace, 194; conditions of peace with Turkey, 203; alliance against Bulgaria, 214
Baltchik, port of, 210
Baltic, the, 379; question of, 355
Baltic Provinces, 488
Baranovitchi, 350
Bark, M., Minister of Finance, 241
Basil II., Emperor, 192
Battenberg, Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, 3; abdication, 8; letter from Alexander II., 159
Beauharnais, Eugene, 259
Belachitza, range of, 192, 194, 208; defeat at, 315
Belfort, 320
Belgian Army, retreat, 320
Belgium, invasion of Germans, 311; atrocities, 318
Belgrade, 49, 100
Beliaieff, General, Chief of the General Staff, 387; interview with M. Nekludoff, 389; charges against, 396
Belogradchik, 195
Below, Herr von, 145; audiences with King Ferdinand, 146, 199
Benckendorf, Count, Russian Ambassador to London, 134; rumours of his departure, 450
Bentkowski, 302
Berchtold, Count, 283
Bergen, 499
Berlin, Congress of, 20
Bernadotte, Marshal, Prince of Ponte-Corvo, elected King of Sweden, 248
Bessarabia, ceded to Russia, 147; annexation, 150; privileges conferred on, 151
Bethmann-Hollweg, Herr von, 223
Biberstein, Baron Marshal von, departure from Constantinople, 93; death, 93
Bitolia, 112
Black Sea, 114, 121, 125, 344; Fleet, 34
Bobrikoff, Governor-General of Finland, 94
Bolsheviks, the, commit murders, 431; policy, 480; at Stockholm, 483; propaganda, 497; defeated, 512
Bomarsund, fortress of, 354
Bondestog, or peasants' procession in Sweden, 266
Bonin-Longare, Count, Italian Ambassador to Madrid, 509
Boris, Grand-Duke, 237
Bosdari, Count, Italian Minister to Sofia, 83
Bosnia, annexation of, 14, 19, 20, 40
Bosphorus, the, 92
Bostroem, Vice-Admiral, in command of the Black Sea Fleet, 34, 36; ship aground, 36
Bovary, Mdme., description of diplomatists, 240
Brandenburg, prisoners' camp in, 373
Branting, Hjalmar, head of the Swedish Socialist party, 306, 418; policy, 309; at the Auditorium meeting, 483
Bregalnitza, the, 169, 185, 194, 208
British Army, in Belgium, retreat, 320
Brockdorff-Rantzau, Count, German Minister to Copenhagen, 278
Brugère, General, 294
Brunswick, Grand-Duke of, marriage, 168. *See* Cumberland.
Brussiloff, General, in command of the military operations in Galicia, 388 *note*, 423
Buchlau, 19
Budberg, Baron, characteristics, 244; Ambassador to Madrid, 245
Buhakoff, General, 95
Bukharest, entry of Mackensen, 445; Treaty of, 45 *note*, 86, 150, 214, 215, 217; Peace Conference of, 201, 202, 207, 231
Bukowina, 323, 388 *note*; reoccupied by Russians, 424
Bulair, 121
Bulgaria, relations with Russia, 20, 231; independence, 21; payment of the debt to Russia, 27; relations with

Serbia, 38, 135, 137, 239; principal phases, 39–43; massacres, 40; negotiations with Serbia, 52–57; demarcation of the frontier, 52, 53, 55, 125, 203, 209, 211; settled, 56; agreement with Serbia, 56, 64; military convention with Russia, 74; with Serbia, 96, 98; alliance with Greece, 98; celebration of the feast of veterans, 101; agreement with Montenegro, 103; mobilisation of the army, 108–110; war with Turkey, 111; condition of the roads, 115; *Bulgar-Vilayet*, 116; national anthem, 122; instructions on the rule of the "prohibited area," 123; Adrianople and Thrace ceded to, 130, 210; relations with Greece, 135, 137; with Rumania, 147; claims to Dobrudja, 147; acquisition of Deli-Orman, 148; cession of territories, 153; partition of Macedonia, 164; accepts arbitration of Russia, 174; constitutional custom, 178; preparations for war, 181; war declared, 189; advance of the Allies, 195; peace conditions, 202; alliance against, 214; co-operation with Germany, 215; return of the troops, 217; result of the entry into the war, 303, 336

Bulgaria, Prince Alexander of, 3

Bulgaria, Crown Prince Boris of, received into the Orthodox Church, 9; at Kieff, 30, 31; appearance, 31; festivities on his coming of age, 57, 74; at Sofia, 232

Bulgaria. *See* Eleanor, Queen; Ferdinand

Bulgarian Army, occupy Pirot, 41; advance on Salonika, 113, 169; shortage of munitions, 114; victory of Lozengrad, 111; march on Constantinople, 114, 120; attack on Chataldja, 121; on Adrianople, 154; treatment of the wounded, 160; collision with Greeks, 168; defeated, 168, 190, 192, 315; attack on the Serbians, 185, 189; refuse to be sent to Macedonia, 191; officers on the reserve, 119 *note*; division, 192 *note*; surrender, 195; entry in Sofia, 217; march-past of the troops, 218

Bulgarians, the, 347 *note;* flag "of Samara," 102; characteristics, 102, 138, 155, 156, 159; relations with Greeks, 114, 120; religious views, 119; cruelty, 155–157, 160, 192; treatment of Turks, 156; result of Turkish domination, 157; national hierarchy abolished, 158; national policy, 159; relations with Serbians, 161

Burgos, 510

Burian, M., 326

Burschillos, meaning of the word, 343

Burtzeff, imprisoned, 377

Buxhoeveden, Baron de, at Copenhagen, 279

Cambon, M. Jules, Ambassador to Berlin, famous dispatch, 244; fears the policy of Germany, 282

Carlotti, Marquis, Italian Ambassador to St. Petersburg, 406

Carpathians, the, 323, 329, 348

Casso, M., Minister for Education, reactionary policy, 284; treatment in Germany, 315; death, 316

Castellane, Countess Jean de, 292

Castro-Fejo, M., Portuguese Minister to Sweden, 276

Catalonia, unrest in, 509

Catherine II., Empress of Russia, 489, 508 *note;* reforms, 346

Caucasus, the, 329, 348; independence proclaimed, 497

Cetigne, 88

Chalcidice, occupied by Greeks, 132, 169

Charleroi, 320

Charles Albert, Archduke, of Austria, 57

Charles, King of Rumania, 149; presented with the *bâton* of Russian Field-Marshal, 152

Charles X., King of Sweden, 489

Charles XI., King of Sweden, 489

Charles XII., King of Sweden, 247; statue of, 262

Charles XIII., King of Sweden, 248

Charles John XIV., King of Sweden, 248

Charles XV., King of Sweden, 248, 259; reforms, 249

Charles, Prince, of Sweden, characteristics, 270; President of the Red Cross, 345; work for the prisoners of war, 361, 364 *note;* organises the transfer of the wounded, 366

Chataldja, 29, 114, 120; attack on, 121

Clementine, Princess, 7; death, 8, 12

Clery, Mdlle., 259

Clive, Mr., First Secretary to the British Legation at Stockholm, 486

Clive, Mrs., 492

Coburg, Prince Ferdinand of, 7. *See* Ferdinand

Cologne Gazette. article in the, 339

Connaught, Princess Margaret of, 270

Constant, Benjamin, saying of, 378

Constantine XIV., King of Greece, 210, 212; on the Bulgarian aggression, 168
Constantine, "Diadoch," advance on Salonika, 113
Constantinople, 92; palace revolution in, 40; fire at, 93; panic in, 114; solution of the Straits question, 117
Constantinovitch, John, 211
Constanza, 34, 36
Courland, 349; invaded by the German Army, 419, 424
Cracow, 323, 349; union with Vilna, 379
Crete, island of, 203; restored to Greece, 132
Cretzeano, M., Rumanian Minister to Madrid, 521
Crimea, the, climate, 227
Cronstadt, insurrection at, 35; Fleet at, 475
Cumberland, Duke of, marriage, 168. *See* Brunswick
Cyril, Grand-Duchess, 237; effort to stop the Rasputin scandal, 455
Czechs, the, surrender, 323
Czetwertynska, Marie, 238. *See* Narichkin

