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# WHY I SIDE WITH THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

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By René Marchand,

Late correspondent of the „Figaro“  
and „Petit Journal“



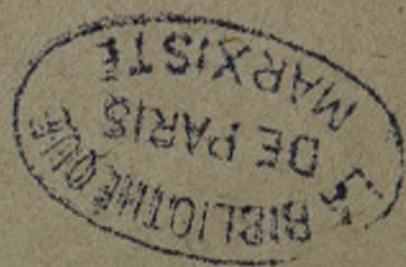


# WHY I SIDE WITH THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

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PUBLISHING OFFICE OF THE COMMUNIST  
INTERNATIONAL

PETROGRAD © 1920





To

Jacques SADOUL

in witness to my highest admiration for his work  
of courageous loyalty



## PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

The brochure which we present to the reader was written by a man who only yesterday was our adversary. By his origin, inclinations, and past career, as journalist of a French „conservative“ newspaper, M. Rene Marchand was made to be our enemy. He was our enemy, right up to the day when he thoroughly learned the ins and outs of Entente politics in Russia, understood what treacherous weapons were being put into use against us,—until he saw the birth, and growth of the work of the Soviets and understood what we want. The Communist International publishes this testimony of a man of good faith and good intentions led by the evidence of facts from bourgeois patriotism to Communism.





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When the Russian Revolution of February 1917 broke out I was staying at Petrograd on a convalescent holiday. The last sojourn I had made to the front, as also observations and impressions of the later months of 1916 did not allow of the least illusion as to the real state of affairs, i. e. the state of extreme fragility to which the Imperial Power had reached, the authority of which had been decreasing, in fact, ever since the disappearance of Stolypin, and which, in the course of the war, had rapidly foundered into anarchic impotence, owing to a Bureaucratism which was incapable of supplying the honesty and the energy which circumstances demanded for the continuation of its work.

Nevertheless, I must confess, that the Revolution came to me as an unexpected for event. Absorbed as I was in the war, preoccupied exclusively with the ways and means of concentrating a maximum of allied forces against Germany (who I knew was still powerful), it was no difficult task for me to mistake my wishes for actual realities. Unwilling to look at Russian internal politics from a standpoint other than that of the war, I finally persuaded myself (again following that which my feelings prompted) that—, the edifice would maintain itself somehow or other until the end, i. e. until victory“. I was too profoundly convinced, precisely owing to the extreme fragility of the whole, that any

alteration in its structure was impossible (or at least something which constituted a most hazardous and dangerous operation and in which France had nothing whatever to gain). It was for this reason that, I was energetically and frankly hostile to all those combinations, cherished by certain Allied ambassadors, having for their purpose the „renovation“ of the Government, not to speak of the Regime, or a „change“ in the Monarchy. I saw but one line of conduct, namely consolidation of whatever kind possible and by every means in existence.

Hence, on the outbreak of the Revolution, my first emotion was one of stupor, one of complete despondency and discouragement. Not for one second did I allow myself to participate in the pleasure which then manifested itself in almost all bourgeois circles and with the majority of the members of the Allied diplomatic corps. To me one thing alone was clear, namely that Russia had gone out of the war, that it signified perhaps the breakdown of the Eastern front and on this account, perhaps, the triumph of German Imperialism. It meant such a prodigious increase of effort that it was impossible for France, who had already been tried so much, to think of it without shuddering. This truth, which I felt instinctively, had been grasped from the very first moment, with a precision and surety of judgment that admitted of no doubt, by our Ambassador at that time, M. Paleologue, who, as he refused to give himself up to chimerical hopes which might become dangerous for France, began to look upon his mission in Russia as one that was practically terminated.

Public opinion in the shape of the Russian

bourgeoisie, as well as the majority of the Allied diplomatic representatives, right from the very first day of the Revolution, committed an unpardonable mistake in not *seeing* the Revolution, or to speak more distinctly in seeing it only in the colours that suited them, and within such limits as they had prescribed for it in advance.

In other words, they restricted it to a rehabilitation of the Ministry, a „change of sovereign“, at the most (and, mark you, this only for the sake of form, and without admitting that anything could be fundamentally affected by it) even to a change in the Regime, and becoming accustomed to the idea of the change (the evolution that the Press underwent is striking proof of this), which they considered as a purely formal one, they innocently prepared themselves to resume work, after an interval of a few hours interruption. They did not perceive (and later on they obstinately refused to do so), that the approaching events, events which were not yet unfolding themselves, but were *simply beginning*, were by no means a mere rehabilitation of a cabinet of which for long months they had been ardently dreaming, but that these events were rather a first cry of revolt arising from a whole people, a people who, so to speak, had just begun to see the light, and whose first act of authority was to declare in the face of the whole world that it wanted nothing more to do with the War. Victims of an extraordinary mirage, politicians, journalists, diplomats (and behind these the public at large),—all went about muttering that „things now were only just starting“; that under the guidance of a Cadet Ministry, that is to say the élite of the Russian bourgeois intellectuals,

Russia would have simply to fly from one victory to another.

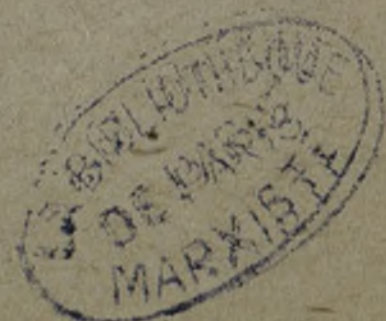
No sooner, in fact, was the chief of the Cadet Party Milioukoff installed in power, than his first step was to solemnly affirm Russia's claims to Constantinople and the Dardanelles; to affirm, in other words, in one of its essential points, a programme of Russian Imperialism; that is to say, a programme of a Russia, with bourgeois power, powerfully supported by a formidable army. Was it possible, in truth, to give greater evidence of an absolute incomprehension of the real state of affairs?

During the few years that I had spent in Russia previous to the war, I had found sufficient opportunity of observing the Cadet Party at work in opposition in order not to be misled by the moderate hopes that were placed upon it on the eve of the Revolution.

The Cadet Party had been, in fact, nothing better than a party of professors; a party deprived of all contact with the people, and which, under the Imperial Regime, had constantly aimed at power; had been very near obtaining it; and had for ever been conducting a systematic opposition (in the worst Western Parliamentary meaning of this word) to all the acts of the Government, whether good or bad, contributing in this way to shake the most honest and capable of ministers, and to substitute them, to the detriment of the State, by less honest and less capable successors. At the same time, and while all this was going on, they overwhelmed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, at that time, M. Sasonoff, with their unreserved cooperation and support in order to force him

into a policy of „national dignity“ and „firmness“. Let us not forget that had it not been for the considerable moral support rendered to M. Sasonoff by the „liberal opposition“ such a policy might very well have horrified the latter, who was a man of very mild character, very religious and of an essentially pacific nature.

Finally notwithstanding the warm and profoundly sincere sympathies of several of its members towards France and French culture, the Cadet Party had never been a Francophile Party. Of Germanic temperament and turn of mind, no less than its Finnish friends, Svinhufvud & Co, the Cadet Party, since the commencement of the war, had been induced to throw itself heart and soul into an admiration, which was in some respects an exclusive admiration, of the English monarchy, the Parliamentarism, Constitution and the traditions of Great Britain. In this admiration which was often intentionally exaggerated I was often able to remark traces of an antipathy, if not disdain for France, as well as a complete and willful misunderstanding of the prodigious effort made by France during the war; a flagrant injustice towards the French army, that is to say towards the French people. It is not my intention to mention any names in these notes. It will suffice if I restrict myself to pointing out that, having my own experiences of Russian life and having been able to penetrate intimately into its interior, I had often the occasion to overhear edifying remarks on this point, which, as far as we were concerned, had no more real justification than the famous cry of indignation uttered by the President of the Duma, Rodzianko: „What are



you doing on your front? While we are fighting, you occupy yourselves with a metre of Souchez sweatmeats".

The arrival of the Cadet Party to power, at such a critical moment as this naturally inspired me with no great feeling of confidence. I was convinced that it would never be able to go further than the combinations of the Duma, in which it had evolved, and in which the Imperial Government itself had died a slow death. On the other hand, I was sure that the ferment amongst the masses was too strong for the Cadet Party to be able, merely by the means at its disposal (namely a change of persons and of the *external* administration) to resuscitate the former Imperial Government.

Such, briefly, was my state of mind when circumstances placed me in contact with a man who, in virtue of his vast intelligence and broad character, was destined to exercise a decisive influence over my ideas and the orientation of my thought. I wish to speak of Albert Thomas who arrived in Russia at this moment on a mission of special importance. His ardent enthusiasm and his real love for the Russian people,—a trait which, unfortunately, was infinitely rare amongst the official representatives of the Allies,—his sincere admiration for the Russian revolution, and the system of the Soviets, resulted in his revealing a new horizon for me; and, very rapidly, in giving me back my former faith in the destinies of Russia. Until then, I had been confined to the milieu in which I had lived, if not materially, at least intellectually, prior to the Revolution, and had therefore not seen the elements which since then had decomposed or

were undergoing a state of decomposition. In this manner, I suddenly found myself transported to the very *sources* of this Revolution. Coming into contact with and studying the Workers' Soldiers' and Peasants' Soviets, as well as the Socialist Parties, which until then had been more or less unknown to me, I was again forcibly made aware of the *Russian Power*,—a power which certainly was very different from that which I had formerly known, but which all the same struck me at once as being more profound, much more *real* than the former, because it came direct from the people themselves, unadulterated either by statistics or chancelleries.

With indescribable rapidity, therefore, and entirely overlooking my first impressions made during my contact with this power, I came to persuade myself (still preoccupied with the question of the War), that the Russian people was about to return to the fight with much greater energy than under the former regime. In other words, that this *Revolutionary power was going to become a power in the imperialist war!*

Even at that time, the alarming contradiction which existed in this association of ideas did not enter my thoughts. Later on, attracted more and more towards the heart of this people, that I felt beating day by day ever faster and faster under pressure of the daily events through which I was living,—captivated ever more and more by the discourses of such orators as Kerensky and Tzeretelly,—I did not pay much attention to Bolshevik propaganda, which commenced at that time to vigorously manifest itself. Had I, however, recollected my *first* impressions,—*that*

of the revolt of the Russian people against the War, — I might have reflected and have saved myself from a serious error.

The insurrection of the Cronstadt sailors at Petrograd in July, as well as the campaign conducted by the „Pravda“, where Lenin began to reveal himself in startling relief, — the retreat from Tarnopol, and the dislocation at the front, — all this, owing to some incomprehensible blunder, was attributed by me to facts of second rate importance; to such events, for instance, as the activities of „German agents“, in Russia, which though certainly capable of giving work to the police and the counter-espionage were quite devoid, in the wide meaning of the word, of any political significance.

Nevertheless, Russian bourgeois public opinion, as well as the opinion of the majority of the Allied diplomatic corps, which again found itself in affectionate harmony with the former, began to think, both openly and secretly, of *military dictatorship* and of having recourse to the generals. Little by little they had become disenchanted with the Russian Revolution, inasmuch as it had ceased to be theirs!

This was the time when the campaign carried on in the press began to demand a „more energetic“ Government, and to put forward, amongst the candidates for the Presidency of the Council, the name of Admiral Kolchak. This tendency was to be observed particularly at the British Embassy, where, the first moment of astonishment having passed, an attempt was made for a return to the formula which had been studied and prepared in advance, and by which the Revolution was not permitted to exceed a change in the Ministry, which would



bring the Cadet Party to power. No doubt they began to fear that the Cadet Party was no longer capable of seizing the reins of power itself, and to think that the only means of placing them into its hands was by Military Dictatorship. The days of the Moscow Assembly (August 1917), which was convoked by Kerensky, who in this manner hoped to definitely strengthen the position of the Provisional Government, until the Constituent Assembly would have met, have left in my mind an ineffaceable recollection. I was present at the Assemblies which took place in the Grand Theatre, in a box reserved for members of the Diplomatic Corps. I shall never forget the painful and pathetic moment when an outburst of applause, coming from just one half of the Assembly, greeted the appearance of General Korniloff, at that time Commander-in-chief of the Armies. I had just time enough to scan this demonstration, the character of which it was not possible to doubt, and to take note of the fact that all the Soldiers' and Sailors' deputies had remained seated in impressive silence, when, behind me, I heard an exclamation, made by an English General, the official representative of the British Embassy. „He is the dictator“. These words, spoken, carelessly though not without a touch of triumph, which, in view of the general atmosphere of the Assembly, sounded like defiance, had only just been uttered when a Roumanian General emphasised them, as it were, in a cold and biting observation. „And those soldiers, — he said, — who do not even stand up before their General deserve to be shot!“ Just as though these soldiers were there in the capacity of mere sol-

diers, instead of the *delegates* of the Army Soviets! Just as though *their general* had just presented himself to them as *their* leader, instead of a man, whom the ovation of half the assembly stamped as their *implacable enemy!*

The counter-demonstration, however, was not long in forthcoming. After ringing the bell, Kerensky rose and calling upon Korniloff to speak, referred to the latter as „first soldier“ of the Provisional Government. At this moment, an ovation, no less formidable than its predecessor burst out in honour of the leader of the Provisional Government and of some officers, whom the Soldiers, Sailors, and Workers, deputies cheered frantically, — a counter ovation against the „Generals“, the blind „political instruments“ — and not leaders of armies.