Dalmatia, 157
Dalsland, 250, 266
Danev, M., policy, 23, 96; Home Secretary, 26; attack on King Ferdinand, 27; on the demarcation of the frontier, 53; at the head of the "Activist" party, 82; mission to Livadia, 82; at the Conference in London, 128; character of his policy, 164; return from London, 176; interviews with M. Nekludoff, 176–181; obstinacy and presumption, 177, 181; entrusted to form a Cabinet, 179; foreign policy, 180; delegate to St. Petersburg, 183; delays in starting, 184; advice from M. Nekludoff, 193, 196; resignation, 196; attempt to commit suicide, 216
Danish Red Cross, member of the, audience with Empress Alexandra, 473; witnesses the Revolution, 473
Danube, the, 193; bridges over, 195
Danubian Principalities, 151
Dardanelles, the, 121
Dato, M., President of the Council, receives M. Nekludoff, 506
Davos, 5, 44
Dedeagatch, 123, 126, 129, 210
Dedulin, "General du jour," death, 224; funeral, 225
Deli-Orman, 148, 210
Demir-Hissar, 209
Demotika, 210
Denmark, commercial spirit, 257; overtures from Germany, 352
Denmark, King of, meeting with King Gustaf V. at Malmö, 286
Denmark, Princess Ingeborg of, 366; characteristics, 270
Devaux, Baron, 276
Diedring, M., work for the prisoners of war, 364 *note*
Djavids, the, 23
Dmitri, Grand-Duke, at the murder of Rasputin, 457; arrest and banishment, 457
Dniester, the, 379
Dobiecki, M., 378
Dobritch, 148, 210
Dobrovitch, M., 90, 172, 184, 198
Dobrovolsky, M., appointed Minister of Justice, 452; occult views, 452
Dobrudja, 210; population, 147; rectification of frontiers, 129
Dogger Bank incident, International Commission of Inquiry, 36
Dolomites, 349
Drama, 194, 209
Dubassoff, Admiral, 36
Dubiagsky, M., 185
Duma, the, members of, at Stockholm, 413; refuses to dissolve, 466; dissolved, 474, 513
Dumbadze, General, military governor of Yalta, 225; characteristics, 226; despotic rule, 226; orders Rasputin to leave Yalta, 226; interview with Nicolas II., 227
Durazzo, 132
Dvina, the, 350

E——, M., supernumerary counsellor to M. Nekludoff, 449; intrigues, 450; dismissal, 450
Economic Conference of the Allies, 454
Ehrensvaerd, Baron, 265
Eitel-Frederich, Prince, in command of destroyers, 287; unknown destination, 301
Eleanor, Queen of Bulgaria, 12, 16; receives the Black Sea Fleet at Varna, 34, 36; interview with M. Nekludoff, 234–236; death, 236
Elena, district of, 158
Elisabeth Petrovna, Empress, 508 *note*
England, negotiations with Sweden, on the control of imported goods, 335; result of the blockade in Sweden, 353
Enos, 123, 169, 203

Enver-Bey, military agent in Berlin, 23; *pronunciamento*, 130
Epirus, occupied by Greeks, 132
Ergene, 125, 137
Erzerum, 348; capture of, 387, 400
Esthonia, 487-492; frontiers, 490; invaded by Germans, 515
Eugene Napoleon, Prince of Sweden, 270; landscape painter, 271
Euxinograd, 34, 36

FERDINAND, King of Bulgaria, policy, 2, 164; relations with M. Sementovsky, 2; distrust of foreign representatives, 2; characteristics, 3, 7, 10, 14, 269; parents, 7; unpopularity, 7, 217; death of his mother, 8; marriage, 8; conferences with Prince Lobanoff, 9; reception of his son into the Orthodox Church, 9; reconciliation with Russia, 9; contempt for his subjects, 9; school for officers, 11; second marriage, 12; political intrigues, 12; consolidation of his throne and the career of his subjects, 13; tendency to neurasthenia, 13; indecision, 14, 269; suspiciousness, 14; audiences with M. Nekludoff, 16, 54, 62-65, 106, 169, 232-234; assumes title of Tsar, 21; absence from Sofia, 27; Jubilee celebrations, 29, 91, 105, 143; on the Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations, 53, 63-65; the coming of age of Prince Boris, 57, 74; financial difficulties, 59; a mortgage on Vrana, 59; loan advanced to, 61; art treasures, 62; wish to get rid of M. Nekludoff, 85, 173; audience with Shelking, 90; relations with M. Nekludoff, 90; dread of war, 105; ambition, 105, 125; pride in the victories of the Bulgarian Army, 116; meeting with Abdul-Hamid, 116; the Straits question, 117-119; on a reconciliation with Rome, 119; preparations for the entry into Constantinople, 120; headquarters, 121; wish to possess Rodosto, 126-128, 130; secret schemes, 126-128; inaccessible to Ministers, 142-146; at the cathedral service, 143-145; audiences with M. Panofieu, 145; with Herr von Below, r46, 199; treatment of the Serbians, 155; postpones entry into Adrianople, 156; telegram to Tsar, 173; power to appoint Ministers, 178; on sending a delegate to St. Petersburg, 183; instructions to General Savov, 188; summons his Ministers, 198-201; on the critical situation, 199; readiness for flight, 216; heads the procession of the troops, 218; duplicity, 270; audience with M. Savinsky, 391
Fichev, General, Chief of the Bulgarian General Staff, 29; reception in St. Petersburg, 29, 76; protest against the advance on Constantinople, 115
Finland, 262; in possession of Russia, 248; secession from, 347; autonomy, 441; policy, 489
Finmark, reindeer forests of, 355
Finnish or Ural-Altaic race, 347 *note*
Finns, the, 488; characteristics, 262, 347 *note*
Fontanka, mansion of, 238
"Ford Peace Troupe," 352
France, phil-hellenism, 211; friendship with Sweden, 254; unpreparedness for war, 297; declaration on neutrality of Sweden, 308; atrocities of Germans, 318; trench-warfare, 329
Francis Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, assassinated, 283, 286
Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria, Jubilee, 19
Frederick III., Emperor of Germany, 259; friendship with King Oscar II., 259
Fredericsz, Count, Court Minister, 228
French Army, retreat, 320; successes, 320
"Fruschka-Goa," monasteries of the, 157

GABROVA, district of, 158
Gagaüzi, the, 147
Galata, 92
Galicia, 322; occupied by the Russian Army, 323, 329; result of their rule, 329; military operations in, 348, 423, 424, 433, 500; evacuated, 350
Galitzyn, Prince Nicolas D., 395; president of Russian Red Cross, 396; characteristics, 396; interview with M. Nekludoff, 396; devotion to Empress Alexandra, 396; President of the Council, 396; imprisoned, 397; Prime Minister, 458; declaration, 477
Gallieni, General, 320
Gallipoli, peninsula of, 121
Gardner, Professor, at Stockholm, 375
Gennadiev, M., prosecution, 26; on the advance of the Bulgarian troops, 187; Foreign Secretary, 196, 199; characteristics, 196; imprisonment, 393
Geoffray, M., French Ambasasdor to Madrid, 509

George, King of Greece, 141, 282; assassinated, 144
German agents, influence in Russia, 408–410, 463, 477, 478, 485; Army, advance in Belgium, 320; retreat, 320; reinforcements in Galicia, 323, 329; advance on Warsaw repelled, 329; systematic ravages, 363 *note;* advance on Courland, 419; take Riga, 515, 516; destroyers in the Sound, 287; spies at Stockholm, 383; submarines, 500
Germany, loss of influence in Constantinople, 18; policy in Balkan States, 110, 146, 197; influence in Turkey, 123, 215; opposes reinstatement of the Bulgarians, 210; co-operation of Turkey and Bulgaria, 215; relations with Sweden, 255–258, 342; trade with, 257, 337; influence over, 259–262; relations with Russia, 261; attempts to secure alliance with Sweden, 272; preparations for war, 280, 295, 312; ultimatum to Russia, 282, 296; declaration of war, 304; resources, 249, 310; invasion of Belgium, 311; losses, 312; treatment of refugees, 313, 317; war methods, 318; treatment of prisoners, 318, 362–365, 368; military operations in East Prussia, 319, 349; supply of coal to Sweden, 335; intrigues, 341; invincibility, 350; proposals of peace with Russia, 351; overtures to Denmark, 352; result of propaganda, 363; reprisal camps, 365; revolutionary literature sent to Russia, 409
Giers, Michel de, Russian Ambassador to Constantinople, 92, 104, 150, 355; on the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance, 93; opinion of the Turkish Army, 94; warning to the Bulgarians on war with Turkey, 105; Minister to Bukharest, 149
Giurgevo, 220
Godunoff, Boris, 423
Goremykin, M., 89; President of the Council, 241; infirmities, 242; policy, 284; retirement, 393
Gorlice, attack at, 349
Gortchakoff, Prince, 40, 48, 261, 355; famous saying, 285
Gottenburg, 252
Gourko, General, 101
Great Britain, entry into the war, 307, 311; declaration on neutrality of Sweden, 308
Greece, alliance with Bulgaria, 98; with Serbia, 98, 163, 169; mobilisation of the army, 108; war with Turkey, 111; Crete restored to, 132; acquisition of territories, 132; relations with Serbia and Bulgaria, 135, 137; demarcation of the frontier, 140, 203, 209, 211; wish for the arbitration of Russia, 174; relations with, 204
Greece, Crown Prince of, at Sofia, 57
Greece, Prince Nicolas of, marriage, 211; mission to St. Petersburg, 448; accusations against M. Nekludoff, 449
Greek Army, advance on Salonika, 113; defeat the Bulgarians, 168, 192; occupy Salonika and Chalcidice, 169; capture Rilo-Dagh, 195; advance on Samokov, 197; relations with the Bulgarians, 114, 129
Greeks, spiritual hierarchy over Turkey, 157; relations with Turks and Albanians, 157; hatred of Bulgarians, 158, 168
Greffulhe, Countess de, 292
Grey, Sir Edward, policy regarding Serbia, 135
Grodno, 349; defence of, 95
Gruber, M., 392
Gueshov, M., Coalition Ministry, 17, 24; character, 25; attitude towards Russia, 25; Foreign Secretary, 27; on the demarcation of the frontier, 53; interviews with M. Nekludoff, 66, 141–143, 170, 176; on the military Convention between Bulgaria and Serbia, 98; on the condition of the Turkish Army, 104; declaration from the representatives of the Powers, 109; on the cession of territory to Rumania, 153; interview with M. Pachitch, 170, 172; resignation, 172, 178
Gulkevitch, M., 463
Gustaf III., King of Sweden, 247
Gustaf IV., King of Sweden, 248, 254
Gustaf V., King of Sweden, 232; promise to the *Bondestog*, 266; operation, 268, 271; receives M. Nekludoff, 269, 307, 411–413; sincerity, 272; trust in his Ministers, 273; opens the Riksdag, 279; meeting with the King of Denmark at Malmö, 286; receives Pres. Poincaré, 289; banquet, 291; telegrams, 292, 293; reception, 293; on the neutrality of Sweden, 307, 309; meets King of Norway at Malmö, 330; letter to the Tsar, 356; message from him, 411; wish to stop the war, 412; takes leave of M. Nekludoff, 498

Gustavus Adolphus, 489
Gutchkoff, Alexander, Minister for War, action in the Revolution, 478; dismissed, 476
Gutchkoff, M., on the sinister influences dominating the Court, 67; interviews with M. Nekludoff, 78, 99; duel with Miassoïedoff, 78; at Sofia, 98; at Belgrade, 100; departure from, 100

HAAKON VII., King of Norway, meeting with the King of Sweden at Malmö, 330
Hadik, Count, Austro-Hungarian Minister, in Sweden, 277, 291, 342
Hadji-Oglu Bazardjik, 148
Hallsberg, 367
Hammarskiold, M. de, Prime Minister, 267, 273; policy, 417
Hammerfest, 263
Haparanda, 366
Hardinge, Sir Arthur, Ambassador to Madrid, 509
Harte, Rev. Clinton, work for the prisoners of war, 362
Hartwig, M., 39; interview with M. Nekludoff, 46; on relations between Bulgaria and Serbia, 46; characteristics, 47, 50, 163; career, 48; Director of the Asiatic Department, 49; Minister at Teheran, 49; at Belgrade, 49; knowledge of the Slavs, 49; flaws in his reasoning powers, 50; Mayor of Belgrade, 100; conferences with M. Venizelos, 139; proposed Balkan alliance, 162; death, 163
Hasselbaken, 425; banquet at, 431
Hedwig, Queen, marriage, 379
Helen, Grand-Duchess, marriage, 211
Helen, Princess, marriage, 211
Helsingfors, 475
Hendrikoff, Countess, at Livadia, 230
Henricovitch, Nicolas, 49
Heredia, M. de, 506
Herzegovina, annexation, 19, 20, 40; insurrection, 40
Hesse-Darmstadt, Grand-Duke of, 43
Hindenburg, General, defeats Russian Army, 319
Hohenfelsen, Countess of, 401. *See* Paleï
Holmsen, General, military agent in Constantinople, 94; captivity in Germany, 95
Holstein-Hottorps, the, 247
Howard, Sir Esmé, British Minister to Sweden, 275, 290, 308; conferences with M. Nekludoff, 337; staff at the Legation, 339; on the views of M. Keskula, 486
Hungary, invaded by Rumanian troops, 442

IGNATIEFF, Count, Minister for Education, dismissal, 419
Ignatieff, Countess Sophie, 69
Ignatieff, General, 39; Ambassador to Constantinople, 39, 40; protection of the Bulgarians, 204
India, fakirs of, 469, 472
Ingria, 491
Ishtib, massacres at, 97, 104
Isker, the, 197
Isonzo, the, 349
Isvolsky, M., interview with M. d'Aerenthal, 19; on "healthy optimism," 107; party in his honour, 292; appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, 355; Ambassador to Paris, 450; rumours of his departure, 450
Italo-Turkish war, 36, 95
Italy, policy on the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement, 84; entry into the war, 310, 349; supply of sulphur to Sweden, 335
Itchas, M., at Stockholm, 381, 413, 430, 453; marriage, 381; head of the Russian Red Cross, 381
Ivanov, General, defeat of his army, 192
Izborsk, 491

JAGELLON, King of Lithuania, marriage, 379
Jagow, M. de, 233, 275
Janina, siege of, 116; surrender, 132
Japanese war, 2, 296
Jilinsky, General, head of the General Headquarters Staff, 74; on the proposed military convention with Bulgaria, 74; interview with M. Nekludoff, 75; Governor-General of Poland, 76; military operations, 77
Joachim III., the Patriarch, 206
Joffre, Marshal, 320
John the Terrible, Tsar of Russia, 423, 491
John V., Tsar of Russia, 508 *note*
John VI. Antonovitch, story of, 508 *note*
Jugo-Slavs, the, surrender, 323

KALUSZ, massacres at, 318, 511
Kandauroff, Lieut.-Col., military attaché to the Russian Legation at Stockholm, 300; orders to the troops,

301 ; interview with King Gustaf V., 307
Karavelov, Madame, enthusiast for liberty, 165 ; head of military hospital at Sofia, 166 ; meeting with Mdlle. Milutin, 166 ; on giving up Macedonia to the Serbians, 166, 178
Karavelov, Petko, tortured and death, 165
Karea, *Protat* or Superior Council at, 204
Karlovo, district of, 158
Karlovtzy, 157
Katchaneh, massacres at, 97, 104
Kaulbars, Baron, treatment in Germany, 317
Kavala, 121, 126, 194, 209
Kavarna, port of, 148, 210
Kazanlyk, 101
Kerensky, A. F., head of the Socialists, 474 ; on the Revolution, 479 ; characteristics, 494 ; commander-in-chief of the Revolution, 494 ; efforts to save people, 495 ; attitude towards Nicolas II., 496 ; speeches on the prosecution of the war, 496, 512 ; Dictator-Generalissimo, 511 ; proclaims the Republic, 511 ; telegram from M. Nekludoff, 517
Keskula, M., Esthonian political agitator, 486 ; interview with M. Nekludoff, 487–492
Khlyst, a, meaning of the word, 71
Khrenoff, 402
Kiamil Pasha, Grand Vizier, downfall, 130
Kieff, 30 ; union with Russia, 379 ; Ukranian *rada* at, 511
Kirk-Kilisseh, 111, 122 ; occupied, 146, 208
Kitchener, Lord, prophecy on the length of the war, 329
Klaritonoff, M., Controller of the Empire, dismissal, 419
Kleinmichel, Countess, fancy-dress ball, 237
Klingenberg, Governor, 380
Koewenhüller, Count, 292
Kokochkin, M., illness, 431 ; murdered 431
Kokovtzoff, M., 21 ; President of the Council, 61, 78, 79, 80, 211 ; in Paris, 223 ; Berlin, 223 ; interview with M. Nekludoff, 240 ; characteristics, 240, 241 ; defence of the system of the spirit monopoly 241 ; resignation, 241 ; dread of war for Russia, 241 ; pessimism, 405
Kola, port of, 344
Kolpino, 492
Koni, M., member of the Council of the Empire, 398
Konopischt, interview of, 280
Korniloff, General, head of the Petrograd garrison, 493 ; resignation, 494 ; attempt to take up arms, 517
"Kossovo Polé Songs," 112
Kotchana, 194, 209
Kovel, fighting at, 433, 436
Kovno, 349
Krasnoe-Selo, manœuvres at, 29
Krivochëin, M., 80 ; policy of reforms, 284 ; Minister for Agriculture, 419 ; dismissal 419
Krivolak, 190
Kropotkin, Prince, at Stockholm, 481 ; interview with M. Nekludoff, 481–483
Krozé, 380
Krupensky, M., Ambassador to the Quirinal, 87
Krylbo, 367
Krzyzanowski, M., Secretary of the Empire, alters minute on the Polish question, 441
Kudascheff, Prince John, interview with M. Nekludoff, 515
Kulomzin, M., member of the Council of the Empire, 399
Kustendil, 190, 197
Kutzo-Wallachians, 87