For the first time, I had presented before me a picture of a Russia, divided into two enemy camps, both ready to come to blows in bloody conflict, for the supreme benefit of German Imperialism. But on this occasion I also for the first time began to understand instinctively, or more correctly, to feel, that the fatal rupture, that the declaration of war had come from the bourgeoisie itself, this same bourgeoisie which had just given ignominious proof of its impotence, which had wildly persisted in its struggle, both unfruitful and fatal to their country, and, what is more, that the Allied military representatives had *applauded* it.

My emotion was felt and shared by our Consul-General M. Gabriel Bertrand, who had recently arrived in Russia, but whose heart, which was an essentially human one, could not help but sympathize with the profound aspirations of

this infant people which had placed itself into contact with political life with such a confident and naive spontaneity.

The premature death of M. Gabriel Bertrand, was a loss that I do not hesitate to qualify as irreparable; for, had he been present at his post, the deplorable events which were to take place during 1918, might have been avoided, or at any rate redressed, at the proper time.

The few hours that I was able to spend in the company of this kind-hearted man, between the sittings of the Moscow Assembly, will for ever remain engraved in my memory. With what fine French perspicuity, with what sturdiness of thought he regarded the situation! Entirely given up to the war, more preoccupied with France bleeding of her wounds than anybody else he longed for nothing but the destruction of German imperialism. It was for this reason that he was so fond of the Russian people, so justly appreciated the enormous sacrifices made by them, and the heroic support which they had given to France. At the same time, he was able to understand and to love the pacific nature of the Russian people, its Tolstoyism, and all that which ordinary diplomats, accustomed to see in Russia only „an entity capable of putting in line a fixed number of millions of bayonets“, according to the expression of M. Delcassé,—saw nothing but „cowardice“, „corruption“ and „lack of character“.

I can still hear Gabriel Bertrand saying to me:  
„It is not from those industrials who, since 1914, have been doing nothing but earn millions, and who have no interest in anything else,—not from those who, in order to save their own

personal interests, would not shrink from the criminal idea of thrusting their unfortunate country into an odious civil war—it is not from those that we have anything to hope for. I have seen enough of them in order to know. Only with the aid of the people of these new democratic elements, which have just come to the front, our natural friends and allies, can we hope to maintain the eastern front, and drive back the German invasion of Russia“. And with what evident pleasure Gabriel Bertrand stayed behind in his Diplomatic box, now almost vacant (for since the appearance of the „candidate for dictatorship“, the Assembly „offered no further interest“), to watch the voting take place, which was to give the moral authority to the Provisional Government to introduce a *republican* form of the new Russian regime! This voting brought about an apparent reconciliation between the two halves of the Assembly and dissipated,—or at least I was so convinced at the time,—the horrible spectre of Civil War which had been so clearly apparent during the firstpart of the Assembly.

Nevertheless, the diplomats did not consider themselves defeated altogether and anxiously gathered together all the „reliable information“ that began to present itself from „all sides“: namely, to the effect that the dramatic occurences at Moscow signified nothing further than a temporary delay, and that very shortly events bearing a definite character were likely to take place. As far as I was concerned,—and it was here that I made my mistake,—it seemed to me that salvation was to be found only in Kerensky, and forgetting all about the „Soviets“, and for

so much the more reason, their evolution towards Bolshevism, I clung tightly to my faith in the leader of the Provisional Government, whom I at that time considered the *only* person capable of making a stand against ambitions for dictatorship; and, consequently of saving Russia from a Civil War; or, briefly, of saving her from tragical hardships and a military disaster which would place her at the mercy of German Imperialism.

It was in this state of mind, and in this atmosphere of distress, that I lived through the latter weeks of the Provisional Government; the Korniloff affair, the fall of Riga, due rather to intrigue and treason amongst the officers than to the „shameful disloyalty“ of the soldiers. A number of articles were devoted to this subject in a journal, called the „Entente“, published at Petrograd in the French language, and these are some of the most remarkable and poignant that Ludovic Naudeau ever wrote. I consider it a duty to state here that a large number of detachments, and especially the Lettish detachments, which later on were the first to pass over to Bolshevism, fought with a courage that was worthy of the highest praise. After this, the Provisional Government, feeling its authority grow weaker and weaker, convoked Parliament after the Moscow Assembly in an attempt to maintain itself until the Constituent Assembly. Any objective observer would have at once seen that this attempt was only the death agonies of the Provisional Government, a sign of its impotence to guide the country until the Constituent Assembly. He would have understood that the ground was then prepared, by the de-

velopment of events themselves, for a Bolshevik coup d'etat. But, once again, carried along by my hopes, and wishing to transform them into realities, I persuaded myself of the soundness of Kerensky's position, to the same extent as I felt the danger, and the menace of military endeavours, which could not but precipitate the country into the most formidable adventures. Once again I took no heed of, indeed, hardly noticed even, the Bolshevik tendency, the origin and development of which I had neglected to study, considering it (it being so much the simpler) in the light of something artificial, prepared, or at least, supported and fostered by German propaganda. Nothing could have been more untrue; and later events proved to me the complete absurdity and absolute falsity of this charge.

Moreover, all around me, the force of the Bolsheviks generally was not taken seriously! Everybody failed to observe that the Bolsheviks were beginning to have the masses of the people behind them, seeing that their programme on the two most vital questions, the question of peace and the question of the land, gave expression, in precise and vigorous formulas, to the deepest aspirations of the people themselves. I can recollect very well how Georges Weill on the evening of his departure, which took place only a few hours before the coup d'Etat, said to me in tones of profound conviction „The Bolsheviks will do nothing! I have just had a look at them! Trotzky I examined at leisure, whilst making my report before the Soviet in Smolny, on the Alsace Lorraine question. You have only to look at those people to be quite sure that

they have no stomach and will never dare to budge“.

On the other hand, on the eve of the coup d'Etat, the minister Tereschtchenko, made it known that, on this occasion, the Government was quite undisturbed, that the whole plot had been discovered and disarmed, and that he held all the threads in his hands; that no surprise was possible as had been the case in July.

And whilst we were thus moving onwards, in complete blindness, towards the October revolution, diplomatic circles, stuck fast to their projects of military dictatorship, were constantly limiting their relations and the circle of their investigations to the right wing; from soviet socialists, like Tseretelly, they passed over, first to socialists of the right wing, and later on to the socialists of the extreme right, to a new bloc, which they christened radical-socialist, and of which Savinkoff was regarded as the left (socialist).

„Soviets means Anarchy“, „What we have to do is to find the man of the hour“, „We have made a great mistake in showing so much respect towards this revolution which becomes ever more hostile to us“. „What we must do now is to break off the erroneous policy of Albert Thomas and give an all-round support to those who are our friends“—such were the phrases that one might hear repeated daily. Moreover, they were in agreement with the axiom that Maklakoff had expressed: „It will be by other men, and under another flag, that the true ideas of the revolution will conquer“. This axiom found very rapid favour in the Embassies where it was unanimously interpreted

as a complete and definite rupture with socialism.

. . . .

These were the conditions existing at the time when I was *surprised* by the October revolution. I use the word *surprised* deliberately, for as in February I had been unable, or had not desired to expect the arrival of the events which, as a matter of fact, continued to develop in the most logical manner. However, it turned out that I was to persist to my error. Not only did I not understand, but I did not even guess that the revolution was not a mere *accident*, but was what appeared to be a real upheaval of the popular masses of the Russian people, who, under the standard of the Proletariat and the International, were striking their first decisive blow at the old world. Under the influence of my impressions I saw but two things:

a) Firstly, the question of the war. Firmly convinced that the bolsheviks, who at that time meant Lenin, Trotzky and certain „supernumeraries“ for me, were paid agents of the Germans, I did not even question for one second that the October coup d'etat was a German move brought about with the definite aim of abolishing the eastern front and of scattering all hope for a revival of the combatant force of the Russian army. In other words, I was persuaded that the days of October were not a *revolution*, but a *plot*, one more important than those which had preceeded it (the July attempt, and the retreat from Tarnopol).



b) Secondly, the question of the revolution. This revolution which had become dear to me, and which henceforth I felt to be allied with Russia's power and vitality appeared to me to be in peril. Alarmed at sympathies which I had heard openly expressed in diplomatic circles in favour of a military dictatorship (which for me was the synonym for a catastrophe), it occurred to me that the October trouble could do nothing but reinforce the dictatorial party. Instead of recognising that the point of support, the centre of gravity of the Revolution was precisely the Soviets (and, of noticing as a consequence, that the Soviets had not only not suffered any reverse by recent events but, quite on the contrary, had just accepted power under their real standard, namely *bolshevism*)—I saw all this exclusively in Kerensky, and behind him, in the Constituent Assembly.

My deception and my anxiety can be easily imagined. But, nevertheless, during the first few days (and even during the first few weeks), I remained firmly of the opinion that the October revolution (which according to me was still an *insurrection*) was quite a temporary affair, and that sooner or later Kerensky would again accept power. Only, he must, of course, arrive in time, that is to say before the Germans would have succeeded in drawing too great a military advantage from the situation and, further, that he must succeed in smashing to atoms the anti-patriotic ambitions of generals whom he would, necessarily, be obliged to have recourse to. This was my only preoccupation at that period and (I may as well say so) my only thought amidst a confusion of reports, as nu-

merous as they were imposible, which at that time saturated the atmosphere of Petrograd.

As for Bolshevism, for me, I repeat, it was something that did not exist, something whose real character constantly eluded my attention. Not for one moment was I inclined seriously to accept the first decrees of the Government of the „Commissars of the People“, which were placarded along the walls of Petrograd. Further, general impressions, the aftermath of events, as well as the physiognomy of the capital, were strange and indefinable. The Bolsheviks had overthrown the Provisional Government with the greatest of ease, without any real resistance, and with the „neutrality“, that is to say, with the complete indifference of the larger section of the garrison. The Provisional Government vanished like a phantom without leaving even a trace behind it. Further, it did not seem that those who had obtained so easy and so complete a victory had any substantial force behind them. In the streets, people were speaking openly of the arrival of Government troops, rallied by Kerensky, who were advancing to subdue this handful of „rioters“ and „maniacs“ seated at Smolny. In the Embassies, everyone was informed from „absolutely reliable sources“ that the Bolsheviks could hold out for not more than 8 to 10 days. Last of all there came the strike of the employees of all the administrative and State services, the famous „sabotage“ which *in itself*, by putting things under the worst possible conditions should be able to finish the Bolsheviks in the space of two weeks at the most. Day after day passed by however and reports of the approach of Government troops, instead of being more

precise, became gradually more vague. The „sabotage“ continued, of course, but if it caused harm to everybody else, it did not appear to be killing the usurpers at least not in the period in which it had been expected. This period was later on successively deferred to a later date, whilst the Embassies, who would not admit that Bolshevism could possibly exist decided, for reasons of personal expediency, to enter into relation with Smolny. Naturally, it was inconvenient to have to remain any longer without petrol supplies for ones automobiles, without passport visas for ones fellow-countrymen, without facilities for placing ones agents!