L——, General de, at Stockholm, 444 ; on the number of Russian troops in Rumania, 445
L——, Madame de, 409
Ladoga Lake, 491
Lagos, M., in Sweden, 276
Lagos, Mdme., 276
Lamsdorf, Count, 48
Landquart, 44
Lapland, 250
Larson, Carl, 271
La-Granja, 509
Lema, Marquis de, Minister for Foreign Affairs, receives M. Nekludoff, 506
Lemberg, 323
Lenin, M., 485, 520
Leopold, Prince, of Prussia, at Sofia, 57 ; military rigidity, 58
Leontieff, Colonel, 75
Lermonteff, M., Lines from, 481 *note*
Letts, the, 487
Liaptchev, M., 99
Lichnowsky, Prince, Ambassador to London, 93
Lichtenstein, Prince Francis of, journey to Vaduz, 44
Liège, siege of, 312

Lievin, Princess, treatment in Germany, 318
Liliefors, M., 271
Lindberg, Dr., 358
Lithuania, 350; history, 378; geographical position, 381
Lithuanians, at Stockholm, 378; characteristics, 380; number in the United States, 381
Livadia, 82, 224; palace of, 228
Livonia, invaded by Germans, 515
Lobanoff, Prince, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 9, 42; conferences with Prince Ferdinand, 9; on the decorations of the Winter Palace, 44; strength of character, 283; member of the Council of the Empire, 430; at Stockholm, 430
London, Conference of, 128, 130, 177, 203, 355; clauses of the peace treaty, 203
Louvain, massacre at, 318
Lozengrad, 122; taken by the Bulgarians, 111
Lucius, Baron von, Counsellor to the Embassy in St. Petersburg, 338, 409; Minister to the *Mpret* of Albania, 338; sent to Sweden, 338; intrigues, 338; "Der Preventive Krieg," 339; appointed Minister to Stockholm, 339, 453; tactics, 341
Ludskonov, M., character, 26
Lukomsky, General, Director of Ordnance, 387, 389
Lule-Burgas, 123; defeat of the Turkish Army at, 112, 114
Lund University, 266
Lutsk, capture of, 424
Lvoff, Prince, President of the Provisional Government, 467; Prime Minister, 494; President of the Council, 504
Lwow, 349
Lyon, Lieutenant, 500

Macedonia, 10, 43, 96, 132; administration, 17; condition, 22; proposed autonomy, 161; partition, 164; battles in, 190
Mackensen, General, entry in Bukharest, 445
Madjarov, M., member of the Cabinet, 179
Madrid, 500
Magyars, the, policy, 326; characteristics, 347 *note*
Mahomet II., conquest of Constantinople, 122, 129
Majoresco, M., Rumanian Prime Minister, president of the Bukharest Peace Conference, 202; interview with M. Nekludoff, 220
Makaroff, M., Minister of Justice, 81; reactionary policy, 284
Maklahoff, M., reactionary policy, 284
Malinov, M., 14, 165; President of the Council, 16; resignation, 17; Radical Cabinet, 23; interviews with M. Nekludoff, 178
Malmö, 313; exhibition at, 277–279; meeting of the Scandinavian Kings at, 286, 330
Manassevitch-Manuïloff, M., 89
Mandelstamm, M., 302
Mansuroff, M., mission to Mount Athos, 213
Manus, M., 70
Margaret, Crown Princess of Sweden, visits the wounded, 366
Maria, Grand-Duchess, 31
Marie, Grand-Duchess, divorce, 221, 232, 244, 265; at Tsarskoe-Selo, 402
Marie Christina, Queen-Mother of Spain, receives M. Nekludoff, 504, 518; personality, 505; charm of her conversation, 505, 518
Marie Feodorovna, Dowager Empress of Russia, at Tsarskoe-Selo, 79; exhortations to the Emperor and Empress, 79; resemblance to Princess Ingeborg, 270; receives M. Nekludoff, 404
Marie Louise, Princess, marriage, 8; character, 8; death, 12
Maritza, the, 123, 210; island, outbreak of cholera, 156
Marmara, Sea of, 92, 114, 121, 124, 125
Marne, the, battle of, 320, 322
Masurian Lakes, 77, 329, 348
Maubeuge, 320
Meaux, 320
Medua, 132
Mehmed Ali, 126
Merrone, Colonel, Italian military attaché at Sofia, 83; friendship with Bulgarian officers, 83; informs the Staff of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement, 83; aide-de-camp to the King, 85
Mesta, the, 209
Meyendorff, Baron, ex-President of the Duma, at Stockholm, 453
Miassoïedoff, M., duel with M. Gutchkoff, 78
Michael, Grand-Duke, of Russia, refuses to accept power, 467
Mickiewicz, the poet, 380
Midia, 125, 129, 169

Mikolajow, 323
Milan, King of Serbia, 41 ; abdication, 42 ; loan to, 60
Militza, Grand-Duchess, 69
Miliukoff, M. P. N., 165, 174 ; at Stockholm, 413, 414, 430 ; criticism of Stürmer, 451 ; appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, 468 ; characteristics, 492 ; courage, 493 ; demonstration against, 493 ; dismissed, 493
Milutin, Nicolas, Secretary of State, 166 *note*
Milutin, Pauline, meeting with Mme. Karavelov, 166 ; friendship with M. Sazonoff, 167
Ministry, the "Chancellor's office," 47 ; Asiatic Department, 48
Mir, the, 25
Misu, M., at the Conference of London, 177 ; Rumanian Minister to London, 180
Mohilev, headquarters of the Russian Army at, 421
Mongolians, the, ravages in Russia, 379 *note*
Montebello, Countess Jean de, 292
Montenegro, agreement with Bulgaria and Serbia, 103 ; mobilisation of the army, 108 ; demarcation of the frontier, 203, 209
Montenegro, Crown Prince of, at Sofia, 57
Moon, island of, taken by the Germans, 515, 516
Moscow, meeting of Marshals of the Nobility at, 452 ; recollections of, 483 ; meeting of members of the Duma at, 512
Moscow, Metropolitan of, gift to King Ferdinand, 62
Mossoloff, General, 85 ; career, 86 ; appointed Minister to Bukharest, 86, 443
Murman, construction of the railway, 264, 336 *note*, 344
Murmansk, port of, 344 *note*
Mürzsteg, 20

NABI-BEY, Turkish Minister at Sofia, 101 ; secret negotiations, 101
Napoleon, Emperor, formula of, 117
Narichkin, Marie, 238. *See* Czetwertynska
"Narodniak" party, 179
Narova river, 490
Narva, 490
Narwich, 263
Natchevitch, M., return to Constantinople, 209
Nazim Pasha, assassinated, 130
Neidhart, Alexis, head of a committee on prisoners of war, 397 ; characteristics, 398 ; member of the Council of the Empire, 398 ; political views, 398 ; sisters, 398 *note*
Nekludoff, A., Counsellor to the Embassy in Paris, 1 ; Minister to Sofia, 1 ; audiences with Nicolas II., 3-5, 74, 230-232, 399 ; presents credentials to King Ferdinand, 6, 16 ; interviews with him, 16, 54, 62-65, 106, 143-145, 169, 201, 232-234 ; negotiations with M. Gueshov, 27, 170 ; Russian Squadron at Varna, 34-36 ; on the Serbo-Bulgarian relations, 38-43, 45 ; at Vienna, 43, 98, 100, 236 ; meeting with Macha Vassiltchikoff, 43, 372-374 ; journey to Davos, 43-45 ; interviews with M. Sazonoff, 45, 71, 74, 77, 221, 386, 437, 438 ; at Belgrade, 46 ; interview with M. Hartwig, 46 ; wedding of his daughter, 53 ; on the Serbo-Bulgarian negotiations, 54-56, 93 ; arranges loan for King Ferdinand, 59-61 ; interviews with M. Gueshov, 66, 141-143, 170 ; at St. Petersburg, 67, 236, 385-410, 437-443 ; interview with General Jilinsky, 75 ; on the proposed military convention, 77 ; interview with M. Gutchkoff, 78, 99 ; present at an evening reception, 69 ; return to Sofia, 82, 232 ; intrigues against, 86, 90-92, 450 ; calumnies, 87 ; interview with Shelking, 89 ; relations with King Ferdinand, 90 ; trip to Constantinople, 92-96 ; telegrams to M. Sazonoff, 96, 171 ; on the dangers of a war with Turkey, 103 ; telegrams from M. Sazonoff, 125 ; conversations with M. Spalaïkovitch, 133, 137, 170 ; prediction on the policy of Bulgaria, 138 ; interview with M. Venizelos, 139-141 ; negotiations on the Conference of Ambassadors in St. Petersburg, 152 ; solution of the Balkan question, 161 ; on the partition of Macedonia, 164 ; accusations of King Ferdinand, 173 ; conference with General Savov, 174 ; interviews with M. Danev, 176-178, 179-181 ; with M. Malinov, 178 ; advice to M. Danev, 193, 196 ; summoned by King Ferdinand, 198-201 ; transferred to Stockholm, 201 ; on the results of the Treaty of Bukharest, 214 ; letter to Baron Schilling, 218 ; journey