But it remained an understood thing that politically and diplomatically Bolshevism did not exist, and that Russia was temporarily deprived of a Government. As far as Allied diplomats were concerned, this „Government“ could be reformed only by the sword of a General, and whether that General would be Alexeyeff, or Korniloff or Kaledin, who would be the second of Rodzianko, Milyoukoff and Savinkoff was a secondary matter. The whole problem, which was, moreover, an extremely simple one reduced itself really to a mere question of persons: all that was necessary was to re-establish „order“ and „discipline“ in the army and country, which Kerensky had failed to maintain to the necessary degree „for any State worthy of that name“.

Not the slightest allusion to Bolshevism: not the least comprehension of the formidable proletarian revolution which had only just taken place,—„discipline“ and „order“,—this was all that was awakened in the diplomatic mind by the

startling figure of a Russia, convulsed by one of the most gigantic crises that History had ever known. I can still hear M. Noulens, from the windows of the French Embassy on the French Quay, pointing towards the first destroyers of the Red Fleet, moving up the Neva, and remarking: „That is where one arrives when men who bear the responsibility of government fail to enforce respect and authority upon the people. Nevertheless, it is not for the want of warning Tereschtenko enough; all my life I have always insisted with my colleagues in parliament upon the danger of demagoguery. To think to what awful depths this poor country has fallen, merely for having disregarded the spirit of discipline!“

Towards the end of December I left Petrograd for Moscow and the south, where I was to meet Kaledin, upon whom diplomatic circles then placed strong hopes. I had not really had any contact with the bolsheviks, except a visit to Smolny in order to obtain the necessary papers for my journey.

The credentials of which I was the bearer was a letter from our Ambassador recommending me „to the civil and military authorities of Russia“. At the Soviet Chancellery a discussion took place, as I very well remember, in regard to my case. They required, first of all, a definition of the formula used, namely that it should be clearly indicated in one way or another that the document from the French Embassy was really addressed to the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Soviet of Petrograd, and further, that my loyalty in regard to the Workers and Peasants Government of Russia, should

be guaranteed. Nevertheless, as I insisted, knowing as well that M. Noulens would accept neither the one nor the other of the rectifications, they agreed to submit the matter to Trotzky, who at once inscribed on the margin of my paper a note to the effect that the necessary authorizations should be delivered to me without delay.

It was in the course of this visit to Smolny that I made the acquaintance of Volodarsky, one of the most prominent of the younger leaders of bolshevism, who was to be rapidly promoted to an important post at the Commissariat for Propaganda where he gave proof later on, up to his assassination, of an extraordinary energy. All the questions that I put to him tended to the one point I had at heart, namely the relations with Germany. With great precision, and without the least hesitation, Volodarsky explained to me in all its vigour the thesis of the International Proletarian Revolution, as opposed to universal Imperialism, logically refuting the accusations made against the Bolsheviks of Germanophilism, and declaring that the latter would never consent to sign a Peace Treaty which would bind the Russian people, hand and foot, to German Imperialism. In regard to the immediate position of the country, he gave proof of an optimism which appeared to me more like extreme bluff. He declared that he was convinced that the Bolsheviks would succeed in putting a stop to the „sabotage“ and the strikes of the officials and public administration employees, and would very soon be successful in obtaining a firm grip upon the whole machinery of the State. These precise, und indisputably very frank declarations,

unfortunately did not impress me in the least any more than the declarations of Comrade Solz, one of the editors of the violent, „The Social-Democrat“ of Moscow, in which a number of articles had appeared directed against the activities of the „counter-revolutionaries“ of the French Military Mission in Russia and against the unworthy treatment inflicted upon Russian soldiers in France. This last accusation appeared to me at the time so monstrous that it scarcely occupied my attention at all and seemed to me a case of flagrant bribery of the „Social Democrat“ by German agents.

Further, one of the first visits I made in Moscow to the editorial offices of this organ, with a view to extracting an explanation, or raising such a discussion, as would, at least, unmask what to my mind at that time was nothing less than the dishonesty of unscrupulous adversaries. Solz protested his love for the people of France with the greatest energy, declaring that, not for one moment had the violent articles, which had appeared in the „Social Democrat“ been directed against the latter, and could, under no circumstances, concern it. He added further that, in spite of the unjust attitude of the present representatives of France towards the Workers and Peasants Government of Russia, the Russian Proletariat did not forget and could not forget that the French Proletariat on many occasions in the past had been the first to raise the red standard of the world revolution, and courageously to expose itself to blows for the sacred cause of the oppressed. On the question of an armistice with Germany, he was even more emphatic than Volodarsky himself, stating that the Russian

proletariat asked for peace, not because of its weakness, but fully conscious of its strength, and that it would never sell the Russian people „to the bandit of German Imperialism“.

„If you wish to be really impartial, even from your Imperialist point of view“, he added, „you must recognise that we, by our example, and all our actions have already done more to weaken the German military forces and, consequently, more for the military triumph of *your* arms,—which of course we are not working for,—than all your Rousskys, Broussiloffs, and other Generals, killers of men, whose brilliant services are so highly lauded in your press. You complain that we have given Germany the chance to throw all its units over to your front, but you overlook the fact that the units which she will take from our front will be already strongly shaken by our propaganda,—that their „morale“ is far from that which it was only two or three months ago. You forget that these units represent for you no longer the impenetrable wall that they have been up to now“. These assertions appeared to me at the time in the light of declamatory extravagance, and I remember how Charles Dumas, to whom I reported my conversation with Solz summed it up by saying that it was „all outrageously mad“.

My investigations from the bolshevik side were pressed no further, so strong was my conviction that, with the exception of a few „fanatics“ and a few „inspired“, the bolsheviks (or at least the most prominent of them) were German agents, „traitors“, „the instigators of the Russian betrayal“ as they were daily stigmatized by the French press.

„There is some truth in all slander“. During the last-few weeks preceeding the signing of the Brest-treaty, I lived in a state of mental enervation produced by this idea which daily became more and more fixed by the conversations I heard, the articles I read and the documents, invented or „inspired“ and so cleverly used,—by those anxiously waiting for the finishing stroke that Germany would not hesitate to deal,—and by the insupportable echo of triumphant joy that the majority of the Russian bourgeoisie manifested at the news that the Germans were advancing upon Petrograd, and in the direction of Moscow. In the meantime I had the misfortune to learn of the quite unexpected departure of our Embassy for Finland, that is to say, away from Russia, at a moment when, confronted by menacing peril, we ought, more than ever, to have remained to give to the poor Russian people, at least the moral support of our presence, and to signify in some tangible way our protest against the infamous appetites which German Imperialism had just cynically revealed.

Sad beyond expression, profoundly disappointed, I experienced at that moment something more than a feeling of indignation. I felt an insuperable disgust for everything that surrounded me. All my hopes in what for me was still „the resurrection of the revolution“, that is to say, the return to power of a Kerensky Government, had been cruelly frustrated. The lamentable downfall of the Constituent Assembly from which I had expected so much, the timidity of the popular indignation, and of the opposition parties, about which I had been so sure, as



well as the complete docility, and apparent resignation, with which revolutionary elements had finally accepted the „quarter of an hour's respite“ accorded by the Treaty of Brest, — all contributed to justify and foster my complete discouragement. The words of the Roumanian minister, M. Diamandy, were involuntarily recalled to my mind:

„History will show that this revolution had about it something of unprecedented cowardice, the abdication of an entire people who, through fear, voluntarily chooses the betrayal of its allies and its unconditional surrender to the enemy...“ And I asked myself whether these words were not going to be realized by actual facts. Could it be really possible? Was it indeed possible that a mere clique of German agents could stifle Russia and the Russian people for ever?

No, I refused to believe it, and meanwhile I suffered silently and deeply from the sarcasm and contempt which it was the custom „amongst honest respectable people“, to heap upon everything that was Russian, without either distinction of class or of social condition. Ah! If then I had only been able to see the truth, to understand the meaning of Bolshevism, to penetrate into the ardent sincerity of Volodarsky's and Solz's declarations, freed from all prejudice, and caring nothing for infamous calumnies, I should then have been able to give myself up to an objective and impartial study of men and things, to learn the meaning of Trotzky's repeated appeals to the Allies, his despair when, abandoned on all sides, meanly sacrificed to the considerations and interests of class, he was obliged, sick at heart, after his

final attempt at resistance with his formula of „neither peace nor war“ to sign the Treaty of Brest, the only means which remained to him for saving the Russian people from destruction!!...

In all the acts and in all the words of the Bolsheviks at that time I saw only knavery, intrigues, comedies and German plots! Beyond and outside of Bolshevism, as I have already stated, there was nothingness. I did not wish to admit however that „all was finished“, an irresistible instinct restrained me from so doing, and not for one moment did it enter my mind that there was nothing further to do than to pack one's baggage and make way for the diplomats and agents of Wilhelm. All the conversations and relations with the Bolsheviks could not, according to my mind, have any other character than a business deal; that nothing politically could ever result from them. On the other hand, was there not some living force, as yet still latent, which was capable of giving the signal for a reawakening of Russia?

Evidently it was not to be expected from commercial and industrial circles, where the lust for profit remained more than ever the only guiding principal, nor from the bourgeoisie who, while waiting for their „German saviours“ had given proof of their implacable and hateful selfishness. As for the revolutionary elements, the young Russian Republic, they appeared to have become definitely bankrupt. For one moment I imagined that I saw this force in the orthodox Church. I had been greatly interested for several months past in the crisis through which this church was passing, and I was present at its reorganization. Monopolized and bureaucra-

tized under the old regime, it appeared to me that it had acquired great moral force, since it had received its liberty. It seemed to be on the point of undergoing a complete revival on the basis of a return to its primitive form. The principle of re-election introduced at the bottom of its hierarchy, its contact with the people, of which under the regime of the Czar it had been practically deprived of, all led one to cherish great hopes of it, so much the more so as its patriarch had not allowed himself to be monopolized by political parties, by the Kadet bourgeoisie which for its own paltry interests was now pretending to be religious. It was therefore not at all impossible that the orthodox Church would become a popular, democratic force, freed from all servitude of classes, and this was, of course, a question of indisputably high importance. Unfortunately the orthodox Church, at least as a whole, did not, during the following few months determine its rupture with the bourgeoisie, and further, did not know how to borrow from the Soviet formula that in it which was profoundly christian. It did not know how to resolutely thrust aside the violently anti-christian appetites and passions of certain elements, wrongly reputed to be „religious“. Later on, it failed to place itself above material considerations, and instead of concluding, an alliance that stood ready before her with the Soviet, power, the Church weakened itself in a vain struggle on the question,—absolutely foreign to christian ideas,—of clericalism, a struggle which, of course, could not fail to be exploited by bourgeois politicians, ostensibly for the welfare of the Church, but in reality,

against it. At that time I myself was one of the first to share this error and even to push it to extreme, because, in my complete incomprehension of bolshevism (the living realisation of the Soviet idea), not only did I oppose the Church to Bolshevism, but horrified by the anarchy and the disorganization that I felt growing about me, I even went so far as to confound and compare Bolshevism, this anarchy and disorganization, with „socialism“ in general, and even to conceive the idea of a common moral action undertaken by all the Churches against the flood of revolutionary ideas! As though the defence and conservation of a social state which had made possible, and had continued for more than four years, a horrible massacre of humanity, for the sake of appetites and financial interests and which today appeared as the only, but also insurmountable obstacle towards the re-establishment of peace, fraternity and justice, could be compatible with any religion having the principles of Christ for its basis!

I introduce this subject here, however out of place it may be, in order to emphasize that, on this question as on all others, I disclaim none of my previous thoughts, ideas or emotions and that, on the contrary, they all form one uninterrupted chain; that it is quite impossible for me to pass over in silence any one of the stages through which I passed, so much were they all intimately allied.

In the meantime, political events hastened to determine themselves in a new direction. Our Embassy had, of course, abandoned its post but a new Consul-General, M. Grenard, had

arrived at Moscow, where our Military Mission was located, and where to the Bolshevik Government had transferred itself from Petrograd. Very shortly after M. Grenard's instatement in office, a telegram from M. Pichon was received, requesting that an enquiry be opened as to the opinion of the different political parties regarding an armed Japanese intervention, with a view to driving back the German invasion of Russia. The question of armed intervention of the Allies in Russia, hitherto looked upon from an entirely hypothetical standpoint, was thus raised in a very precise manner. Two opposite points of view quickly asserted themselves on this question. On the one hand intervention with the cooperation, or, at least, the assent of the Bolshevik Government: on the other hand, intervention against this Government and even intervention destined to overthrow it, and to re-establish the eastern front against Germany.