to Paris, 220; interview with M. Majoresco, 220; impressions of Paris, 223, 514; at Yalta, 223; entertained by Nicolas II., 228; letters to M. Sazonoff, 230; interview with Queen Eleanor, 234-236; last meeting with Count Witte, 237; interview with Prince Alexander of Serbia, 239; with M. Kokovtzoff, 240; with M. Zinovieff, 242; at Stockholm, 245, 267, 411, 444; audiences with King Gustaf V., 269, 307, 411-413; with members of the Royal Family, 270; interviews with M. Wallenberg, 271, 308; colleagues, 275-277; at Malmö, 278, 286; excursion in the "skärgaard," 287; interview with M. Poincaré, 290, 293; present at the banquet, 291-293; interview with Herr von Reichenau, 297-299; advice about Bulgaria, 302; distress on news of the outbreak of war, 304; help from his colleagues, 305; work for the refugees, 313; conferences with his colleagues, 337; prediction on the Albanian throne, 338; staff at the Legation, 339; relations with the Swedes, 343-345; with M. Wallenberg, 343; with the Duke of Amalfi, 360; on the fate reserved for Russians, 369; relations with the Poles, 377; meeting with his sons, 386; death of them, 386 *note*, 436; interview with General Polivanoff, 387-389; with M. Savinsky, 390; with Prince Galitzyn, 396; at Tsarskoe-Selo, 401; received by the Empress Alexandra, 402-404; the Dowager-Empress, 404; the Grand-Duke Nicolas, 404; receives members of the Duma, 413, 424, 430; on the question of the Aland Islands, 415, 417: entertains M. Protopopoff, 425; interview with M. Pokrovsky, 429; expedition to Saltsjöbaden, 430; at the banquet at Hasselbaken, 431; on M. Sazonoff's policy, 434; interview with Stürmer, 439; rumours of dismissal, 450; on the Protopopoff-Warburg interview, 453; letter to M. Neratoff, 454; interview with M. Rizov, 460-463; telegram to M. Pokrovsky, 462; adherence to the Provisional Government, 468, 513; interview with Prince Kropotkin, 481-483; first encounter with Bolsheviks, 483; attends lecture on Armenian massacres, 484; interview with M. Keskula, 486-492; appointed Ambassador to Madrid, 492; leaves Stockholm, 498; journey to Madrid, 499; audiences with King Alfonso XIII., 500-504, 518; procession, 501; interview with the Queen, 504; with the Queen-Mother, 505, 518; with M. Dato and the Marquis de Lema, 506; colleagues, 509; at San Sebastian, 509, 516; telegram to M. Kerensky, 517; resignation, 518; letter to M. Terestchenko, 519; leaves Spain, 521

Nekludoff, Mdme., 304; visits the wounded, 367

Nekludoff, Peter, secretary to the Embassy in Rome, 386; meeting with his father, 386; death, 386 *note*

Nekludoff, Serge, commission, 385; meeting with his father, 385; killed in action, 386 *note*, 436

Nelidoff, M. de, 34; Ambassador to Constantinople, 205

Neratoff, M., 33, 453; assistant to M. Sazonoff, 5; letters from M. Nekludoff, 55, 60, 454

Nerezov, Colonel, adjutant, 29; Chief of Staff, 187

Neskutchnoye, palace of, 402

Neva, the, 457

Nicolas II., Emperor of Russia, audiences with M. Nekludoff, 3-5, 74, 230-232, 399; characteristics, 4, 73, 401; instructions, 4; gift to King Ferdinand, 62; dismisses Rasputin, 70, 81; at Livadia, 82, 224; receives M. Danev, 82; at Berlin, 168; result of his telegram proposing to arbitrate in the Balkan question, 171-174; interview with General Dumbadze, 227; affection for his daughters, 230; interest in the explorations of Sven-Hedin, 264; foreign policy, 328; triumphal journey to Lwow, 349; letter to King Gustaf V., 356; visit to the Duma, 394; treatment of Ministers, 399; change in appearance, 400; criticism on his weakness, 405; message to King Gustaf V., 411; assumes command of the armies, 419; at Mohilev, 420; lessons to his son, 421; curious character, 422; receives M. Sazonoff, 437; dismisses M. Stürmer, 451; abdication, 467, 473, 513; prisoner in the Palace of Tsarskoe, 475; sent to Tobolsk, 486, 507

Nicolas, Grand-Duke, 152; manifesto

to the Poles, 323–325; receives M. Nekludoff, 404; literary works, 404; collection of portraits, 405; dismissal, 419; appointed Viceroy of the Caucasus, 419; reconciliation with the Grand-Duchess Vladimir, 456; removal from St. Petersburg, 458
Niemen, the, 381
Nikon, Mgr., mission to Mount Athos, 213
Niloff, Admiral, at Livadia, 229
Nish, 194; valley, 41
Nobel, Emmanuel, 313; at the Malmö exhibition, 277
Novy-Sad, 157
North Sea problem, 355
Norway, union with Sweden, 248; naval spirit, 257; separation from Sweden, 355
Novibazar, 40
Novikoff, M., Ambassador in Vienna, 40
Novoye Vremya, 23, 28, 49, 56, 67, 89; articles in the, 471
Nynäs, 286

Obolensky, Princess, maid-of-honour, resignation, 71, relations with the Russian Imperial Family, 81
Obrenovitch, Prince Michael, 39; assassinated, 40
Ochrida, Lake, 52
Octobrists, the, 23
Odier, M., Minister of the Swiss Confederation to St. Petersburg at Stockholm, 421
Odoievsky, Prince, lines on the death of, 481 *note*
Odrine, annexation of, 123
Oesel, island of, taken by the Germans, 515
Oldenburg, Prince Alexander of, energy and unremitting toil, 397
Olga, Grand-Duchess, 30
Olga, Queen of Greece, 457
Olsufieff, Count Dmitri, member of the Council of the Empire, at Stockholm, 424–427; on the Protopopoff-Warburg interview, 453
"Opportunists," the, 69
Ordyn-Nastchokin, M., 442. *See* Stürmer
Orjevski, General, 380
Oscar I., King of Sweden, 248
Oscar II., King of Sweden, 259; friendship with Emperor Frederick III., 259; marriage, 259
Osman Pasha, taken prisoner, 152
Osman-Nizami Pasha in London, 177, 180; Ambassador to Berlin, 180 *note*
Osten-Sacken, Count, Ambassador to Berlin, 21, 88, 150; prophecy on the policy of William II., 282
Osvobojdenie, the, 376
Ouroussoff, Prince, 21
Ovtche-Polie, 181, 190
Oxenstjernas, the, 246

P——, Count Joseph, 324
Pachitch, M., 100, 134, 135, 136, 295; conferences with M. Venizelos, 139; with M. Gueshov, 170; on the proposal of Russia to arbitrate in the Balkan question, 173
Pahlen, Count Constantine, 318
Pahlen, Mdlle. Marie de, 318
Paleï, Princess, 401
Palmstjerna, Baron de, 306
Panafieu, M., audience with King Ferdinand, 145
Panas, M., 139
Pan-Germanism, birth of, 255
Paprikov, General, Bulgarian Minister in St Petersburg, 63; plenipotentiary for peace, at Nish, 194
Paris, 2, 17, 500; impressions of, 222, 386, 514; Treaty of, 355
Paul, Grand-Duke, 221, 401; character, 401; fate of, 402
Peïpus, Lake, 490
Pera, 92
Perisant, M., 60
Perrichon, M., case of, 345
Petchevo, 194, 209
Peter the Great, 346, 508 *note*
Peter III., Emperor of Russia, 258
Peter, King of Serbia, 64; reply to the Emperor of Russia's telegram, 172
Peter and Paul fortress, incarcerations in the, 465, 472
Peterhead, 499
Petrograd, 385; impressions of, 386; revolt of the Soviet, 493; demonstration of the "Red Guard" garrison, 493. *See* St. Petersburg
Philippopolis, 123
Pirot, 41, 194
Plevna, siege of, 152
Ploehve, M., 89
Pocej, Ignatius, 119
Poincaré, M., elected President, 145; visit to Russia, 275; at Stockholm, 287; official reception, 289–294; banquet, 291
Poklewski-Kozell, M., 311; Minister to Bukharest, 442; intrigue against, 443