At first, for a brief period, our new Consul-General seemed to hesitate between these two points of view, or rather to attempt to reconcile them, whereas our Military Mission, „under the influence of Captain Sadoul“ was inclined to agree with the first. Attached as I was by my work to the Consulate, it was only rarely that I had relations with the Military Mission, and at that time I did not know Captain Sadoul, whom I had met casually only once or twice, and with whom I had never really had an occasion of conversing. Captain Sadoul was subjected to much violent criticism in our propaganda circles for his attitude. He was „Trotsky's man“, the man whom Trotzky had „the audacity to introduce to our Ambassador“,

in order to waylay him". In reality, as I later on found out, the matter concerned a visit that had been made to the French Embassy, to which Captain Sadoul had come at the requests of his chiefs in order „not to oblige Trotzky“, but to arrange a matter of the highest interest to France, namely the expulsion of the French Military Mission from Russia owing to the violent campaign of calumny and lies directed against Bolshevik leaders which had been promoted in the Russian press by certain members of the Mission.

I was also one of those who, without knowing anything definite, deprecated the „influence of Captain Sadoul“ on the Military Mission. Here again it was the same as with my opinions of the Bolsheviks. Instead of obtaining the necessary information for myself, I believed what I heard stated about me by „highly respectable and reliable“, men and shared their „legitimate indignation“. In all things in life, but especially in politics, one must, if he wishes to be really loyal, draw his conclusion from facts that he has personally verified, without relying upon anybody, for otherwise one runs the risk of being led eventually to share the passions and the hates of other people. It is so very easy to come and say afterwards: I have been led into an error, advantage was taken of my simplicity. But this rectification after the event does not prevent one's thoughts, actions or words having temporarily exercised a bad influence from the point of view of justice and the truth, the only point of view which a politician or a journalist, who every moment belongs to public life, should have.

Very soon the idea of intervention against the Germans, without the help of the Bolsheviki, got the upper hand both at the Consulate and in the propaganda, and after the return of M. Noulens to Russia, this idea quickly converted itself at Vologda into the idea of intervention against the Germans but with the purpose of first overthrowing the Bolsheviki. I remembre how irritated M. Noulens was against Bolshevism: one could very easily perceive in this irritation a personal sentiment of wounded pride. It was evident that our ambassador, who had been guided by trivialities and by paltry, futile incidents connected with his journey to Russia, much more than by political considerations, had returned, not with the intention of studying events, of informnig himself of the situation, but with a definite line of conduct mapped out in advance. „Since the Signing of the Brest Treaty, the bolsheviki have become the open allies of the Germans: we must treat them as enemies“ Further the irritation of our ambassador did not limit itself to Bolshevism but applied to the whole of Russia. On the one hand, he instructed our Consul-General to inform him of the state of mind of the political groups which had „remaind our friends“, whilst on the other hand, he declared that „the opinions of the Russians was of absolutely no importance whatever“ and that the only thing that counted at present were our own intentions. „Tell them that intervention has already been decided upon and will take place whether they like it or not“, „It has been recognised as necessary to re-establish the eastern front, and it will be re-established“. I accompanied M. Grenard upon his first visit

to Vologda and was able to convince myself that our ambassador had already made up his mind on all questions, and that he listened to information that was brought to him only in as far as it coincided with his preconceived opinions. Certainly it was no intention of mine to make an appeal on behalf of the bolsheviks, for at that time I was convinced that it was necessary to intervene *against them*. But M. Noulens did not even allow me to develop the impressions that I had brought back from my recent visit to Kronstadt. When I was about to emphasize the revival of anti-German feelings which I had noted amongst the sailors and above all amongst the workers, he interrupted me with the words: „The Russians will never do anything“.

Later on, this tendency to deprecate the Russians became more accentuated. One could feel it in the tone of the formulas in use, which became more and more imperious: „Tell our friends that we shall never permit any further socialist experiments in Russia“ (it was a question of the formation of a government with the aid of the right social-revolutionaries). This conception, terrifying from a moral point of view, which came as the logical conclusion of the first: „We pay, therefore we order“. How many times have I heard it made almost with this same brutality, notably on the occasion of the visit of a Polish delegation during the stay of our ambassador at Moscow. That is what they called „to know how to talk to the Russians“.

These latter were in fact regarded as a horde of uncultured and barbarous people with whom one might do as one wished. It was not for one second admitted that they were a



people who if it was uneducated was at all events highly talented, fully conscious of its force, who, even in its moments of apparent inertia, nevertheless, thought and lived, and whilst retired within itself in this tragical situation, always remained capable of the most admirable efforts.

I have already had occasion to point out that, from the very first day, M. Noulens placed the matter of intervention, as was evident from all his communications, against the bolsheviks, as decided, whereas in reality, right up to the last moment, it was not at all decided. I was able to convince myself later on that it was only on the urgent representations of our ambassador, who had made a personal matter of it, and in consequence of pressing and repeated approaches to President Wilson, that the scheme was finally sketched out, much too timidly from the point of view of a struggle against the Germans, and in proportions which were not at all in agreement with the kind of intervention that had been announced in the most formal manner by M. Noulens.

It is just because intervention, that M. Noulens had not ceased to represent as having been finally decided by the Governments of the Entente was met by the gravest objections, that our ambassador was induced, in order to overcome the resistance (which irritated his pride) and, in order to give more force to his arguments, to prove by facts that he had fully prepared the ground, and that only a very slight effort was required to achieve the downfall of Bolshevick tyranny and to constitute a national Russian government. He went to the extent

of provoking revolts as bloody and sterile like Savinkoff's White Guard revolt at Yaroslavl, the only result of which was the killing of some thousands of Russians,—evidently a matter of no importance, and the destruction of artistic treasures. The insurrection of Yaroslavl was, moreover, brought about on the express demand of the immediate despatch of Allied troops.

As intervention, from the very beginning, had been put by our ambassador as something absolutely decided upon, nevertheless the „conversations“ with the various political groups which had remained „our friends“ consisted merely in making solemn and gratuitous declarations to the latter on the imminence of our armed action against the Germans and the Bolsheviks and,—as our friends still saw nothing coming,—in repeated deferments of the date when the action was to commence.

„The political groups who had remained our friends“, whilst making the most ardent protestations of friendship and attachment to us, were interested in our intervention exclusively to the extent in which it was capable of overthrowing the bolsheviks, and they thought absolutely nothing about continuing the struggle against the Germans. On the other hand, seeing that we were deceiving them, at least in regard to the imminence of intervention, and finally ending in doubting it all together (and justly so), they entered into parallel negotiations with the Count Mirbach, offering their services to the latter if only he „who, for that matter, had only to make a motion“, would relieve them of the bolsheviks. This was the comedy, devoid on both sides of dignity and frankness, in which

passed (as I was later on able to verify), the few months of „diplomatic action“ of the representatives of the Entente, prior to the landing of allied troops at Archangel.

I was, right from the first hour, one of the most convinced partizans of intervention against the Germans and the bolsheviks.

Against the Germans, because the destruction of German Imperialism (the only obstacle to the re-establishment of peace and the advent of a regime of liberty and fraternity of the nations, based on the right to govern themselves),—was and remained, more than ever, my only preoccupation, my only immediate ideal, or more exactly that which embodied all my dreams and hopes for the future.

Against the bolsheviks, because the bolsheviks,—I still remained persuaded of it,—were German agents and usurpers of power, who had „killed the Russian revolution“ and precipitated Russia into an abyss. Still understanding nothing,—not having studied the development, doctrine and aims of Bolshevism at its source, I saw nothing but the abuses, the excesses on the streets which were being committed around it, in spite of it, often directly against it, and I perceived only its work of destruction which appeared to me necessarily anarchic, since I did not notice that it aimed at the mechanism of capitalist state, and that parallel with this, there was being sketched out the work of constructing a new State, the Proletariat State, the Commune, or in other words, this transitory form of State which is no longer State in the real meaning of the word, and which Lenin has defined so clearly in his

work: „State and Revolution“. In the domain of the army particularly, I in my blindness saw nothing but the destruction of the old army, the instrument of oppression in the hands of capitalist State, without perceiving or comprehending the formation of a new army, that is to say of the proletarian army, the Red army, called upon to defend the conquests of the Workers' and Peasants' Revolution of October.

My eyes could not distinguish anything else than the break up of discipline (on which the old army rested) the humiliation and dispersal of the officers (by which the Capitalist state held the army in its hands), my eyes remained blind to the formation of a new command, destined for the new army which was as yet in an embryonic state, to the establishment of a new discipline founded on the enlightened consciousness of the proletarian masses. The measures of legitimate defence, the just repressions of the Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia (which, whatever political point of view one might accept was the de facto Government of Russia, and which, as such, could not but respond to the blows with which it was threatened and anticipate them as far as possible) were all confounded in my mind with the excesses, the abuses, the robberies committed outside of this Government and in formal contradiction to its laws, by common criminals, often even by counter—revolutionaries acting under the standard of anarchy, and as later on I had the proof, in certain instances, by agents interested in augmenting the disorder in the country, and in bringing about, even at the cost of the worst calamities for the Russian people already so hardly tried,—the downfall

of the power of the worker and peasant which had arisen out of the revolution of October. And then, always haunted, dominated by this legend, this ridiculous fable that the bolsheviks were in the pay of the Germans, I was obviously unable to look for anything else in their acts but tendacious explanations, seated on the top of preconceived ideas, instead of studying events objectively. The „destruction of the army“, the dispersal of the officers' corps was effected, unquestionably, „at the orders of Berlin“ and the „execution of Admiral Schastny was the „punishment inflicted“ by Trotzky upon the diplomatic representations made by Count Mirbach, upon a courageous Russian patriot who, apparently, had, contrary to the instructions of the Government of the Commissars of the People, conducted the fleet from the Baltic—where the Germans were preparing „to take charge of it“, to Kronstadt, amidst all the ice and amidst considerable technical difficulties.

In this-manner, therefore, to be brief, bolshevism continued in my mind to signify, from the point of view of the war, the German bribery of Russia, and from the social and European point of view the hearth of anarchy, disorder, mutiny, disorganization, which had to be crushed. I remained incapable, I repeat, of raising my observations even to the slightest suspicion of the formidable work of world social revolution which had just been undertaken so boldly by the Workers and Peasants Government of Russia and which was to develop so logically and so vigourously.

I was still convinced of the necessity of armed intervention against the Germans and the

Bolsheviks and I did not cease to insist upon the urgency of this intervention that I believed had been really decided upon and which I expected from day to day. But in spite of the official declarations of France to which I have just made allusion, this did not appear to take shape.

I insisted upon its urgency: firstly because the menace of German Imperialism was still suspended over Russia at that time disarmed and without defence, like the sword of Democles, because at any moment, the resumption of the German invasion upon one point or the other of Russian territory was to be feared; further, because the German Imperialism made it one of its duties to bleed white the regions occupied by it, notably the Ukraine, from where it could draw provisions and resources which were able to fortify it immediately and to prolong its existence: finally, because the Russian people commenced to suffer cruelly as a consequence of the German invasion and civil war, and that the Allied intervention,—it was my opinion and also my profound belief,—must, in bringing the country military aid against the invader, at the same time bring it economic aid on the largest scale. From the very first, I had insisted upon relief being afforded to the Russian people and I did not doubt for one moment that Allied intervention would be not only military but alimentary aid, thanks especially to the cooperation of America. The declarations of official representatives of France on this point were absolutely formal. I even remember very well that one day, our Consul-General, M. Grenard, stated to a peasant dele-

gate from the provinces, in my presence, that the delays in the intervention of the allies were due to the fact that the latter did not wish to commence their military action before they were able at the same time to commence the revictualising of Russia and that the Americans were at that time occupied in making up large stocks of provisions as well as manufactured articles destined for Russia.

From a point of view of the interior of Russia, deceived by the completely wrong impression that „the revolution had been killed“ by Bolshevism, and that the young Russian republic was completely bankrupt, I came back to the idea of a monarchical government, as being the only one capable of regrouping the different nationalities of the Russian State and to give it sufficient force, in order if not to effectively resume the struggle against German Imperialism, then at least to draw a line between itself and the latter. And here again I insisted upon the urgent necessity of allied intervention, though not so much out of sympathy, of course, with the Russian bourgeoisie, particularly the industrial and commercial elements with which I was connected (I was as yet unaware of the conversations that were going on with the Count Mirbach, of the egoism, indifference and even hostility towards the renewal of the struggle against German imperialism), as much as from fear of seeing the German diplomats „forestall us in the re-establishment of a stable government“ in Russia and thus, this time without hope of retrieval, place their hand on this great and unfortunate country.

I have just pointed out that I had come back at that time to the idea of a monarchical

government, because I believed the revolution and the Russian republic to be killed by Bolshevism, instead of understanding, on the contrary, that under the standard of bolshevism, the revolution and the republic were progressing and asserting themselves, and that the bolshevik government alone was capable of regrouping, on the basis of the Soviets and Federation, all the nationalities which had formerly constituted the Russian State. But my monarchic conception was not at all that of Noulens. What our ambassador had in view,—when he „secretly“ let it be known to „friends of the right“ that M. Clemenceau himself thought that a monarchic government best suited the requirements of Russia,—was the re-establishment of what had previously existed, in a slightly different form (a constitutional monarchy), but with, perhaps, even more „firmness“, more force in the exercise of its sovereign power. Briefly, a monarchy in the western, European meaning of the word. What I conceived, on the contrary, was the establishment of a popular monarchy. On many occasions already, under the former regime, I had often expressed the idea that the Russian monarchy should never develop in the direction of an impotent and obsolete parliamentarism, which would not be able to rejuvenate and restore it, but that it should rather go back to its origins, the profound national traditions of Russia, from which it had deviated in order to become autocratic, which is a mixture of oriental despotism and west European absolutism.

The national form of Russian monarchy had the form of a popular government with the



continuous and direct collaboration in public life, not of a Parliament but of the people directly, a form in which the sovereign was not above the people, but, on the contrary, came from the people. This form which had been the basis of Russian history at the time of the domination of its first princes, had been forgotten. Later on it was completely perverted, in order, at the period of the liberation of Russia from the Tartar yoke, to borrow from the East the despotism of the Khans and, ultimately, in modern times, to copy the absolutism of the Divine Right of Kings from the West. It was of this adaptation of the ancient patriarchal and popular form of governments of the princes, to modern life, that I was thinking of when speaking of the re-establishment of a monarchic government. I was even so profoundly absorbed in this democratic and popular monarchic conception, that I quite overlooked its opposition to the soviet idea which, little by little, began to penetrate into my mind, but which, owing to a complete blunder on my part, I regarded as the anti-thesis of Bolshevism. Although at that time I believed the revolution to be dead for ever,—I was brought back, by some kind of irresistible instinct, which said to me that it was the Soviets alone which could be the basis of a new Russian life,—instead of understanding that this formula of the soviets was inseparable from bolshevism, or more exactly, that bolshevism whose existence I persisted in not seeing was nothing else than the practical realisation of the formula of the Soviets.

Such is the spirit in which I lived almost up to July. I have been careful to note down all

the various phases, without omitting any of them: many of them will seem to-day of a simplicity which is devoid of all interest but, as I have stated, they are all so closely linked together in my mind that I am unable to leave any out. Further, their continuity will explain how and why, in spite of essentially bourgeois prejudices, of the circle in which I have lived, I had, nevertheless, one day necessarily to end by understanding bolshevism,—not through socialist education, but spontaneously and instinctively, firstly from the national Russian point of view and, secondly, from the point of view of the revolutionary proletariat, the Marxian and international point of view.

A series of facts were destined gradually to shake my first convictions as to the need of an allied anti-bolshevik intervention, and my credulity in the absurd legend of the Bolsheviks being German agents. It was, first of all, the insurrection of Yaroslavl which, I have already mentioned, impressed me very vividly and very painfully.

As I have stated already, I knew that it had been set on foot by our ambassador personally, and this painful circumstance was added to the disillusionment I had already experienced in regard to the continual deferment of our intervention (at a time when the Russian people so violently exhausted by German Imperialism had so urgent a need of our most generous and efficacious aid). For the first time, I began to doubt seriously the sincerity of the solemn promises in which up to then I had placed my trust. This intervention, constantly delayed and which, from the

point of view of a struggle against German Imperialism, began to lose its whole *raison d'être*, began to shape itself in a manner that had not been foreseen by me. It seemed, in fact, that it must reduce itself more and more and more, especially from the side of the Far East,—to the occupation of certain parts of Russian territory which, from the point of view of Russian internal policy, as well as from the point of view of the war against German Imperialism, could not be justified at all. Practically, it seemed that intervention would have to restrict itself almost exclusively to Japanese military action in Siberia and in spite of endeavours to circulate the legend of a direct German menace to Siberia, it was clear that such intervention appeared much more dangerous, not only for the bolsheviks, but also for Russia herself than for Germany.

Later on, there came the Czecho-Slovak affair. The duplicity with which it was prepared, under the care of our diplomacy, impressed me very painfully. First of all I saw in it, as in the Yaroslavl intervention a manoeuvre to provoke intervention even at the risk of dragging us into an adventure, and of retaining contingents of French troops on Russian territory, for which the French command was clamouring on the French front.—This clamour our diplomacy coolly described as a „misunderstanding“. Secondly, this affair appeared in a very bad light from the Russian point view. If it was really the commencement of our intervention, why did they not say so? If really the Bolsheviki were, as I had believed, and on the basis of calumnious assertions continued to believe, German

agents and systematic disorganisers of Russia, was it not absolutely necessary, in the interest of our own cause in Russia and in the interests of Europe itself that we should officially break with them? Why were we still fighting them like hypocrites, by unworthy means and always under foreign colours (the White Guards of Yaroslavl, the mutiny of the Czecho-Slovaks) while continuing to give them, in the very eyes of „our Russian friends“ all the moral advantage of our relations and consultations? If it was finally war against Bolshevism, which for my part I had waited for and desired, why was it not preceded by a declaration of war? Finally, from the point of view of a struggle against German Imperialism, which still remained my predominant preoccupation, I did not at all perceive what the Czecho-Slovak affair might be used for. I considered it rather dangerous as being likely to call forth a reply from the Germans, by a further advance of enemy occupationary troops in another region of Russia.

Further, the parallel duplicity of the Russian bourgeois parties was also a very disagreeable disillusionment for me. Certainly, I had never cherished any illusion in regard to the sincerity of their attachment to the French cause in the war, nor of their intention to re-commence, on however slight a scale, the struggle against German Imperialism. I knew very well from the first day that what they expected from our intervention was the overthrow of Bolshevism, the protection of their class interests, with the mental reservation that no sooner had they been reinstated in power, thanks to our assistance, they would begin to bring pressure to

bear on the Governments of the Entente for an immediate conclusion of peace. But for all that I did not want to give credit to the reports that they were carrying on negotiations with the German Ambassador at the same time as they were negotiating with us. The definite confirmation of this treachery came as a great surprise to me and the final proof of the visit made to Count Mirbach by some of the most prominent representatives of the Commercial and Industrial party, with Tretiakoff at their head, was a severe blow to my feelings. To make things worse, this visit had not even the excuse of being provoked by a direct or indirect action on the part of the diplomatic representatives of Wilhelm. It was spontaneous, it bore the character of a supplication to Count Mirbach to have Moscow occupied by German troops, in return for which the latter might count with the cooperation of the commercial and industrial groups for the constitution of a government which would submit itself to Berlin. It was after their bargain had been refused by the German Ambassador, as a proposition which did not interest his country,—seeing that the men of „order and industry“ („who had his complete sympathy“) did not dispose of a sufficiently large number of Russian bayonets in Russia,—that these „prominent members“ of the „elite“ of industrial and commercial circles in Russia came back to us to continue their negotiations, just as though nothing had happened. Here we have the cynicism of Miliukoff's speech at Kieff, which was not at all the weakness of a moment, the excusable and quite comprehensible distraction which mo-

mentarily evercame him, as his friends tried to make out at the time, but rather a political act which had long been reflected on and carefully thought out.

Further, a document which accidentally came into my possession towards the end of July, for the first time awakened in my mind a real doubt, in regard to the systematic Germanophilism of the Bolshevik policy, which I had believed in up to then, as I have indicated already, with closed eyes. I wish to speak of a draft agreement, proposed through the intermediary of the diplomatic representative of Great Britain at Moscow, to the Allies by the Bolsheviks of an interallied military intervention in Russia against Germany, with the cooperation and support of the Government of the Peoples Commissaries. According to the terms of this agreement, the Bolsheviks agreed to the landing of allied military forces on the northern coast of Russia as well as in the Far East. They requested the cooperation of allied instructors for the formation of a Red Army which they declared themselves ready to put in line as soon as they would be able to do so, against German Imperialism. They only asked for recognition, and the cessation of all support to Russian counter-revolutionary elements.

On the margin of this document which suddenly opened up for me, new and undreamt of horizons, there was this annotation in blue pencil by Mr. Noulens: „I perceive the advantages for the bolsheviks, but I look in vain for any that the Allies might obtain!“ And so there did really exist an attempt on the part of the bolsheviks, these „German agents“, to come

to an agreement with the allies against German Imperialism! It was, therefore, untrue that the bolsheviks had been resolutely hostile to any allied anti-German action in Russia! And this project, which our ambassador had not even consented to discuss or to examine but which must, undoubtedly, have offered some interest, a project which he had put aside a priori, deliberately! A short while after this first direct blow to my convictions, our intervention, which had so often been deferred, at last came to a head. It was announced in a laconic telegram from M. Noulens, who, prior to leaving Vologda (from whence he stated that he would return in two or three weeks with French troops) gave warning of the imminence of the occupation of Archangel and, in pointing out that very probably, „faithful to their habitual tactics“, the Bolsheviks would not fail to enter into negotiations with us, he concluded with the words: „You at any rate will not take part in any negotiations whatsoever“. On the other hand, a telegram from M. Pichon announced the commencement of a Japanese intervention which would probably „rapidly assume important proportions“ in the Far East. This time the allied intervention announced and promised to „our friends“ for several months past had really come!

But it took place much too late. It had allowed the moment to pass when the Germans, intoxicated by their draconian peace of Brest, were continuing their advance further and further into the interior of Russia. It took place at a moment when the Germans began to retreat from one part of the occupied territories or, at least seemed on the point of doing so,

and exposed themselves, to an ever greater extent, to the revolts of the peasants. Finally, it took place at a moment when, after the assassination of Mirbach and Eichhorn, the German Embassy precipately left, almost in a panic, for the other side of the frontier. It was effected frankly, formally, exclusively against the Bolsheviki, at a moment when the latter were directly supporting, at the risk of most serious complications, the magnificent revolt of the peasants in the Ukraine, which German Imperialism, faithful to its tactics, suppressed with odious savagery, burning and exterminating whole villages, murdering women, children and old men, without distinction (I had just obtained possession of a proof of this which tardily, unfortunately, put a complete end to the legend so long entertained by me in regard to Bolsheviki being German-agents). This splendid uprising of the peasants,—the first grave check encountered by the Germans in Russia since the Brest Peace and which, at that period, was of considerable import,—was, for reasons which to day I hesitate to explain to myself,—neglected, passed over by the allied press almost in silence. At any rate, they were far from rendering the homage due and, not for one moment, was the slightest protest raised against the savage repressions of the German subordinates, I mean Skoropadsky and his agents. Our representatives at Moscow who, at all costs, wished to unite the Bolshevik cause to that of the Germans, pretended to see in all this nothing but the action of the „revolutionary left socialists“ whereas it was certain that Government of the People's Commissaries had just despatched from Moscow to



the Ukraine large quantities (in view of their limited resources at that time) of rifles and bullets, as well as money, and that several of the most prominent members of the Bolshevik party, with Piatakoff at their head, had been sent to maintain and develop by all possible means and particularly by an energetic propaganda, the peasant and worker movement of the Ukraine (one must not overlook the strike of the railway workers and the strikes at large factories) against the tyranny of Berlin and Skoropadsky.