Pokrovsky, M., Controller of the Empire, 420 *note;* at Stockholm, 428; characteristics, 428, 454; interview with M. Nekludoff, 429; with M. Wallenberg, 429; sons, 430; sympathy with M. Nekludoff, 438; Minister for Foreign Affairs, 454; telegram from M. Nekludoff, 462
Polak, M., 392; at Stockholm, 425
Polak, Mdme., at Stockholm, 425
Poland, 348; atrocities of Germans, 318; military operations in, 322, 323, 329; result of the partition, 324; evacuated by the Russian Army, 350; scheme for the autonomy, 440
Poles, the, promise of autonomy, 323–325; in Stockholm, 377; characteristics, 377
Polish question, 433; memoir on the, 440; alteration, 441
Polivanoff, General, assistant to the Minister of War, 78; M. Sazonoff's reception, 81; Minister for War, 386; interview with Nekludoff, 387–389; work for the reconstruction of the Army, 419; dismissal, 419
Pomerania, 255
Poprikov, General, Bulgarian Minister to St. Petersburg, 82
Portsmouth, Treaty of, 2
Potemkin, mutiny, 35
Poushkévitch, M., at the murder of Rasputin, 457
Prisoners of war, exchange of the seriously wounded, 366–368
Propper, Mr., 89
Protopopoff, M., Vice-President of the Duma, at Stockholm, 413, 424–427; characteristics, 413; entertained by M. Nekludoff, 425; interview with M. Wallenberg, 426; volubility, 426; interview with M. Warburg, 427, 438, 452; mental condition, 428; Home Secretary, 446; reactionary policy, 447; illness, 447; execution, 447; ambitious views, 452; at Moscow, 452; blunders, 458; belief in the reincarnation of Rasputin's soul, 458; measures to provoke disorder, 477
Prussia, 254; policy, 255
Przemysl, surrender of, 323, 348
Pskoff, 490
Puschkin, *Festivity during the Plague*, 237

Radko-Dmitriev, General, 114; victory of Lule-Burgas, 127; mission to St. Petersburg, 127; instructions, 127; ovation in his honour, 154
Radoslavov, M., entrusted to form a Cabinet, 196
Radovitch, 209
Radziwill, Prince Nicolas, 315
Rasputin, Gregory, influence over the Empress Alexandra, 67, 69, 73, 419; dissolute life, 69–71; a "trezvennik," 69; sent away from Court, 71, 81; return, 71, 81; a *Khlyst*, 71 *note;* expelled from Yalta, 226; flattered by Ministers, 284; scandal, 395, 455–457; accepts sums of money, 435; assassinated, 457; funeral, 457
"Rasputin," meaning of the word, 69
Reichenau, Baron von, German Minister to Stockholm, 277, 291; interview with M. Nekludoff, 297–299
Reichstadt, 20; conference at, 40
Rennenkampf, General, 319
Retch, article in the, 173
Rhodope Mountains, 113, 210
Riga, 350; taken by the Germans, 515, 516
Rilo range, 195
Rilo-Dagh, taken by the Greeks, 195
Ristitch, M., the Serbian Plenipotentiary, 41
Rizov, M., hostility to Russia, 87; Diplomatic Agent, 87; marriage, 87; Minister to Rome, 88; characteristics, 88; influence over King Ferdinand, 172, 174, 179; interviews with M. Nekludoff, 174, 460–462; Minister to Berlin, 459; death, 463
Rodosto, 121, 126, 130
Rodzianko, M., President of the Duma, 81; stirring speech, 395; suppression, 494
Roman Catholicism, power of, 118
Romanovski, Colonel, military agent in Sofia, 75, 82; at Nish, 194
Rosen, Baron Leon de, secretary to the Russian Legation at Stockholm, 430; political views, 432; speech at the Council of the Empire, 432
Rosen, Baroness, 359
Rosetti, Mdme., 149
Rosetti-Solesco, M., Rumanian Minister to St. Petersburg, 149
Russnoye Slovo, 91
Rumania, rectification of the frontiers, 129; relations with Russia, 149, 151; mobilisation of the Army, 189; neutrality in the Balkan war, 147; relations with Bulgaria, 147; claims to Dobrudja, 147, 148, 180; acquisition of territories, 153; entry into the war, 303, 442, 444; condition of the Army, 388; geographical position, 388

Rumania, Crown Prince of, at Sofia, 57
Rumanian Army, cross the Danube, 193; occupies Northern Bulgaria, 195, 197; aeroplane, 197; leaves Varna, 201; enters Hungary, 442; evacuates Transylvania, 445
Rumelia, 23; invasion of, 41
Russia, Revolution, 2, 466; relations with Austria, 18; with Bulgaria, 20, 231; "moderantism," 23; "Council of Ministers" or "Cabinet," 33; Asiatic Department, 48; proposed convention with Bulgaria, 74; inadequate preparations, 78, 100, 241, 296; possession of Constantinople, 117; rule of the "prohibited area," 122, 125; supports Serbia's claim, 134; cession of Dobrudja, 147; relations with Rumania, 149, 151; proposed arbitration in the Balkan question, 170–174; checks advance of the Turks, 201; relations with Greece, 204; policy in the Near East, 205, 207; renewal of influence in Greece and Rumania, 214; spirit monopolies, 240; relations with Germany, 261; construction of the Murman railway, 264, 336 *note*, 344; ultimatum from Germany, 283, 296, 301; "robust" optimism, 283; policy of Ministers, 284; the need to *collect herself*, 285; on neutrality of Sweden, 309; defeat of the army, 319; policy, 327; rule in Galicia, 329; trade with Sweden, 335, 336; need to secure transit through, 336; secret intelligence methods, 340; relations with Sweden, 343–345, 432; secession of Finland, 347; negotiations for peace, 351; concession to Sweden in 1856, 355; elimination of the clause at the Conference of London, 355; rights in the Aland Islands, 356; ravages of the Mongolians, 379 *note*; reorganisation of the Army, 387; railway system, 389; discontent of the lower class, 406; influence of German agents, 408–410, 477, 478; result of the reverses, 409; internal condition, 446, 447; Provisional Government, 467; illusions on the Revolution, 469–472; views of the Western Allies, 469–471; massacres, 475; action of the Fleet, 475; origin of the Revolution, 476; Government and the "people," conflict between, 479; the *trepak* or national dance, 485; demonstration of "the Red Guard," 493; Republic proclaimed, 511
Russian Army, condition, 95; military operations in East Prussia, 319, 349; in Galicia, 322, 329, 348, 423, 424, 500; ascent of the Carpathians, 323; forced to retire, 349; evacuates Poland and Galicia, 350; retreat, 350; captures Lutsk, 424; evacuates Transylvania, 445; adherence to Provisional Government, 467, 471; *Prikase No.* 1, 476; reserve regiments of the Guard, revolt, 478; army of treachery, forming, 485; dissolution, 497; behaviour of the deserters, 497; refusal to fight, 500; demoralisation, 511; flight, 511
Russian Fleet, at Varna, 34–36; assassination of the Admirals, 475
Russian prisoners, treatment, 362–365; result of German propaganda, 363, 368; officers, 370
Russian refugees, treatment in Germany, 313, 317; in Sweden, 314, 321; Committee formed, 358
Russians, monastic faith, 206; characteristics, 347 *note*, 369; future of, 369; in Paris, 514
Russo-British Entente, 2
Rustchuk, 220
Ruthenes, the, 329

SABLER, M., Counsellor to the Legation, introduction to King Ferdinand, 144; Procurator of the Holy Synod, 145; reactionary policy, 284
Saburoff, M. Andrew, member of the Council of the Empire, 398
St. Alexander Nevsky, Cathedral of, 154
St. Pantelaimon, Monastery of, 206
St. Petersburg, 1, 385; Conference of Ambassadors, 152; entertainments in, 236; destruction of the German Embassy, 240; impressions of, 439; police measures, 465; disorders, 466; revolution, 466, 478; reception of convicts and political exiles, 480; population, 492; revolt of the *Soviet*, 493. *See* Petrograd
St. Sophia, 119
Salonika, 41; occupied by Greeks, 132; by Bulgarians, 169
Saltsjöbaden, 430
Samara, standard of, 290
Samarine, Alexander, 171
Samokov, 197
Samothrace, island of, 126, 130
Samsonoff, General, 77; annihilation of his army, 319
San, the, 349
San Giovanni, 132
San Sebastian, 509, 521