The Allied intervention, as it was easy to judge after the Czecho-Slovak affair, was, therefore, going to have political result of merely embarrassing and weakening the Bolshevik action in the Ukraine, by obliging them to defend themselves on other parts of Russia as they had already been obliged to defend themselves on the Volga. The first contingents of the Red Army, which had just been formed, instead of being free to support the Ukraine peasants, either directly or indirectly, by menacing the occupational hordes of German Imperialism (weakened and disorganized by the active propaganda of the bolsheviks), were to be hurled one after the other against Allied troops. And, owing to this, German Imperialism was to be given a moment of respite from the Russian side, was to continue, at least for a few weeks, and perhaps for some months, its cynical exploitation of the occupied regions and in this manner to find fresh resources for the continuation of the bloody world butchery!

Unfortunately, events which were to follow with irresistible logic, hastened to confirm my sad forebodings.

Never, in fact, could I have expected (despite the first rays of truth that had at last, by the very force of circumstances, penetrated in my mind) the prodigious burst of energy and vitality in face of the menace of death, which on the eve of our landing at Archangel, the bolshevik power seemed to on all sides put forward. Suddenly I saw the latter rise to the height of a Government in the proudest revolutionary acceptance of the word: and, at this moment, I profoundly felt, contrary to what I had so long believed on the basis of vile calumny, that, the Bolshevik government was really and essentially a Russian government, which relied on the popular masses of the people of the country and not upon a handful of adventurers, and foreign agents, imposed by artifice and violence, upon the passiveness of the people.

Without doubt in was as yet, as I wish to emphasize, only a first ray of truth: I still did not clearly understand bolshevism: its work of organization, its constitution of a new proletarian state continually escaped me. As yet I did not distinguish that the force of Bolshevism was due to the realisation of the Soviet idea. I continued to think of the latter as something apart from it. Now, however, one thing was clear to me and caused no longer the shadow of a doubt. It was that the Bolshevik Government at that moment was the true Government of Russia, and that far from being in the pay of German Imperialism, it fought against the latter with the same desperate energy with which it prepared itself to parry the blow by which we unjustly wished to crush it.

The Brest Treaty had been signed only with a

pistol at the head of the Soviet Government, after everything had been done to avoid it. It was evident that it could not be regarded as an agreement with German Imperialism but, on the contrary (as they themselves had solemnly proclaimed), the Bolsheviki saw in it only an act of unprecedented violence, with which they remained more than ever determined not to make their reckoning until circumstances would permit. Here we were doing our best to delay this hour. Owing to our blunder, not „Bolsheviki“ (translated into „restless elements“, „plunderers“, „scum of society“) but Russians, Russians profoundly convinced and inspired with the noble ideal of human fraternity, in the Christian sense of the word,—Russians fully conscious of their strength and ready to give their lives for their „revolutionary fatherland“—ready to expose their breasts to our bullets and, in spite of themselves, fire upon „their own“. And all that for the supreme advantage of German Imperialism! On the other hand, generous France, owing to the blunder and the narrow prejudice of her diplomats was unconsciously to aid the development of Civil War in Russia, to let lose the white terror, a hundred, thousand times more terrible than the red which, without this fatal recrudescence of Civil War, had seemed well on the way to be appeased. I had but one thought at this moment, namely that of assisting by all means in my power to stop this disastrous intervention, for the furtherance of which I, in my blindness, had also worked. I could not, in fact, perceive what shame there might be in saying: „I have erred: I have taken the wrong direction“.—Nevertheless, when I informed

our Consul-General of my impression and my observations he pretended to ascribe my „state of mind“ to the result of a „nervous fatigue“, advising me to take rest, employing at the same time the following expression which I shall never forget: „This intervention for which we have been working, which, to a certain extent, is our work, has been launched: it is necessary that it should give good results: in politics there is but one method of not committing an error, that is to persist to the end in the line of conduct one has adopted after carefully weighing the pros and the cons“. And, almost as though to aid one to see things in this light and, doubtless, to „brace up“ nervous people, an abundance of news arrived during the next few days which was all later on belied by facts.—The rapid advance of the Japanese army of 200,000 men towards Irkutsk which would be occupied in not later than a fortnight,—the irresistible advance of troops landed at Archangel and (ten days later), the announcement of the imminent occupation of Vologda. On the other hand, the temporary check in the advance of the Czecho-Slovaks on Nijny and Moscow was due, as they claimed, exclusively to the reinforcement of German regular troops which had been sent to support the Bolsheviks,—a check, moreover, of no importance at all, for detachments of Czecho-Slovak cavalry had already penetrated into the Government of Vladimir and an insurrection was expected at any moment.

Is it possible to do otherwise than to compare this campaign of systematic lying, intended only to inspire „our friends“ with courage and, probably, to incite them to some new Yaroslavl

revolt, with the dignity maintained by the Bolshevik press? Not for one moment did the Government attempt to conceal the extreme gravity of the situation. Not for one moment did it think, as is the custom with bourgeois governments in such circumstances, of inspiring its people with renewed courage even at the cost of a slight distortion of the truth, by the announcement of some imaginary victory. Never were its informations more exact. The odious calumny that its successes on certain points of the Czecho-Slovak front were due to the presence of German troops was met by it from the first moment with a categorical denial, in which it pointed out that, in the ranks of the Red Army, there were international units composed of German, Austrian, and Hungarian socialists, who volunteered for the defence of the Russian revolution and, in defending the latter, for the defence of the World revolution. Later on, events were to prove that, as it happened, these German and Austro-Hungarian internationalists were not fighting merely „at the orders of“ and for the sake of Austro-German Imperialism! Further, the Bolshevik Government, which naturally felt itself invincible on this point, as again it was relying solely on the truth, requested that a commission of journalists and allied officers, appointed by the diplomatic representatives, and the military missions still at Moscow, should be allowed to go over the whole Czecho-Slovak front, and interrogate the combattants in the Internationalists units on the spot,—a proposition which, naturally, received no consideration.

However, events were hastening on, and by the end of August, a meeting at the Consulate-

General of America which existed at that time at Moscow under the Swedish flag, was to enlighten me in regard to a whole series of facts and actions of which I had as yet no idea whatsoever!

The intervention which I had supported (even in my blindness when it appeared to me as realized against the Bolsheviks) had constantly remained in my mind directed first and foremost against German Imperialism and destined to give economic aid to the Russian people, particularly with provisions. I have already had occasion to remind the reader that this economic aid had been promised on various occasions most categorically by our official representatives, and in considering it as a certainty, as the basis even on which our Military action was to be founded I was under no circumstances the victim of a „hallucination“, of a „dream“ but, on the contrary, I was simply holding strictly to the formal assurances that had been given to me. But never had the suspicion even entered my head that our representatives in Russia might have in view an intervention of a different kind, an intervention perhaps destined to overthrow the Bolsheviks and without hesitating, in order to achieve their end, to take measures such as must surely bring about frightful sufferings of the Russian people and which, to culminate matters, from the point of view of the war, could not, even indirectly, affect German Imperialism. Had I known of an intervention of this kind,—at least by certain representatives of the Entente Governments in Russia,—not only would I never have given my support to it, but even when in favour, erroneously in favour of

an action against the Bolsheviks, I would have fought against it with every inch of my energy firstly from the humanitarian point of view, which one had never the right to forget, even in war time, and further, as I repeat, from the French point of view. That is a point upon which I wish to lay emphasis in the clearest possible manner. What I accidentally learned at the meeting at the American Consulate-General shocked and revolted me to the last degree, by throwing a completely new light on the real plans of our representatives as well as the „diplomatico - military“ procedures by which they proposed to support intervention and „to bring it rapidly to a successful end“. No longer against German Imperialism (for they no longer discussed that question), not even,— I have a full right to say so,—against the Bolsheviks, as they themselves boasted but simply and in fact, whether they fully understood what they were doing or not,—against the unfortunate Russian people themselves, whom it had always been only a question of „aiding fraternally as far as possible!“ Without doubt, this meeting was not, as I have already pointed out, an „official conference“: it bore the character of a private business conversation: but that does not alter and never can alter in the least that, in the presence of the official representatives of the United States and of France, Consul-General Poole and Grenard, without being reproved for one single instant by the latter, an English officer (whom the Extraordinary Commission for combatting counter-revolution later on identified, without any doubt whatever, as Lieutenant Riley) was able to explain to a French agent the details of a

project, according to which he proposed to blow up the railway bridge which crosses the river Volkhoff, a little way before the station Zvanka. What is particularly singular is that lieutenant Riley did not in any way conceal from himself the extreme gravity of the consequences that the realisation of his project might have, for he observed quite coldly that the wrecking of this bridge cuts off Petrograd from all communication, not only from the North but also from the East (Vologda—Viatka line) from which Petrograd exclusively received all the trains of wheat, cereals, and, in general, almost all its provision already so precarious, so insufficient for its population. And Riley himself concluded that the wrecking of the bridge could have as its direct consequence the complete starvation of Petrograd, that is to say not of the fortunate minority of rich bourgeois who had and would always have the means of emigrating south, but principally, exclusively, of the working population and clerks, including old men, women and children.—Nevertheless, the frightful perspective did not prevent him from continuing the study of this infernal plan, any more than it for one second troubled the peace of mind of the Consul-General of the United States and France, who, probably, had not heard of this affair for the first time. The French agent to whom Lieutenant Riley addressed himself, more particularly than to the other persons present, was M. de Vertamond. He had been introduced to me recently at the French Consulate by M. Grenard, as an officer of the French navy, occupied with „work of destruction“ in the Ukraine (where at that time, the most



effective „destructions“ undoubtedly were being accomplished by the revolutionary workers and peasants, supported, as I have explained, by the Russian Bolshevik Government). These words, „in Ukraine“ made clear moreover,—in the clearest possible manner the exclusive anti-german aim of M. de Vertamond's mission. The latter, in point of cynicism, was in not in the least behind Lieutenant Riley. He declared that he attempted, but without success, to blow up the bridge of Tcherepovetz (which would have had equally tragic consequences for Petrograd, Tcherepovetz being on the line Zvanka-Vologda-Viatka). Afterwards he expatiated on the measures which he had taken in order to effect the destruction of rolling stock and obstruct the principal railway lines. He explained specially that he had succeeded in obtaining valuable cooperation amongst the railway workers, but that this cooperation had an objection... that of preventing him from making use of certain improved appliances which were able to run the first train passing off its rails. The railway workers procured by him had, in fact, put the formal condition to their cooperation, that no trains carrying war material should be run off the rails. After this stupefying conversation which, I repeat had not provoked either on the part of M. Poole or M. Grenard the slightest objection, Lieutenant Riley concluded, in addressing himself to M. de Vertamond, that it was necessary for them „to divide the work“ and to act in close contact with each other, but with prudence and as much as possible „through the intermediary of women“, as the latter „roused suspicion much less easily“. Further, he added

that, he personally had no fear whatever, as he had found service, under an assumed name, in a „Soviet institution“!

Our Consul-General who until then had kept silent, commenced to speak, and addressing himself more particularly to M. de Vertamond, said: „At present there is one question to which I should like to call attention to: great interest in compromising bolshevism to the eyes of western socialism. There must certainly exist some kind of compromise between the Bolsheviks and the Germans. The latter have probably promised the Bolsheviks to refrain from all offensive action on the Russian side and thus give them the possibility of throwing all the forces of the Red Army, of which they might dispose, against the Czecho-Slovaks. A telegram emanating from the Commissariat of war, or some other document of this kind would be most valuable, for the political motives which I have just mentioned, and it seems to me that it should not be at all impossible for us to place our hands on a document of this kind, which we could advantageously make use of“.

Espionnage of the most contemptuous kind, plots and outrages cunningly devised in the dark, inducements held out to agents anxious to make a career in order „to find“ imaginary documents, to such methods had the persons who had the honour of representing France before the Russian people arrived!

These were the machinations to which they resorted, acting in security, under the protection of neutral flags, whilst accusing the Bolshevik Government, in the face of the whole world, of giving evidence of „signal bad faith“ towards

them, because they put certain reciprocal conditions to their departure from Russia.