San Stefano, 122; Treaty of, 41, 42, 217
Santander, 509
Sassnitz, 313, 366
Savinsky, M. A., Minister to Stockholm, 85; to Sofia, 86, 91; removal from Sweden, 222; difficulty of his position, 265; illness, 390; warnings on the Bulgarian peril, 390; audience with King Ferdinand, 391; policy, 392
Savov, General, prosecution, 26; Commander-in-chief of the Bulgarian Army, 168; conference with M. Nekludoff, 174; protest against sending a delegate to St. Petersburg, 183; instructions from King Ferdinand, 188; plenipotentiary for the settlement with the Porte, 209
Sazonoff, Mdme., 398 *note*
Sazonoff, M., Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1; career, 1; illness, 5; at Davos, 5; return to St. Petersburg, 5; under the influence of Stolypin, 32; improvement in his health, 39, 45; interviews with M. Nekludoff, 45, 71, 74, 77, 221, 386, 437, 438; on an alliance between Bulgaria and Serbia, 45; return from Davos, 55; reception, 79; telegrams from M. Nekludoff, 96, 171; to him, 125; presides at the Conference of Ambassadors, 152; friendship with Mdlle. Milutin, 167; on the independence of Mount Athos, 203, 207, 213; protest against advance of the Turkish troops, 208; his foreign policy, 215, 434; optimism, 221, 243; letters from M. Nekludoff, 230; policy of reforms, 284: advice from M. Nekludoff, 302; the Aland Islands, 415; remains in office, 420; resignation, 433, 437; received by Nicolas II., 437; minute on the Polish question, 440; on the entry of Rumania into the war, 443
Scandinavian Sovereigns, meeting of, 330
Scavenius, Mdme., 276
Scavenius, M., Danish Minister to Stockholm, 276
Schakhowsky, Prince, reactionary policy, 284
Schebeko, Nicolas, career, 150; Counsellor to the Embassy in Berlin, 150; Minister to Bukharest, 150, 208; Ambassador to Vienna, 220; return from St. Petersburg, 280; scepticism, 283; delay in his intervention, 283
Scherbatcheff, General, in command of the reserve army, 388; reoccupies the Bukowina, 424
Schiller, J. C. F., history of the Thirty Years' War, 256
Schilling, Baron, 91, 443; letter from M. Nekludoff, 218; advice from him, 302
Schingareff, M., at Stockholm, 413, 414, 430; character, 431; speeches, 431; murdered, 431; advice to Protopopoff, 447
Schipka Pass, attack on, 101; Veterans' Fête, 101
Schischman, John Samuel, Bulgarian Tsar, 192
Schuvaloff, Countess Betty, ball given by, 238
Schuvaloff, Count Peter, Ambassador in London, 40
Scutari, siege of, 116; annexation vetoed, 129
Sementovsky, Mdme., 88
Sementovsky, M., Russian Minister to Sofia, death, 1, 3; relations with King Ferdinand, 2
Serbia, relations with Bulgaria, 38, 135, 137, 161, 239; principal phases, 39–43; war with Turkey, 40, 111; negotiations with Bulgaria, 52–57; demarcation of the frontier, 52, 53, 55, 203, 209, 211; settled, 56; agreement with Bulgaria, 56, 64, 230; military convention with, 96, 98; alliance with Greece, 98, 163, 169; agreement with Montenegro, 103; mobilisation of the Army, 108–110; outlet to the Adriatic, 128, 132–135; acquisition of territories, 132; siege of Adrianople, 134; relations with Greece, 135, 137; with Russia, 164; claims in Macedonia, 164; preparations for war, 181; loyalty to Russia, 214; ultimatum from Germany, 280, 288, 290; reply, 294; atrocities of Germans, 318
Serbia, Crown Prince Alexander of, invasion of Eastern Rumelia, 41; at Sofia, 57; tact, 58; departure from Belgrade, 101; at Krivolak, 190; at St. Petersburg, 239; on relations between Serbia and Bulgaria, 239
Serbian Army, defeated at Slivnitza, 41; defeats the Turks, 112; participate in the taking of Adrianople, 155 attacked by Bulgarians, 185, 189 victory over them, 190
Serbian Mussulmans in Bosnia, 157
Seres, 209
Sereth, the, 445

Serge Mikhailovitch, Grand-Duke, 78, 402
Sergueieff, Capt., wounded, 371
Sievers, General, forced to retire, 349
Silistria, 147 ; ceded to Rumania, 153
Skirmunt, M., 378
Skoplie, 111 ; occupied by Serbians, 112
Skoropadsky, Colonel, 315
Slatin-Pasha, at the conference at Stockholm, 364
Slivnitza, defeat at, 41
Slovaks, surrender, 323
Smolensk, 379
Sobanski, Count, 378
Sobranjé, the Great, convened at Tirnova, 28
Sofia, school for officers, 11 ; festivities at, 57 ; troops from Macedonia, 96 ; Schipka Veterans' Fête, 101 ; services in the Cathedral, 102, 145, 146 ; military hospital, 165 ; skirmish of reservists, 216 ; march past of the troops, 218
Solovieff, M., Counsellor to the Russian Embassy in Madrid, disapproval of M. Nekludoff's telegram, 520 ; dismissed, 521 ; in Poland, 521
Sophia, Queen, of Sweden, 259 ; characteristics, 259
Sound, the, German destroyers in, 287
Soviet, the, treatment of Nicolas II., 475 ; power, 478 ; organ of German policy, 486
Spain, the *Guardia Civil*, 506
Spain, Archduke Albert, 505
Spain, Archduke Charles, 505
Spalaïkovitch, M., characteristics, 53 ; conversations with M. Nekludoff, 133, 137, 170 ; on the Serbian claims to territory, 133 ; suggestion to Belgrade, 136 ; suspicions of the Bulgarians, 137 ; at Tsaribrod, 170
Spaniards, characteristics, 510
Spitsberg, Conference, 302
Staaf, M., 265
Stakovitch, M., appointed Ambassador to Madrid, 520
Stamboulov, M., omnipotence, 8 ; resignation, 9 ; assassinated, 10
Stambul, 92
Stana, Grand-Duchess, 69
Stara-Zagora (Eski-Zagra), battle of, 102
Stjerrenstett, Mdme. Marika, lecture at the Auditorium meeting, 483
Stock Exchange Gazette, 89
Stockholm, 245, 464 ; Riksdag of "the National Defence," 279 ; Requiem Mass for Archduke Francis Ferdinand, 286 ; reception of M. Poincaré, 289–294 ; banquet, 291 ; panic, 301 ; work of the committee for the prisoners of war, 359 ; conferences at, 364 ; commercial amateurs, 382 ; Secret-Service agents, 383 ; German spies, 383 ; members of the Duma, 413 ; meeting in the Auditorium, 483
Stohed, marshes of the, 436
Stolypin, Michael, killed in a duel, 31
Stolypin, Petia, assassinated, 31 ; characteristics, 31, 32 ; attempt on his life, 31 ; tendency to despotism, 32 ; foreign policy, 32 ; influence over M. Sazonoff, 32 ; protection of the Lithuanians, 380
Stolypin, Mdme. Peter, 298 *note*
Stromberg, M., 358
Struma, the, 194, 208, 209
Struve, Peter, at Stockholm, 376 ; edits the *Osvobojdenie*, 376 ; head of the service of economic studies, 376
Stürmer, M., Minister for Foreign Affairs, 86, 433, 439 ; President of the Council, 393 ; President of the Zemstvo at Tver, 393 ; Provincial Governor, 394 ; mission to, 394 ; characteristic, 394, 439 ; policy, 418 ; influence over Empress Alexandra, 419, 435 ; bad reputation, 435 ; German origin, 435 ; appearance, 439 ; interview with M. Nekludoff, 439 ; ultimatum-writ to Rumania, 442 ; arraignment of his private secretary, 446 ; retirement, 450
Sudermania, Duke of, 248. *See* Charles XIII.
Sukhomlinoff, General, Minister for War, 78, 80
Sumarokoff-Elston, Count Felix, at the murder of Rasputin, 457
Svatikoff, M., 515
Sven-Hedin, 263 ; explorations, 264 ; received by Nicolas II., 264 ; on the Russian danger, 265 ; result of his visits to the German armies, 342
Sverbeieff, M., at Vienna, 95, 100 ; Ambassador to Berlin, 98, 281 ; on leave, 280 ; characteristics, 281 ; limitations, 282 ; treatment in Berlin, 316
Sviatopolk-Mirsky, Prince, Home Secretary, 399
Sweden, history, 246–252 ; enmity to Russia, 246 ; administration, 247 ;

naval engagements, 247; loss of Finland, 248; union with Norway, 248; Diet replaced by two Chambers, 249; the *Riddarehuset*, 249; education, 250; iron mines, 250; Socialism, 250; aristocratic and democratic, 251; population, 251; friendship with France, 254; relations with Germany, 255–258; trade with, 257, 337; influence of, 259–262; fear of aggressive policy of Russia, 263; the *Bondestog* or peasants' procession, 266; resignation of the Liberal Cabinet, 266; Chamber of "National Defence," 267; dissolved, 330; proposals of alliance from Germany, 272; the Russian colony, 274; policy of neutrality, 306–310; belief in Germany's invincibility, 310, 321; number of refugees, 313, 358; treatment of them, 314, 321, 358; export trade, 332; geographical position, 333; restriction of imports, 333–336; position of international trade, 334–337; need for coal and other commodities, 334; Russia's need to secure transit through, 336; orders from, 336; relations with, 343–345, 432; work of the Red Cross, 345, 364; system of telephony, 346; political and social organisation, 346; policy of the Activists, 348, 350; aversion to war, 350; pacificist current, 352; result of the blockade, 353; custom of *Yul-Klappor*, 353; concession made by Russia in 1856, 355; separation from Norway, 355; work for the prisoners, 359; administration of Esthonia, 489; the new Cabinet, 498
Sweden, Crown Prince of, 270
Swedes, the, characteristics, 252, 253; patriotism, 252; "Spaniards of the North," 253; belief in Germany, 320–322; danger of an alliance, 322; relations with Germans, 343; treatment of refugees, 345; contamination from foreign elements, 384
Syria, condition of, 22

T———, M., 396
Talaats, the, 23
Tango, the, in Paris, 223
Tannenwald, battle of, 379
Tarnowski, Count, 109; council, 187
Tatar-Budjaks, the, 147
Tatiana, Grand Duchess, 30; at Livadia, 229; unknown fate, 229
Tatischeff, Serge, 9
Taube, Baron, 36
Tchkeïdze, M., Socialist, 467; ridicules Prince Galitzyn's speech, 477
Teheran, 49
Terestchenko, M., appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, 494; characteristics, 495; letter from M. Nekludoff, 519
Thasos, island of, 126
Theodore, Tsar of Russia, 423, 491
Theodorov, M., 25 *note*. *See* Todorov
Thiébaud, M., French Minister to Sweden, 275, 308; work, 340
Thomas, M. Albert, Minister of Munitions, at Stockholm, 414; appearance, 414; mission to Russia, 499
Thrace, 129; condition, 22; military operations in, 123; cession, 130; occupied, 209
Times, the, article in, 463 *note*
Tirnova, 28, 91; Jubilee celebrations, 105; earthquake, 182
Tisza, M., 326
Tobolsk, 496
Todorov, General, expedition against Salonika, 113
Todorov, M., 172; Bulgarian Minister of Finance, 25; Serbo-Bulgarian relations, 38; on the demarcation of the frontier, 53; on the financial difficulties of King Ferdinand, 59; journey to St. Petersburg, 126; conference with M. Nekludoff, 174; member of the Cabinet, 179; on the decision to send a delegate to St. Petersburg, 182. *See* Theodorov
Tolstoy, Count Alexis, verses, 423
Tolstoy, Count Leo, 423 *note*
Tommasini, M., Italian Minister to Sweden, 276; characteristics, 337; work, 340
Tommasini, Mdme., 276
Tontchev, M., member of the Cabinet, 196; plenipotentiary for the settlement with the Porte, 209
Tornea, 366
Torres, Senor de, 361
Trans-Siberian Railway, 265 *note*
Transylvania, evacuated, 445
Trelleborg, 366
Trench-warfare, 329
Trepak or Russian dance, 485
Trepoff, Alexander, Minister of Ways and Communications, 451; appointed Prime Minister, 451; colleagues, 452; resignation, 458
Trn, 195
Trondhjem, 263
Trotsky, M., 485, 520
Tsaribrod, conference at, 170

Tsarskoe-Selo, 5, 72, 401 ; Palace, 72 ; rebel soldiers of the garrison, 473
Tseretelli, M., Socialist, 467
Turgeneff, Ivan, "On the Eve," 165
Turkey, Christian nations of, 18 ; revolution, 18, 19 ; policy of the Young Turks, 22 ; war with Italy, 37, 96 ; with Serbia, 40 ; with the Balkan States, 111 ; German influence in, 123 ; frontier, 125 ; negotiations for peace, 128 ; annulment, 130 ; armistice, 155, 169 ; result of domination over the Bulgarians, 157 ; relations with Serbians, Greeks and Albanians, 157 ; peace signed, 169 ; cession of territories, 203 ; co-operation with Gemany, 215 ; entry into the war, 329
Turkhan Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador, 208
Turkish Army, strength and equipment, 94, 104 ; defeated, 111, 112, 329, 348 ; surrender to the Greeks and Bulgarians, 113 ; demoralisation, 114 ; demobilisation of the army, 191 ; advance on Bulgaria, 193, 201 ; on Adrianople, 195 ; retake Adrianople, 197, 208
Turkish prisoners on the island of Maritza, 156 ; treatment by the Bulgarians, 156
Turks, the, founders of the Ottoman empire, 347 *note* ; characteristics, 347 *note*
Tutcheff, Mdlle., maid-of-honour, resignation, 71 ; relations with the Russian Imperial Family, 81
Tutrukan, 147, 210
Tver, province of, 393
Tziganes, the, 147

UCHIDA, M., Japanese Minister to Sweden, 276
Uchida, Mdme., 276
Ukraine, the, independence proclaimed, 497
Uniate clergy, persecution of, 329
United States, number of Lithuanians in, 381
Upsala University, 266
Ural-Altaic race, 347 *note*
Uskub, 111

VADUZ, 44
Varangians, the, 246
Vardar, the, 190, 194, 208, 209
Varna, 147, 201 ; Russian Squadron at, 34-36
Vassiltchikoff, Alexander, 43
Vassiltchikoff, Mdlle. Macha, appearance, 43 ; journey to Vaduz, 44 ; meetings with M. Nekludoff, 44, 372 ; at Stockholm, 372 ; on the treatment of prisoners in Germany, 373 ; advice from M. Nekludoff, 374 ; expelled from St. Petersburg, 375
Vassilieff, Professor, member of the Council of the Empire, at Stockholm, 424–427
Venizelos, M., 282 ; Prime Minister of Greece, 137 ; conferences at Belgrade, 139 ; interview with M. Nekludoff, 139–141 ; characteristics, 139 ; outline of the frontier, 140
Victoria, Queen of Spain, receives M. Nekludoff, 504 ; appearance, 504
Victoria, Queen of Sweden, sympathies with Germany, 260 ; characteristics, 261 ; receives M. Nekludoff, 270 ; visits the wounded, 367
Vienna, 17, 98 ; impressions of, 236
Vilna, union with Cracow, 379
Vitosch Pass, 198
Viviani, M., at Stockholm, 290
Vladimir, Grand-Duchess, 21 ; gift to King Ferdinand, 62 ; reconciliation with the Grand-Duke Nicolas, 456
Vladimir, Grand-Duke, 211 ; death, 21
Volhynia, 350, 386 *note*, 433
Volkoff, Alexander, 373 ; on the origin of the war, 374
Vrana, 59, 143, 145
Vulture, the, 499
Vyrubova, Anna, 69 ; at Livadia, 227, 229

WALLENBERG, M. Knut, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 267 ; interview with M. Nekludoff, 271 ; on the preservation of peace, 271, 300, 352 ; friendship with King Gustaf V., 273 ; founder of the "Banque des Pays du Nord," 274 ; visit to Paris and Berlin, 274 ; on neutrality of Sweden, 306 ; character of his policy, 309 ; extension of his term of office, 330 ; relations with M. Nekludoff, 343 ; on the question of the Aland Islands, 417, 444 ; interview with M. Protopopoff, 426 ; with M. Pokrovsky, 429
Wangenheim, Baron von, Ambassador to Constantinople, 93 ; military instructor of the Ottoman Army, 120

Warburg, M., interview with M. Protopopoff, 427, 438; controversy on the meeting, 452
Warsaw, 323, 329, 348
Weckerle, M., 326
Wied, Prince of, *Mpret* of Albania, 338
Wielopolski, Count Sigismund, member of the Council of the Empire, at Stockholm, 430; on the Polish question, 433; death of his son, 437
Willard, Mr., American Ambassador to Madrid, 509
William I., Emperor of Germany, 260
William II., Emperor of Germany, treatment of the Bulgarians, 58; marriage of his daughter, 168; audience with M. Kokovtzoff, 223; at the interview of Konopischt, 280; extreme measures against Russia, 283; cruise in the Norwegian Fjords, 286
William Prince of Sweden, divorce, 221, 244; popularity, 271
Winter Palace, style of furniture, 43
Witte, Count, 21; apprehensions of the future, 237; death, 238
Wotan, 255

Xerxes, 204 *note*

Yalta, 223
Yermoloff, Alexis, Minister of Agriculture, 398
Yser, the, 320
Yudenitch, General, victory in the Caucasus, 348
Yul-Klappor, custom in Sweden, 353
Yussupoff, Princess Zenaida, effort to stop the Rasputin scandal, 455; son, 457 *note*

Zimmermann, M., 275
Zimmerwaldians, the, 481
Zinovieff, M., Ambassador to Constantinople, 21, 205; interview with M. Nekludoff, 242
Zorn, M., 271
Zrny-Vrch, assault on, 112
Zveguintzoff, M., member of the Council of the Empire, at Stockholm, 453

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