As a matter of fact, without frank or loyal declaration, we were in a state of war with the Bolshevik Government and, what is more, our representatives were engaged in a series of subversive operations that no diplomatic immunity whatever could protect, and to which no Government, of whatever kind, could possibly remain indifferent. The Bolshevik Government had an undoubted right to enforce strict measures against all our nationals as a whole, as well as of ordering their internment into concentration camps. It did not do so, but limited itself to precautionary measures destined to assure the security of its representatives and those of its citizens of Bolshevik opinion in the countries of the Entente. It accoored, as everybody knows, all our agents, even those compromised in attempts at insurrection against the Soviet Authority, facilities of freely making their departure.

I have already drawn attention to my profound astonishment and indignation on hearing this revolting, cynical conversation, portions of which I have reported above. I could not believe that such actions were in harmony with the designs of the Governments of the Entente, particularly of the French Government, whose precise declarations, repeated on many occasions during this horrible war about the rights of the people so often trodden under the feet of an unprincipled enemy, I remembered only too well.

On the other hand, the activity of our agents in Russia appeared all the more criminal in view of the fact that all the material which I had collected, all that I had been able to learn

during the enquiry which I conducted (for I wanted to clear up once for all the calumnious reports spread about and which had for so long already obscured and perverted my judgment) could not possibly be more consistent and conclusive. Not only had the Bolsheviki not solicited the aid of German Imperialism, as „our commercial and industrial friends“ had done: not only had they not accepted the disguised aid of Berlin, as our people tried to make belief, but they had the courage, the energy to take supreme measures, despite the formidable danger which they were threatened by, in order to maintain their independence at all costs, and to defend their territory from any encroachment from whatever side it might come. In the same manner they categorically refused the demand made by Germany, after the assassination of Count Mirbach, to be allowed to send a German battallon to Moscow for the protection of the Embassy. They took all the necessary measures to oppose by force even the passage of German troops through the old Russian capital in the event of the Supreme German Command deciding to despatch military forces to the north against the Allies. They did not shrink from the possibility of having to destroy railways, military defence works, depots and important factories of Petrograd and its suburbs for this purpose. Besides this, they had again mined a whole part of the Gulf of Finland which comes within the zone of defence of Kronstadt. This provoked reiterated and violent protests on the part of the German diplomatic representatives at Moscow.

In addition to all this, I had the opportunity

of making myself acquainted with the notes of Captain J. Sadoul. Written from day to day with a precision, a frankness and moral probity that could not but strike at once an impartial reader, they confirmed what my researches had enabled me to learn, after having finally broken through the narrow circles of vile calumny, in which I had allowed myself blindly to be confined. These notes constituted and will constitute, without doubt, for the historians of the future, the most luminous account of the development of Russian events since the Proletarian Revolution of October. The remarkable logic and rectitude of the line of conduct followed by the Workers and Peasants' Government of Russia is to be seen in startling relief: in spite of formidable obstacles, which it is constantly struggling with, it does not cease to keep a firm hand, a helm which steers invariably towards the World Proletarian Revolution,—the only means of salvation for Humanity, and the only possible solution for War! Equally clearly is to be observed the narrow mindedness, the stupid obstinacy, the interested class prejudice, and the revolting partiality of our diplomatic representatives who deliberately gave up the representation of France in order to act as the agents of financial groups, and the champions of egoistic class interests. I learned quite casually from private sources, of the moral sufferings endured by the representative of the Soviet Government at Berlin,—Joffe,—who was personally opposed to signing the Brest Peace and who, in spite of this, had nevertheless accepted the onerous task of representing Soviet Russia with German Imperialism, because he believed that he

had not the right to refuse after being nominated by the Party. It was reported to me, with what firmness and dignity Joffe stood up (often successfully, so much civic courage did he show) to the insolent pretensions of the bureaucrats and generals of Wilhelm, recollecting, despite the dreadful diminution of territory, momentarily imposed upon Russia, that he spoke in the name of a great nation, unjustly unrecognized and that he had to defend, not only party interests, but all the interests represented before German Imperialism by his party, that is to say the interests of the whole Russian people, without exception even of those unconscious elements who, instead of morally supporting him, their Ambassador, in his difficult task, endeavoured by their acts and words to discredit him and the Government of the Workers' Soldiers' and Peasants of Russia, which, during the worst of storms had firmly held aloft the Red standard, the emblem of justice, truth and peace, in fruitful productive labour.

In these circumstances I did not feel justified in associating myself, even by my silence, with the hidden, inhuman, anti-French and absolutely unjustified work of our agents in Russia and, after much hesitation and long reflection, I resolved to bring the whole unfortunate business to the direct knowledge of the President of the Republic, to point out to him all its criminal folly, and to draw his attention to the fact that the power of the Workers' Soldiers' and Peasants' of Russia had just given proofs, in the face of danger, of what it was really capable as a revolutionary government, and that it was impossible to treat it otherwise than as

a Government. For reasons that will be easily understood I did not intend to make this document public, but independent of my own personal wishes in the matter, it was seized during a search made at my house. This circumstance, it is hardly necessary to say no way modifies the value, sense or import of it. That which I had intended to make personally known only to M. Poincare, firmly assured that he would make good use of it for the welfare and honour of France, I have at present no reason for concealing from the public at large. It is without doubt, therefore, that I have nothing to withdraw. To the contradictions, the „interpretations“, that have been formulated, as I am told, in reply to my assertions, I can only repeat what I have already stated most formally and most categorically.

During the following months I had the opportunity of daily convincing myself to an ever greater extent of the vitality of the Soviet Government as well as of the prodigious energy of its work, which at first had entirely escaped me, and which now began to show itself more particularly in certain spheres such as Public Education and the organization of the new army,—the Red Army,—in a particularly brilliant manner.

I will not go into this matter here which, in itself, is worthy of an entire study, or rather, of a whole series of studies and which, consequently, would not well enter into the narrow framework of these notes. I will restrict myself to pointing out the immense services rendered to civilization by the citizen Lunatcharsky and his collaborators. When I consider to-day, after-

rapidly glancing over what has been done, during a period of revolutionary crisis, not only in order to save and protect artistic treasures bequeathed by the past, to utilize without exception and according to their capacities all the „talent“, in widely opening its doors to „new comers“, to the „young“, in giving confidence to the „unknown“ and the timid, but also to educate the popular masses to the level of art and to imbue it with the powerful, robust and healthy inspiration of the people, in order to rejuvenate and restore it in contact with the latter,—one remains absolutely astounded.

It is, in fact, marvellous that during one of the most violent revolutionary struggles by which Humanity has ever been convulsed, at a time when, surrounded on all sides and whilst struggling against internal revolts maintained by foreign gold, the Government of the Workers and Peasants of Russia succeeded in finding in itself sources of intellectual vitality and positive idealism, sufficient to give the impetus to one of the periods of highest artistic activity that Russia has ever known.

The distance that has been covered in the space of only a few months and in spite of conditions which could not have been more unfavorable or more painful, in the sphere of public education, is one that can be measured only by comparison with the most fruitful epochs of History.

Universities opened to all desirous of taking up science and no longer reserved only to the holders of diplomas (valueless parchments bestowed only too often by a bureaucratic routine upon mediocrities),—popular courses and confe-



rences in an, so to speak, unlimited number,—theatres, concerts, cinematographs placed at the disposal of the masses and requisitioned, in the broadest meaning of the word, for teaching aesthetics simultaneously with social truth and justice; Beethoven, Mozart, Glueck, Wagner and Scriabine are played to and understood by workers and peasants. A pianist of great talent was telling me quite recently how astonished he had been in noticing how music possessing such difficult shades as that of Scriabine was profoundly appreciated by the working public before whom he had now the occasion of interpreting it: asserted to me that he played at present with much more spirit, much more artistic conviction than formerly, for he „felt himself much more in contact with his new public than with the snobs who before the revolution came to listen to him because it was the fashion“. The most original artistic collections are brought together in the most varied branches of human genius, supplying the material for innumerable expositions,—competitions for decoration, music, poetry, theatre. Wide scope is offered for sculpture by the erection of monuments, some of which have been powerfully conceived, in honour of the greatest figures of History. The living thought of human and creative France finds abundant personification in Danton, Robespierre, Blanqui, Victor Hugo; etc..... Schools have been opened for popular painting, sculpture, singing and poetry, in many of the former palaces and most sumptuous private hotels. Colonies have been established for poor workers and peasants' children, who are thus taken away from a rude joyless existence life, wit-

hout warmth or beauty to which Fate had condemned them. Such, in a few words, is the summary of a work which is worthy, whatever personal political opinion one may profess, of sincere respect and admiration.

All this was done, I repeat, during a period when the proletarian Government of Russia was threatened on all sides; when, under the enemy's fire, and without other sources of assistance than the irresistible force of its own principles, of its convictions, created by the October revolution. Trotzky, on the day following the loss of Kazan and with Moscow directly menaced, was obliged to start the organization of the Red army, by means of which, in the space of a few months, he was to achieve results not less startling than those just mentioned above, namely the liberation of practically all the former territory of European Russia and the decisive consolidation of the Proletarian Government and the conquests of the October revolution.

For any observer, not only impartial but with even a little intelligence, it was beyond doubt, from that time onwards, that the Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia was the only force capable of guiding the destiny of this country, and that, outside this Government there, was nothing. The allied intervention, in view of the completely erroneous circumstances in which it had been launched, should have been stopped immediately, seeing that it did not and, obviously, could not achieve its only end, that of aiding the Russian people against German Imperialism, and further, that, any idea of action against the Proletarian Government

of Russia was, clearly, from the political point of view of both the French and the Allies, a complete blunder, and, from a more elevated point of view, an unjustifiable crime, firstly against the right of peoples to freely dispose of themselves, secondly against the right, not less sacred, of the workers and exploited to free themselves from their exploiters and once for all enter into free possession of the product of their labour. Nevertheless, the allied intervention was not stopped. It continued implacably in spite of its misfortunes and reverses, without profit either for the Allied people or the cause for which they were fighting in spite of the fact that every day it was more and more losing its *raison d'être* even to the most blind. Further, it was continued to the great detriment of the Russian people, for whom, by prolonging the Civil War,—by aggravating the Terror,—white and red,—by increasing the exhaustion from the war,—it became the accursed obstacle to the work of reorganizing (already in itself so difficult) the material life of the country, and the restoration of its plant, transport and its struggle against the food crisis. Alas, it became finally quite clear that the Allied Governments' intervention in Russia had not been dictated by the interests of their people, in order to strike a blow at German Imperialism, but purely with the purpose of satisfying the interests of financial groups, in whose grip they found themselves, and with the purpose of exterminating Bolshevism, i. e. the threat of Socialism, no longer a theory but a fact,—to tear it down while there was yet time, before the people of other countries might succeed in understand-

ding its real import, to tear down the standard of Proletarian revolution, which the workers and peasants of Russia, with desperate courage and determination, had raised in their struggle for their existence, against death!

„Make no mistake: it is us right enough that they are against. Too many milliards are involved for them to draw back before any crime“—said Comrade Reinstein to me upon my telling him of my conviction that it could not be possible, that it was a misunderstanding even if a tragic misunderstanding, that as soon as they would know in Paris, London and Washington what the Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia really meant, all would at once be explained.

After the German revolution it became impossible for me to retain my last illusions any longer,—and force of circumstances was finally to bring me to reason.

This revolution produced on my mind a terrible impression and suddenly opened up for me horizons which up to then had remained unseen. By a symbolical caprice of chance, the overthrow of German Imperialism coincided with the first anniversary of the proletarian revolution of October, as if Fate had been pleased to render homage to the workers and peasants of Russia, the leaders of whom, during one whole year, had been shamefully overwhelmed with the most infamous and stupid calumny!

Right up to the last moment I had obstinately refused to believe that a revolution in Germany was possible and now suddenly all that I had hated more than anything else in the world, this Prussian Imperialism and this Prussian

Militarism, the intolerable burden of which had prevented Europe from breathing freely for so long, had collapsed covered with mud and blood. A hope was suddenly realised which during four and a half years had not failed to sustain me in moments of weakness and anxiety, and it had been realized thanks to the combined effort of the stoic resistance of the French people and the audacious offensive of ideas and of revolutionary propaganda on the part of the proletariat of Russia. Far from betraying the cause of justice and truth, the Russian people had, on the contrary, devoted to it all its resources and all its energies. Isolated, without aid, unrecognized and combatted by all, it had unfalteringly supported the terrible burden of Brest and, amidst famine, privations and epidemics (thanks to the parallel efforts of German Imperialism and the deplorable attempts of the Allies), it rose up, strong with the invincible principles proclaimed by it, in face of an enemy who had not had time to enjoy the fruits of his victory, as insolent as it was ephemeral. But all these sufferings, all these trials belonged now to the past. From now onwards we had at last awakened from the horrible nightmare of crime and blood into which German Imperialism had plunged us. We were going to be present at the reconstitution of a Europe on the basis of the wide principles of humanity and human solidarity, for the realization of which so much blood had been spilt. This hour so long awaited, the hour that at times one almost despaired of, had struck, had at last arrived!

Days, weeks and months have passed. A self

important and covetous diplomacy has called together and multiplied solemn commissions and sub-commissions around the green tables and tried in vain under the opaque mantle of secret conferences, to mask the complete vacuity of its ideas, the total absence of its principles, the sullen opposition of financial groups which it had been called upon to try to soothe. Of noble ideas and elevated principles, in the name of which it formerly spoke to us, and for the sake of which we listened to it, soon nothing will have remained but feeble echos, and poor rubbish given to the people for the last time, as a bone at which to gnaw, and to calm their legitimate impatience. On the other hand, truth has been coming to light with ever greater vigour and force and soon will have opened the eyes of the blindest amongst us.

In the name of „the right of nations to dispose freely of themselves“ the Allies recommenced their attack against the Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia. Without having had the courage to declare war upon Russia, they accused it, in the face of the whole world, in their official declarations, of maintaining disorder and bringing about the economic ruin of Russia, of being incapable to raise the productivity of the factories, to re-establish „normal life“, all the conditions „indispensable for the re-establishment of European peace“. Hypocrisy without end, for they continued with a fury that only doubled itself after the official categorical and precise offer of peace, by the Bolshevik Government, to obstruct the latter and, by putting into effect the blockade, to take away all possibility for it to renew its industrial plant,

to improve its transport, to provide itself with the necessary implements of agriculture, continuing at the same time to pay and support secret agents for the miserable work of provocation and anarchic destruction, and finally to raise, finance and support on all its frontiers new attacks of the Czechs, Finns and Poles, even going to the extent of readjusting here and there the ruins of German imperialism in order to hurl them as well against the Russian proletarian revolution! Whilst the official representatives of France dare to accuse, and allow their bribed press publicly to accuse the Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia of being able to maintain itself only „with the cooperation of German officers“, they have the courage to demand from Marshal Hindenburg, who has since become their Ally, the incorporation of these German officers into the Iron Division and other „volunteer“ units which, on their direct orders, are sent to attack, and used in the occupation of, against the principle of the rights of nations, and for the plunder of the western provinces of Russia! This calumny of alliance, of identification of „Bolshevism“ with „German Imperialism“, that they desperately endeavour to force upon the public opinion of the West, at all cost, has reached monstrous proportions.

When one is witness of daily events in Russia, it becomes particularly intolerable to read the foreign newspapers, and especially the French. It would be impossible to imagine a tissue of lies more shameless, more flagrantly contradictory, a more systematic and more hypocritical perversion of facts. One day the

truth will undoubtedly come to light: the more it will have been sullied the more brilliant will be its revenge. But the perusal of the infamy published by the French press in regard to Russia is none the less profoundly instructive. It is a vivid illustration of the formidable power which the capitalist Governments and the large financial syndicates have in their hands in order „to form the opinion“ in accordance with their combinations. Never was the action of the press more cynically criminal; and never was its responsibility before the popular masses more heavy. If we desire to liberate ourselves from the past, which has caused us and still causes us so many sufferings, then the lying press, in the pay of capital, is one of the first instruments of oppression that we must destroy. It is necessary to finish once for all with this abominable poisoning of ideas, of consciences and souls. The press, with the modern printing plant, must be requisitioned by the people for the education of the people and not for its enthrallment.

Faithful to the tactics that were being followed in Russia, the Governments of the Entente had nothing more urgent to do in Germany, than to cynically reconcile themselves with the late servants of Wilhelm and to declare Liebknecht an outlaw, the man whom during four and a half years, in the name of principles that they had held up to us, they had not ceased to call, for the sake of their propaganda, „the only honest German“!

In France, the masters of iron-works and industrials eagerly dicussed in „private councils“, the question of the advantages and disadvantages involved for their pockets in the re-anne-



xation of Alsace Lorraine to France, with or without autonomy, that is to say with or without a customs line and, according to the degree of their fears for a formidable competition, they declared themselves „patriotically“ in favour of an immediate reparation of the wrong done in 1871, or „democratically“ in favour of a plebescite of the population of Alsace-Lorraine.

In Turkey, it was an whole people, unhappy and loyal, that they were desirous of strangling, purely and simply, of exterminating once for all from the map.

In Bulgaria bayonets were used to maintain the Czar Boris on a bankrupt throne, fearing that the Bulgarian people, exhausted and reduced to the greatest misery, might take the arrangement of its own destinies into its own hands.

In Governmet circles in Italy, there was a wave of annexation, which on the Dalmatian side, quickly found itself in conflict with the rising tide of Serbian ambitions, where the people were dying of famine and sickness, and on the Adriatic side, in conflict with the French flag which our squadrons were flying.

In neutral countries where, as in belligerent countries, a handful of people had become immoderately and immorally rich, and where the masses were crying out from hunger, misery, exhaustion, as well as their imperious need for order and justice, everywhere it was the same painful outcry of sufferings,—an outcry mixed with imprecation and revolt which grew louder, as a final warning to those fools who continued their mad course towards the abyss and exterminated, in their insatiable greed of

gain, millions and millions of people without end.

It had become clear that, even if it succeeded one day in concluding an artificial agreement which would permit of its members putting their signatures simultaneously at the bottom of another valueless „scrap of paper“, the „Peace Conference“ was and could not help becoming more and more incapable of meriting its name, of giving to the world the promised peace, precisely because it was condemned to remain an ever greater stranger to the interests and the will of the people in the name of which it pretended to speak.

Profoundly dejected and wounded by contact with this hideous truth, I began to understand, for the first time, the meaning of Bolshevism, that all the Governments of Europe were execrating and wished to destroy. At a moment when all was crumbling around me, when everywhere only nihilism was to be seen, I perceived, its luminous star, coming from the horizon of the Future, rising in the sky.

Until then, groping blindly, feeling my way as my instinct guided me, under the blows, so to speak, under the shock of circumstances, I had been led to understand the Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia Exclusively from the Russian point of view,—led to understand as something that was not artificial, that had been invented by German Imperialism but, on the contrary, as something that appeared to be the only real force at that time existant in Russia, alone capable of effecting the territorial and moral re-grouping of the country, alone capable of saving Russia

from anarchy and of enabling it to continue, freely and normally, after its own fashion, its own complex and profound evolution. I understood that to fight against the Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia meant to fight against Russia, attempt to overthrow it and to consign the country to definite ruin. But not for one moment did I give credit to those projects for the regeneration of humanity which were haunting the minds of the leaders of the Russian revolution. Not for one second had it occurred to me to regard it otherwise than from the theoretic point of view, as representing a purely documentary interest, on the theses strongly expounded by Lenin on State and Revolution, on the final crisis of Capitalism, of monopolies and trusts of which Imperialism was only the last stage, its superior phase, on the proletarian Revolution destined to break the state mechanism of the former bourgeois capitalist state of oppression and to assure by means of the temporary Dictatorship of the proletariat (that is to say unfortunately with the absence, of equality and justice for all,—which the oppressors, dictators of *yesterday* are so hypocritically clamorous for *to-day*)—in short, the passage towards a new life, perhaps far off, still very far off from us, but towards which we must direct, resolutely and without weakness, all our efforts and aspirations.

Until then, the international character, the world social import of the Russian proletarian revolution had escaped me. It revealed itself suddenly with irresistible power and in a flood of astonishing logic that never for one moment belied itself. The policy followed by the Prole-

tarian Government of Russia since the first day of its existence appeared to me, retrospectively, with wonderful transparency.

I understood now that the bourgeois Governments, parliamentary as well as non-parliamentary, republican as well as monarchical, had never during the course of this war represented the interests of their peoples, but only, exclusively the interests of financial groups whose agents they were, and that Bolshevism had been right in substituting the struggle against the appetites of Wilhelm, by a struggle against the appetites of all capitalists, of all Imperialisms, without distinction. To-day German Imperialism was defeated, but its acts remained in force, for another Imperialism (that I had not been able to distinguish as yet, my observation being exclusively occupied with German Imperialism) that of the Entente, freed from the competition of a rival Imperial bloc, was able, henceforward, to give, with reserve, a free course to its appetites.

Thus, it had now become clear to me that peace could not be re-established, and that the realisation of principles which up till then had been proclaimed by the bourgeois governments only in order to delude and lull the masses of the people to sleep, could be proclaimed only when the time would come for collapse of this Imperialism and when the people would take the free command of their destinies into their own hands.

Well, that is what the soviet form is, this grand and wonderful creation of the Russian proletarian revolution. The Soviet system of government is government by the people, that is to say of the masses of workers and peasants.

of soldiers, sailors and all those who up to now have with their work, blood and privations maintained Capitalist Governments, and to whom the latter have thrown principles and generous ideas only in order to deceive them and with the injunction never on any account to think of the practical realisation of these principles and ideas! This is the only form that can assure to exhausted, bleeding Europe peace, concord, justice, right and construction of a new life, in the place of the terrible nightmare, in the most frightful drama that History has ever known.

Time,—as we must occasionally remind ourselves,—is decisive factor in human life. It does not, alas, belong to the dreams and generous speculations of the mind. It belongs wholly and exclusively to the brutal exigencies of action. Whether one likes it or not, to-day it can only be a question of a fighting Government, that is to say of a Government which unfortunately has to rely, temporarily upon exceptional laws—a dictatorship. And this dictatorship can only be either dictatorship of capital and the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat. The former, whether or not it be realised by Lloyd George, Clemanceau, Scheidemann or Koltchak, can have only one aim: the strengthening, the consolidation, and the re-establishment of *what existed before the War*, that is to say of a regime which has signed its own condemnation, a regime the logical development of which has resulted in an awful massacre. Although the massacre has for the time being ceased, we shall never be able to free ourselves from its menace, still less recover from it,

suspended over an abyss by a force superior to our own will, which still emanates from the Old World.

No doubt Time calls us to a combat not less impacable, not less cruel, to sufferings and privations perhaps, still heavier than the former, but we are also called to a Future. We are given the possibility, through pain and tears, no doubt, to destroy for ever what still remains of the odious past, which still tries to break in upon us and bury us alive amidst the mountains of corpses accumulated during these years of nightmare,—and, afterwards, giving free course to all our energies, to all our creative forces and ideal aspirations,—to set to work ourselves upon the construction of a new world, a new world which we shall have the force, courage and will to mould to our idea by our own hand.

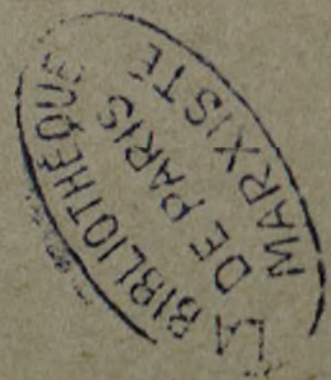
There is no mean between the two dictatorships. It is necessary to chose between them. To refrain from doing so is to give the cooperation of one's neutrality towards the restoration of the ruins of the old world, that is to say to resign oneself to continue to live, without hope of ever issuing enlightened from the black night in which we are plunged.

Whatever may happen, whatever we may have still to suffer before our new life constructs itself, it is faith in her which, alone, can and must support us from now onwards, for behind us and around us there is nothing but ruins, death, and mourning. We are suffering, we shall suffer perhaps still more, but we shall get out of the vicious circle of the old world which is crumbling amidst the noise of fire and blood. To all those who have really a need for an ideal,

to all those who believe in a superior force, in the existence of God, who will not admit that religion should be profaned by unscrupulous politicians and degraded to an instrument of State government, finally to all those who, to some degree or another know the meaning of right and wrong, I am not afraid to voice my ardent conviction; it comes from a brain, and still more from a heart wounded and tortured by the hideous truth; but nevertheless it comes with a force that will only die out with my life.

*René Marchand.*

Petrograd  
March-April 1919.













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